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What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner?

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrated by men is a serious and widespread problem in Aotearoa/New Zealand and worldwide. Various strategies have been developed to address men's use of violence towards their partners. However understanding of the factors and processes that support men desisting from perpetrating IPV is underdeveloped and under researched. The present study breaks from the prevailing quantitative approach focused on recidivism and uses an interpretative phenomenological analysis to understand what helped and hindered men to desist from IPV perpetration, through hearing their experience of this process. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with six previously violent men, with at least 6 months of desistance. Their stories highlighted five superordinate themes involving external factors and internal processing relevant to the desistance process. An event with personal relevance to each man provided the sanction initiating change. For the change process to precede it was important for the men to experience acceptance and support from a significant person, so as to increase their belief in themselves and their sense of agency. Engaging in the desistance process involved gaining awareness of emotions and cognitions, developing the ability to regulate emotions and critically reflecting on beliefs and behaviours to transform these from affirming IPV to affirming safe and respectful behaviours. Progress from resisting the familiarity of perpetrating IPV, to implementing an IPV free identity required proactively engaging in safe and respectful behaviours and considerable time for integration. Desistance needs to be viewed, not as a final destination, but as an ongoing process involving advances and setbacks, with all the men acknowledging they were still in the process of change. Whilst the men who perpetrate IPV need to take responsibility for their actions, the task of eliminating IPV rests with our society as a whole and requires a change in society's attitude from blaming the individual to becoming involved as part of the solution. The implications of these results for individual and social intervention are discussed.

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Table of contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of contents	iii
Chapter One Introduction.....	1
Prevalence and Seriousness of IPV	2
IPV Intervention	3
Desistance	4
Organisation of thesis	6
Chapter Two Literature Review	7
Why Are Men Violent Towards Their Partners?	7
Sociocultural Theories and IPV	8
Family Systems Theory and IPV	10
Social Learning Theory and IPV	11
Attachment Theory and IPV.....	12
Anger and Hostility Models of IPV	13
Personality Disorder and IPV	13
Alcohol and Drug Models of IPV	14
Summary of Single Factor Theories of IPV	15
Nested Ecological Theory.....	15
Desistance or How Men Stop Using Violence Towards Their Partners	17
Chapter Three Methodology.....	30
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	31
Reflexivity and Role of the Researcher	33
Project Design and Methods.....	36
Introduction	36
Ethical Considerations.....	36
The Participants	38
Data Collection.....	39
Data Analysis.....	40
Chapter Four Analysis and Discussion: Sanctions	43
Turning Points or Incentives	43
Discussion.....	51
Chapter Five Analysis and discussion: Acceptance and Support	56
I'm OK, IPV is not OK	56

I'm Not Alone	60
Making the Choice/Autonomy.....	62
Discussion.....	65
Chapter Six Analysis and Discussion: Engaging.....	70
Increasing Sensitivity and Emotional Awareness.....	70
Affect Regulation	74
Critical Reflection.....	77
Taking Responsibility.....	81
Connecting to Values/Faith/Something Bigger.....	84
Discussion.....	87
Chapter Seven Analysis and Discussion: Becoming Safe and Respectful	95
Using Skills for Respectful Behaviour.....	95
Part of a Team or Group, 'WE'	99
Setting Boundaries in Relationships	106
Making Lifestyle Changes.....	107
Discussion.....	110
Chapter Eight Analysis and Discussion: Remaining Safe and Respectful.....	119
Feedback and Making Amends	119
Sharing the Learning/Helping Others	124
It Takes Time and Ongoing Commitment	126
Discussion.....	132
Chapter Nine: Culmination	143
Introduction	143
Implications for Practice	146
Limitations and Future Research Considerations	148
Conclusion.....	150
Reference List.....	151
Appendices.....	164
Appendix 1 Letters of Permission.....	164
Appendix 2 Participant Information Sheet.....	166
Appendix 3 Consultation with Maori	169
Appendix 4 Authority for the Release of Transcripts.....	172
Appendix 5 Letter of Invitation to Participate.....	173
Appendix 6 Consent Form	175
Appendix 7 Interview Guidelines	176
Appendix 8 Introduction to the Participants' IPV Histories	178

Appendix 9	Summary of Thematic Findings.....	179
Table 1	Master table of themes.....	42
Figure 1	IPV Desistance Process Map.....	144

Chapter One

Introduction

My motivation to undertake this research project comes from a desire to eliminate a serious problem from our society, that of intimate partner violence (IPV). Having grown up with a violent and abusive alcoholic father I experienced first-hand the destruction caused to all the family and then proceeded to act the same way in a number of my own relationships. Stopping my own use of violence and abuse and dealing with its effects on myself and others have been major priorities in my life. This has taken me through years of personal growth and led to my engaging in family violence work.

Undertaking the journey of desistance from IPV led me to becoming involved in a group with other men, where we addressed our violent behaviour and developed a living without violence programme (LWVP) and agency in West London, England. Over the past 24 years I have trained as a counsellor, psychotherapist and group facilitator, worked with men through groups and individual work to facilitate their desistance from IPV, and with children and families who have experienced family violence in their lives. I now supervise and train facilitators of LWVP, counsellors and other family violence workers.

Being part of the redevelopment of a LWVP has inspired me to enter further academic training and undertake a research project. Whilst my initial research focus was the improvement of LWVP through testing modifications to interventions, my attention was brought to the lack of research acknowledging and utilising the lived experience of those men who have succeeded in desisting from IPV. Before pursuing research projects testing new interventions with men who have perpetrated IPV, I considered it imperative to first learn what men already know that works for them in their desistance from IPV, as the experts in their own process. In order to formulate the most effective interventions for men to address this serious problem it is important to hear, acknowledge and learn from the lived experience of those men, who have undertaken the journey of desistance from IPV perpetration.

This chapter will firstly outline the prevalence and definition of IPV. IPV intervention will then be discussed, followed by the definition of desistance from IPV before examining the need for further research into IPV desistance and in particular the utilisation of men's lived experience. The final section of the chapter outlines the aims and organisation of this thesis.

Prevalence and Seriousness of IPV

Intimate Partner Violence is of great concern worldwide and is a serious social and public health problem. It is well documented as being of high prevalence in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A survey undertaken by Fanslow and Robinson (2011) found that one in 3 (35.4%) ever partnered New Zealand women report having experienced physical and /or sexual IPV in their lifetime, that this increased to 55% if psychological /emotional abuse is included and that 5.2% experienced physical and /or sexual IPV in the 12 months prior to the survey. The World Health Organization Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women (García-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005) which analysed data from 10 countries and 24,000 women also reported that 35% of the women had experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. The New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse Data Summaries Snapshot (NZFVC, 2014) reports that in 2013 there were 6749 recorded male assaults female offences and of the 11 homicides by intimate partners recorded by New Zealand police, 7 of the victims were women and 4 were men.

Awareness of IPV has increased considerably since the opening in 1971 of the world's first safe house for women and children escaping domestic violence, in Chiswick, West London, England. The definition of IPV has developed during this time and in New Zealand the Domestic Violence Act 1995 (Ministry of Justice, 2014) defines IPV as violence by one person towards another who is a spouse or partner of the other person, where violence means—

“(a) physical abuse; (b) sexual abuse; (c) psychological abuse, including, but not limited to,—(i) intimidation, (ii) harassment, (iii) damage to property, (iv) threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or psychological abuse, and (iva) financial or economic abuse (for example, denying or limiting access to financial resources, or preventing or restricting employment opportunities or access to education)” (Part 1, section 3).

Physical violence is defined as having experienced one or more of the following acts: (a) been slapped or had something thrown at them that could hurt them;(b) been pushed, shoved, or had their hair pulled; (c) been hit with a fist or something else; (d) been kicked, dragged, or beaten up; (e) been choked or burnt on purpose; or (f) been threatened with, or had used against them a gun, knife, or other weapon. Sexual violence is defined as having experienced one or more of the following acts: (a) been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when the woman did not want to, (b) having had sexual intercourse because she was afraid of what her partner might do, or (c) been forced to do something sexual that she found degrading or humiliating. For psychological abuse, an example of intimidation is a partner yelling or smashing things

and for harassment is repeatedly following a partner, appearing at their home or place of business.

IPV Intervention

Strategies to address intimate partner violence by men have included arrest and prosecution as a result of criminal legislation, civil action, treatment programmes and education through social media. In response to the opening of the Chiswick refuge there was an unexpected demand for clinical help from men, whose partners had sought refuge. As a result of this demand the first formal treatment programme opened its doors in 1976 in London (Jennings, 1987). Since then the number of treatment programmes, most often referred to as Living Without Violence Programmes (LWVP) or Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP), has expanded worldwide, in particular throughout the UK, Europe, North America and Australasia. In New Zealand LWVP became more abundant when the Domestic Violence Act 1995 (DV Act) came into effect. The DV Act made a number of significant changes to the earlier legislation, including having a focus on rehabilitation, with respondents of Protection Orders (PO) being required to attend programmes to address their violence. Men who attend LWVP do so as a requirement of a PO or as part of a Family Violence Court, Probation or Child, Youth and Family plan, or they come voluntarily. There is no standardised philosophy or program format for LWVP in New Zealand, although all government accredited programs must fulfil the criteria laid out in the DV Act.

Dutton and Corvo (2006) have drawn attention to flaws in the present paradigms that inform domestic violence treatment, evidenced by the poor efficacy of this treatment reported in research. Meta-analytic reviews by Babcock, Green, & Robie (2004) and Feder & Wilson (2005) have put their effectiveness in stopping re-assault as 5% and 0% respectively, compared to a man who was simply arrested and sanctioned. Bowen (2011) reports that most current LWVP intervention models focus their understanding on a feminist framework and gendered analysis of power that challenges the patriarchal attitudes and beliefs of men who condone IPV, but do not incorporate an understanding of desistance. This present philosophical focus for LWVP intervention has little research support which is incongruent with all current calls for evidence-based practices (Corvo, Dutton, & Wan-Yi, 2008). Campbell, Neil, Jaffe and Kelly (2010) point out that public education programmes, for example White Ribbon (n.d.), may not maximise their effectiveness and appropriately engage perpetrators of IPV due to the present lack of research to evaluate specific kinds of support or intervention used. The omission of IPV desistance process understanding from current LWVP interventions is therefore surprising when this is required to inform evidence-based practice (Walker, Bowen and Brown, 2013). It is evident that research on IPV desistance and the inclusion of relevant findings into IPV interventions is overdue.

Desistance

Desistance is generally defined in the field of criminology as the cessation of offending or other antisocial behaviour. Researchers however have not reached a consensus on the definition of desistance (Kazemian, 2007). In the context of IPV Fagan (1989) refers to desistance as the cessation of offending that might follow intervention or happen spontaneously. When considering the dynamic nature of behaviour Woffordt, Mihalic, and Menard (1994) attempted to conceptualise desistance using the term “suspension” of IPV behaviour. Walker et al. (2013) note there is no dominant definition when examining general offending, violence or IPV. There is also difficulty in identifying the time required for someone to have stopped using violence to qualify as desisted. Various researchers have utilised time frames from six months to 3 years to substantiate permanent change but by this definition testing desistance from IPV would require research over the lifespan. The shortcomings of a dichotomous definition of desistance has led to desistance from IPV to be more generally regarded not as the termination of violent behaviour but rather a causal process that supports the termination of offending. It is therefore a dynamic process that unfolds over time rather than a static end point (Walker et al., 2013).

The apparent difficulty in defining desistance in quantitative terms may in part account for the lack of focus on desistance of IPV. Morran (2013, p. 317) identifies: “Much of the evaluative literature concerning perpetrator programmes has been concerned thus far with ‘outcomes’. It is time for greater attention to be paid to process, and, indeed, to understanding the person who desists as someone involved in continual ‘work in progress’”. The area of treatment for the perpetrators of IPV is in general under researched, with Campbell, Neil, Jaffe and Kelly (2010) having reviewed 769 abstracts published in major domestic violence journals to find only 7% focused on treatment of perpetrators and less than 1% examined the need to engage men in these treatments. Even scarcer is research which includes the heard experience of the men attending treatment programmes (Montella, 2008) or those who have ceased using IPV (Sheehan, Thakor & Stewart, 2012; Walker et al., 2013). Sheehan, et al. (2012) note that more recent research has focused on investigating why perpetrators of IPV change but few of these studies describe the process of change in these individuals. The dearth of research in this area is further emphasised by Walker, et al. (2013) who identify that whilst there is evidence suggesting that a significant proportion of men who perpetrate IPV desist from such violent behaviours, there is only limited research examining the desistance process.

The New Zealand study by Metzger and Woodley (2010) aimed at understanding help seeking, giving and receiving behaviours in the context of family violence and found that much of the literature in the area is focussed on those who have been victims of interpersonal violence and, specifically, women victims of violence. They stated that

“very little literature exists on perpetrator (or ‘batterer’) help seeking and receiving outside of evidence collected through criminal justice systems” (p. 12). The lack of research into men’s experience of help seeking and receiving meant that their review concentrated largely on literature examining victims’, in particular women’s, experience and the experience of those who give help to these victims. From the interviews they undertook a small number were with men who had stopped perpetrating IPV. They found that the current help offered was mostly ineffective and only works well when men are ready to accept help. Before this, offers of help were meaningless and ineffective. This was also found by Campbell, et al. (2010) whose study of 73 male batterer programme attendees in Canada identified that two thirds of the participants sought help regarding the problems in their intimate relationships, but only a half received help to address violent behaviours and only one quarter found the help to be useful or effective.

Campbell et al. (2010) concluded that numerous opportunities to intervene were missed and identified the importance of attending to men’s view of masculinity and help seeking and the critical role of developing trust, non-judgemental and confidential counselling relationships. Metzger and Woodley (2010) echo the significance of making the support on offer amenable to men. They found that every man who made changes had someone on his side who believed in him and supported him, that effective support increases his belief in self and sense of agency, and that men want to access support from their whānau, family and friends. They emphasise the importance of believing in and supporting men, when they state that, as a result of the current “It’s not OK” Campaign against family violence (Ministry of Social Development, n.d.), which rejects the notion that perpetrators of IPV are pathological criminals, more men are seeking help for their use of violence.

Support for research aimed at informing interventions for reducing IPV perpetration that by listening to men who have desisted from IPV also comes from Murphy (2009). Her study on Australian and New Zealand educated men who have used IPV also found a paucity of in-depth research with men who have perpetrated IPV and of studies that focus on men’s change processes. She recommends that “future qualitative in-depth research needs to explore what specific illusions orient other men away from abusing and controlling their female partners.....for change to occur, it is important that future research focus on the issue that there are perpetrators who want to give and receive love and care” (p.380).

The effective engagement of men who perpetrate IPV in seeking and receiving help needs reviewing and changes made to meet the needs of these men. Understanding the process of desistance from IPV for men is under researched and therefore underutilised to inform evidence-based IPV interventions. A significant informant for understanding the process of effectively engaging, challenging and supporting men in

desisting from IPV has been left out, namely the man himself. This study focuses on this important gap in the IPV literature and practice, hearing what the experience of the men themselves tells us that led to change, that helped or hindered their change process and the benefits and the costs that they experience from ceasing IPV. This information will help inform those who endeavour to engage men who use IPV in the change process in order to improve their lives and those who they are affecting and harming.

The aims of the present project are:

From speaking to men in New Zealand, who testify to having ceased using Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), identify how they make sense of the change process they went through:

1. Analyse how men describe the change process.
2. Identify what men found helped and hindered their change process.
3. Identify what men describe as the benefits and costs of ceasing IPV.

Organisation of thesis

Chapter two firstly reviews and critiques literature that informs the current understanding of the aetiology of IPV perpetration. The research on desistance from IPV is then presented including published and unpublished works.

Chapter three outlines the methodology underlies this research. Traditional and qualitative methods of social science investigation are discussed. Interpretative phenomenological analysis is then outlined along with reflexivity and the role of the researcher. This is followed by the project design and methods.

Chapters four to eight present the findings of the analysis and discusses the findings in relation to the literature, each chapter covering a superordinate theme.

Chapter nine gives a summary of the findings, an outline of the implications for practice, and consideration of limitations of the present study along with future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The process of decreasing intimate partner violence (IPV) in society is complex. This chapter will firstly outline current theory on the typology of IPV perpetrators and the major theoretical perspectives for understanding the use of IPV. A review will then be given of the research that has been undertaken on desistance from IPV and the utilisation of men's experience of desisting.

Why Are Men Violent Towards Their Partners?

It is evident in the literature that perpetrators of IPV are not a homogenous group, instead they exhibit a varied intensity and range of risk factors and characteristics (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011; Walker et al., 2013). Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) pioneered the research on types of male IPV offenders, and by reviewing the literature they constructed a hypothetical typology, which classifies subtypes across 3 dimensions: severity and frequency of violence, generality of violence and batterers psychopathologies. They initially identified 3 subtypes for batterers: family only (FO), dysphoric or borderline (DB) and generally violent antisocial (GVA). These were hypothesised to account for 50%, 25%, and 25% of IPV perpetrators in the community respectively.

The FO engage in low severity and low generality of their violence, usually opposing the generalised use of violence and are therefore at lower levels of risk compared to the other 2 groups, where more severe violence is exhibited. DB perpetrators are characterised by moderate to severe violent acts, including sexual assaults, which are still mainly towards partners. They tend to be psychologically distressed with features of borderline personality disorder and substance use, and exhibit emotional dependence and fear of abandonment, which can produce rages and efforts to deprive their partner of independence (McMaster, 2009). Those in the third subgroup, GVA perpetrators, are chronically criminal, antisocial or psychopathic, and moderately to severely assault their partners, often sexually, and also tend to abuse substances. They have a propensity to use violence in instrumental ways in conflict with both partners and others, and tend to view the world as hostile and threatening. This typology has been successfully tried and tested by several studies, one of which identified a fourth subgroup, low-level antisocial (LLA), which fell between FO and GVA types on most measures (Holtzworth-Munroe, et al., 2000).

There are a large range of theories that attempt to explain the aetiology of IPV, all of which have been described as fundamentally flawed in their explanatory power (Woodin & O'Leary, 2009; Bowen, 2011). This is due to these theories lacking both an account of behaviour that generates hypotheses that can be tested empirically and can

account for a large number of observations. These theories generally focus on either single factors or a multifactorial analysis and reflect sociocultural, interpersonal and intrapersonal explanations. Here I will outline the socio-cultural, social learning, family systems, personality disorder, anger and hostility, attachment and alcohol and drug use theories of IPV before examining the one multifactor model that has influenced current approaches to intervention for IPV perpetrators, the nested ecological model.

Sociocultural Theories and IPV

The sociocultural category includes a range of feminist theories with explanation factors including gender roles, gender inequality, power and control, and patriarchy. They hold a common perspective of aiming to understand why men use violence against women at a societal level.

The premise of gender role theory is that individuals will behave in ways that they see as appropriate to their gender identification. As aggression is endorsed by male cultural norms, aggressive behaviour is likely to be exhibited by those individuals who have a strong masculine gender identity. Those men who hold conservative gender role ideals related to providing for one's family and who perceive that these norms are being violated are more likely to perpetrate violence. Some empirical evidence exists to support the idea that those men who perceive threats to their masculinity or masculine ideals and are susceptible to gender role stress, experience negative affect and attributions (Bowen, 2011). They are then more likely to endorse verbal aggression as a response to this. Those men, who are maritally-distressed with a history of IPV, were found to be more likely to attribute negative intentions to wives' behaviour depicted in vignettes, than maritally distressed nonviolent men. This was most prevalent when the scenarios involved depictions of jealousy or rejection.

The pressure experienced in trying to conform to socially constructed gender role stereotypes may play a part in IPV perpetration, according to gender role conflict theories. This can lead to men experiencing depression, anxiety, anger and passive aggressiveness. As such, rather than being a direct cause of IPV, such conflict may be more of a marker, that an individual man may be at increased risk of engaging in behaviours linked to increased likelihood of IPV (Woodin & O'Leary 2009).

The role of gender related beliefs systems is of particular relevance to the study of IPV perpetration. A link has been identified in the use of violence by both men and women in intimate and non-intimate contexts. Those who endorse more traditional conceptualisations of masculinity emphasising instrumental beliefs, i.e. the desire to achieve goals by manipulating social situations, the environment or objects over traditional femininity emphasising expressive beliefs, i.e. the desire to regulate emotions and sustain interpersonal relationships show a greater propensity to violence in general (Woodin & O'Leary, 2009). There is mixed evidence as to the role that

traditional gender role stereotypes and ideals play in IPV. The meta-analysis conducted by Sugarman and Frankel (1996) across 29 studies found no association between holding traditional gender role beliefs and physical IPV perpetration, but did find a clear link with men holding attitudes that supported the use of violence in relationships. They also found that men who exhibited IPV were more likely to exhibit a lack of a clear masculine or feminine gender schema. This contradicts the notion of traditional beliefs being linked to IPV, with an alternative explanation being that these men might use violence because they believe that this constitutes proper male behaviour. A study undertaken by Jenkins and Aubé (2002) supports these findings, where those men who endorsed the conceptualisation of masculinity characterised by hostility, self-absorption and control were associated with the use of psychological but not physical aggression. Perhaps surprisingly those women holding this conceptualisation of masculinity exhibited the use of both physical and psychological aggression towards their intimate partner.

The feminist conceptualisation of IPV argues that alongside societal gender role expectations there is a broader societal system of male dominance and privilege. This is exhibited through men having power and control over their female partners as shown in the Power and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1993). However a study by Dutton and Starzomski (1997) which compared 89 men enrolled on a perpetrator programme against 18 nonviolent men, and utilised the wife's reporting on behaviours used within the power and control wheel, did not support a relationship between power and control tactics and IPV.

Some men who perceive a power inequality in the relationship may perpetrate IPV as a means to achieve a sense of power potency. Anderson (1997) found that women whose income was less than 31% of the total family income were least likely to report IPV, whereas women who contributed 70% or more were 5 times more likely to report IPV. Similarly higher reported rates of IPV were experienced by wives who had achieved high educational attainment or took a greater decision-making responsibility (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson & Gottman, 1993); newlywed men who perceived themselves as having less power had higher reporting of being in a relationship characterised by destructive marital conflict with subsequent use of IPV against their wives (Leonard & Senchak, 1996); and men who perceived themselves as having less power were more likely to use violence, whereas women with higher perceived power were more likely to report using verbal and physical violence in intimate relationships (Sagrestano, Heavey & Christensen, 1999). Interestingly, research by Ronfeldt, Kimerling & Arias (1998) found that rather than perceptions of power predicting men's use of IPV, it was their level of satisfaction with their relationship power.

A further conceptualisation is that IPV is viewed as a patriarchal mechanism to maintain female subordination. This is to support the societal status of men as

controllers of resources and the legitimate dominant gender. Various research supports this, including a study of 52 countries, which showed the highest rates of IPV existed in cultures with pro-IPV attitudes, higher endorsement of sexist attitudes, and lower levels of gender equality and individualism (Archer, 2006). There is also research to indicate that this relationship may not be so straightforward. Dutton (1994) cites a study across the 50 states of the USA by Yllo and Straus (1990) which found no significant association between patriarchal normative beliefs and inequality and indicated that, contrary to expectations, the highest rates of self-reported IPV by men were in states characterised by the highest and lowest status of women, thus indicating a curvilinear relationship. Explaining IPV perpetration by men solely using patriarchal mechanism would therefore appear to be too simplistic.

Although research and policy for IPV has been dominated by feminist understanding, the feminist theories of IPV are generally underdeveloped (Hunnicut, 2009). Hunnicutt notes 5 main criticisms to theorising a link between patriarchy and IPV: the over-simplifying of power relations; the term patriarchy implying a false universalism; men are cast as a singular group as the concept of patriarchy ignores differences among men; violence by men or women against men is not explained through patriarchy; and finally, in societies characterised as patriarchal this concept does not help us understand why only a few men use IPV. Despite these criticisms of feminist theory and its ability to account for the diversity of research findings pertaining to the nature and prevalence of IPV, it still remains the most influential theory in the development of intervention programs (Bowen, 2011).

Family Systems Theory and IPV

Family systems approaches developed from the recognition that working with the social system the individual is embedded in could bring about more efficient and effective change (Lane & Russell, 1989). IPV is viewed as arising, not from within the individual, but from within the family system, in which a boundary disturbance results from the victims and perpetrators being linked in a circular and reciprocal process. It is the relations, roles and feedback mechanisms that stabilise and regulate the system that maintains IPV. The approach therefore adopts a non-blaming philosophy, which has led to it being the most controversial theoretical approach to explaining IPV, particularly with advocates of feminist theory (Polaschek, 2006).

It has been suggested that communication lacks clarity, consistency and is overtly hostile and critical in abusive families and it is these patterns of interrelating that best distinguish aggressive from non-aggressive relationships. Research examining interaction patterns among violent, non-violent distressed and happily married couples has shown that, compared to the nonviolent couples, violent couples were far more likely to be aversive and hostile, engage in both individual and reciprocal verbal aggression, exhibit a husband demand/wife withdraw interaction pattern, and engage

in less mutual problem-solving (Bowen, 2011). Although there is apparent evidence to support the role of communication and interaction within IPV, most of these studies adopted a purely cross-sectional design, making it difficult to identify which such patterns are antecedents or consequences of IPV.

Social Learning Theory and IPV

The central premise to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) is that behaviours and beliefs are learned as a result of direct experiences and observations of others. Social Learning Theory (SLT) therefore explains IPV behaviour and pro-violence beliefs as having been learnt during childhood through either the direct experience or observation of IPV and modelling by others of pro-violence beliefs. Actual or observed reinforcement of these behaviours influences the likelihood of them being exhibited later. As Woodin and O'Leary (2009) point out, behavioural learning occurs through processes of both classical and operant conditioning and cognitive mediational processes. SLT is the basis for the so-called intergenerational transmission of violence, which states that children observing violence between their parents will lead to their later use of IPV. As compelling as this explanation is, the evidence supporting it is inconsistent.

A meta-analysis of 39 studies undertaken by Stith, et al. (2000) found that whilst exposure to violent experiences during childhood is linked to increased rates of experiencing IPV in adulthood, either as a perpetrator or victim, there is a weak association which may be explained by other variables. Ehrensaft, Cohen et al., (2003) conducted a 20 year prospective study of 582 youths and their mothers and found that a diagnosis of childhood conduct disorder was the most significant predictor of IPV but that experiencing interparental violence and childhood abuse were also significant. A prospective study of the Christchurch birth cohort, did not link exposure to interparental violence to increased rates of physical IPV at age 25. They did however find significant mediators of the intergenerational transmission of violence in childhood sexual abuse, maternal age and family standard of living (Fergusson & Boden, 2006). The results of this study have been supported by other prospective longitudinal studies (Bowen, 2011).

Although the greatest amount of empirical research has been given to examining the SLT explanation of IPV, the results indicate that the experiencing of violence during childhood, either directly or indirectly, may increase rates of experiencing IPV in adulthood, but the association is weak and influenced by additional mediating features. Woodin and O'Leary (2009) note that the role of cognitive mediators such as attitudes towards violence may play an important role in predicting IPV, which find some overlap in feminist theory. Other cognitive mediators identified include conflict resolution skills, emotional dysregulation and social information processing deficits.

Attachment Theory and IPV

Attachment theory is a well advanced model of early development and relationship formation which focuses on the child's needs to establish a secure base with one or more caregivers, from which they can safely explore their environment and return to the safety when needed (Bowlby, 1980). Healthy, secure attachments develop when early experiences such as crying, clinging and seeking contact are met with warmth and support from the caregivers, which builds close emotional bonds between the child and parent. This process has parallels in nonhuman mammals, where it is shown to be an evolutionarily rewarded method of survival for protecting offspring from predators (Bowen, 2011). If the child is met with neglect, unpredictable responses or abuse, then they are more likely to form an insecure, disordered attachment, characterised by becoming either dismissing of or preoccupied with close relationships. The attachment style formed in childhood tends to remain stable into adulthood, unless it changes as a result of new experiences, particularly of an interpersonal nature.

It was proposed by Bowlby (1984) that these disordered attachment styles may be expressed in the form of child abuse and IPV, as both involve centrally important attachment relationships (parent-child, intimate partner) and both are concerned with survival of the young and reproduction. Dutton (1998) theorised that the difficulties insecurely attached individuals have with regulating emotions and self-soothing during situations that trigger fears of abandonment may lead them to be controlling or violent to their partners. Abandonment anxiety may be expressed as anger, and if unresolved may lead to the use of IPV in order to retain proximity to the intimate partner. This connection between attachment regulating proximity and distance in intimate relationships has led Lawson, Barnes, Madkins and Francois-La Monte (2006) to propose that the study of romantic attachment patterns could hold particular promise in the study of IPV, and help gain greater understanding of why some, but not all men use IPV and why some women use IPV.

There is considerable evidence that men who perpetrate IPV have higher rates of insecure than secure attachment styles. Bowen (2011) refers to several studies showing a connection between fearful attachment styles and anger, jealousy and trauma symptoms; maritally violent men reporting higher levels of interpersonal dependency, dependency on their intimate partner and lower self-esteem than maritally nonviolent men whether they are distressed or satisfied; and that insecurely attached violent men have higher rates of engaging in controlling behaviours, which combined predicts the frequency and severity of violence used.

Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman and Yerlington (2000) found differences in the function of violence across insecure attachment types, in that during disagreements preoccupied men will show the most belligerence, turning to violence if their partner withdraws,

whilst dismissing men will display the most withdrawal and contempt, turning to violence if their partner shows defensiveness. They theorised that in reaction to fears of abandonment, preoccupied men will act in an expressive manner, whereas dismissing men may use violence instrumentally to exert control over their wives.

Woodin and O'Leary (2009) state that there is increasing research evidence that "insecure attachment, particularly of a preoccupied, controlling type, may lead to partner violence in the face of perceived abandonment" (p. 48). Despite the apparent valuable contribution that attachment theory appears to make to an understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal behaviours within relationships, little has been developed utilising this approach in IPV intervention models (Bowen, 2011).

Anger and Hostility Models of IPV

Anger and hostility have long been theorised as leading to aggressive behaviour and IPV. This however has little empirical support although significant evidence exists that IPV perpetrators exhibit higher levels of anger and hostility (Woodin & O'Leary, 2009). Hostility is defined as an attitudinal construct involving cynicism, mistrust and denigration; whereas anger consists of cognitive, physiological, effective and behavioural changes that are experienced simultaneously.

Norlander and Eckhardt (2005) undertook a meta-analysis of 28 studies examining anger and hostility in samples of IPV men and nonviolent men. IPV men were found to have higher rates of anger and hostility, even when nonviolent men were maritally distressed. Also those men who reported moderate to high severity IPV reported moderately higher levels of anger and hostility than those reporting low to moderate severity. Whilst this meta-analysis provides substantial support of the association between levels of anger and hostility and IPV, currently no precise mechanism by which these associations occur has been elucidated (Bowen, 2011).

Personality Disorder and IPV

Research since the mid-1980s has explored the correlation between IPV and the personality disorders (PD) with recent research indicating that PD rates among IPV men are up to six times higher than rates among the general population (Dutton, 2006). This is particularly evident for antisocial and borderline personality disorders. Whilst the connection between antisocial personality traits and IPV appears to have a consensus of opinion, the role of other forms of personality pathology is less in agreement (Ehrensaft, Cohen, & Johnson, 2006).

Although there is a clear representation of personality pathology correlating to IPV there is still little understanding about the developmental origins of such an association. A theoretical framework connecting the potential role of borderline personality traits and IPV has been proposed by Dutton (1998) where early trauma

experiences in the form of shaming by a parent, witnessing interparental violence and insecure attachment styles may lead to an 'abusive personality' developing, predominantly characterised by borderline personality organisation (BPO), which then leads to the use of IPV. BPO features include self-harming, unstable interpersonal relationships, behavioural impulsivity and excessive anger responses. They may also include difficulties in regulating emotional responses to perceived threat and a higher likelihood of responding impulsively and aggressively to interpersonal confrontation.

Ehrensaft et al. (2006) undertook a 20 year prospective longitudinal study of 543 men for the associations between childhood family violence exposure, personality disorder symptoms and adult partner violence. The data indicated that there are shared etiological factors between, not only antisocial personality disorder traits and IPV, but also other personality disorder traits and IPV. This includes the traits: jealousy, hypervigilance to threats, suspiciousness, hostility, and combative and controlling behaviours consistent with paranoid personality disorder.

The different ways in which violence can be used has also been studied. IPV men with a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder were found by Ross and Babcock (2009) to use violence more reactively, acting impulsively and motivated by emotion. With antisocial personality disorder however, IPV men were more likely to use violence both reactively and proactively, with the use of violence also being goal orientated, without provocation and not motivated by anger. This study, along with others, indicates that personality disorders may determine the type of violence used and that they may function as risk factors for later IPV.

Alcohol and Drug Models of IPV

The association between alcohol consumption and rates of IPV is substantially supported in the research (Foran & O'Leary, 2008). A British survey undertaken by Graham, Plant and Plant (2004) found that up to 40% of partner aggression incidences had alcohol implicated in them. There is evidence that the amount of drinking has been shown to be positively related to more serious violence (Testa, Quigley & Leonard, 2003). A 2-3 times higher annual prevalence rate of IPV was found amongst those who binge drink than those who do not drink (Fals-Stewart, 2003; Testa, 2004). Murphy, Winters, O'Farrell, Fals-Stewart & Murphy (2005) found that the amount of alcohol consumed by alcoholic men directly prior to violent conflict is higher than for nonviolent conflict.

There is considerable debate about explaining the link between alcohol/drug use and violence. Klostermann and Fals-Stewart (2006) summarise three primary conceptual models that have been posited to explain this link. The first is the spurious model, which suggests the alcohol/IPV link is because of other confounding factors, for example, young men are more violent and happen to drink more. The second is the

indirect effects model, which suggests alcohol use corrodes relationship quality leading to conflict and subsequent violence. Finally the proximal effects model suggests intoxication is a causal agent of IPV which may be mediated by the expectations associated with intoxication or the psychopharmacological effects of ethanol on cognitive processing. They concluded that all three have some merit in explaining the link, with the proximal effects model having the greatest empirical support. This was strongly supported in a study by Fals-Stewart (2003) using detailed diaries from male partners with a history of IPV, who were going into either alcoholism or domestic violence treatment, and their female partners, over a 15-month follow-up period. For both samples, over 80% of all IPV episodes occurred within four hours following drinking by the male partner. They also found similar results for the temporal association between cocaine and episodes of IPV in a sample of patients who mainly abused drugs other than alcohol.

While there is insufficient evidence to indicate a causal link between alcohol/drug use and IPV, research indicates that the use and abuse of these is associated with the use and severity of IPV, and that alcohol, in particular, may act as a proximal risk factor for IPV.

Summary of Single Factor Theories of IPV

The single factor theories reviewed each contain partial explanations for IPV operating at different analytical levels, including sociocultural, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Many of these theories adopt components of other theories in order to give a fuller explanation of IPV. Over time it has become clear that more complex multivariate models are required to gain more complete understanding of IPV aetiology (Woodin & O'Leary, 2009). The advantages of using multifactor models to understand behaviour use has been shown in investigations into other areas of aggression (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011) and the importance of adapting existing ecological models to the domain of IPV has been highlighted by Dutton (2006).

Nested Ecological Theory

Dutton (1985) was the first to draw upon the ecological development model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) as an approach to understanding the risk factors that apply for IPV. The Nested Ecological Model (NET) encompasses social and psychological perspectives to understand the potential causes of IPV, and highlights the importance of considering the interaction of various risk factors for social levels. These include the macrosystem, exosystem, microsystem, and the ontogeneric factors.

The first of these, the macrosystem, is the broadest level of analysis and includes sociocultural influences such as gender role norms, gender inequality and pro-violence societal norms. The exosystem is the second level and includes connections between families and the cultures they live in, such as extended family, peer group and school

and may also include economic opportunities and links to social services, police and courts. The third level is the microsystem which consists of factors for IPV in the family and individual and may include the interaction between intimacy and independence, a predisposition towards jealousy and/or control, which may lead to IPV in relation to perceived abandonment or threat. Ontogeneric factors are the fourth and narrowest level of analysis and include physiological, cognitive, affective and behavioural experiences of individuals which serve to increase or decrease the likelihood of IPV.

NET provides a model from which theories about the function of individual's behaviour can be hypothesised and tested, and in particular an opportunity to understand individual differences as to why people in similar social circumstances do not all behave in the same manner (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011). Support for this model has come firstly from research by Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward and Tritt (2004) who undertook a meta-analysis of 85 studies examining the association of risk factors at each level of the model with physical IPV perpetration and victimisation. At the exosystem level, the strongest links with violence were career and life stress, followed by age, education, employment, and income. Ontogeneric risk factors were generally moderate, and included in descending order, illicit drug use, attitudes condoning violence, traditional sexual ideology, anger and hostility, alcohol use, and depression. The microsystem risks were some of the largest predictors and include in descending order: a history of emotional-verbal abuse and forced sex by the aggressor; low marital satisfaction and a history of physical violence; and jealousy. This would suggest that the immediate environment appears to be the most important predictor of IPV in men.

The second supporting research is by O'Leary, Smith Slep and O'Leary (2007) who built structural equation models to test the direct and indirect relationships of several IPV perpetration risk factors in both men and women. A representative sample of 453 US couples were analysed and it was found that both male and female perpetrators behaviour could be explained by a complex path of the direct and indirect predictor variables. These accounted for 47% of variance for the men and 50% for women. Direct predictors of partner aggression, for both men and women, included dominance/jealousy, marital adjustment, and partner responsibility attributions. Men had 3 further direct paths: exposure to family of origin aggression, anger expression, and perceived social support. There was one additional found for women, that of a history of their own aggression as a child or teenager.

Research has shown that there is a constellation of risk factors that help explain the aetiology of IPV. Many, if not all, of the current single factor theories appear to fall short of explaining apparently contradictory findings (Bell & Naugle, 2008). In order to explain the behaviour of any individual perpetrator of IPV, it is therefore important to consider a broad range of potential factors, which the nested ecological model offers some promise towards. The complexity involved in explaining the aetiology of IPV

would appear to be mirrored in the present research and theory related to understanding the desistance process from IPV. Rather than desistance being considered in the context of clear evidence, there may be more promise in considering a nested ecological model, with the interaction of a range of factors being required to provide an explanation for the desistance process of an individual. Utilising a combination of research evidencing both the aetiology of IPV perpetration and the desistance from IPV process could provide a more accurate map for how to best address reducing IPV in our society.

Desistance or How Men Stop Using Violence Towards Their Partners

As mentioned in the introduction desistance is a difficult concept to define. This is largely due to the problem associated with identifying what length of time is required, during which no IPV perpetration occurs, in order to state that no IPV will reoccur. It was also noted that research examining desistance from IPV is limited, in particular those analysing the underlying process of desistance. In this section I will be covering the most recent research covering rates of desistance, the process of desistance (what helps and hinders this process) and what has been learnt from hearing the voices of men who have desisted from IPV.

Walker et al. (2013) undertook a critical review of the available literature addressing desistance from IPV. Their search covers empirical studies written in English, during the period from 1980 to 2011, examining male perpetrated IPV and heterosexual relationships where physical violence had been observed. They did not include any unpublished literature (e.g. dissertations). A total of 15 papers were identified and included in the review. Their discussion came under the headings of stability and prevalence of IPV over time, the nature of dyads within which IPV occurs, offender characteristics and typologies, and behavioural changes.

Their findings indicated that some men stop perpetrating IPV within their intimate relationships for prolonged periods of time, which contradicts the generally accepted premise that violence and aggression are stable over time, or indeed escalate in both severity and frequency (Walker et al., 2013). Utilising data from 8 studies, with sample sizes ranging from 180 to 3000 cohabiting couples, over a time range between 1 and 5 years, they reported desistance rates as small as 23.9% to as large as 69%. Each of these studies had its limitations for providing accurate desistance rates, but they all clearly indicate that IPV desistance and/or decrease in IPV severity does occur for some men who are initially violent in their relationship.

The dyadic relationship, related to the interaction between married heterosexual couples, has been researched to assess how it is an influencing factor in the desistance process. Wooldredge and Thistlethwaite (2006) undertook a study of 703 married men

arrested for misdemeanour assaults on spouses in a US city, to determine the effect of divorce on IPV desistance. The 24% who had divorce papers filed in court during the study period had lower likelihood of rearrests for intimate assault, a decrease in likelihood of rearrests with each monthly follow-up, and long delays to rearrests for those who ultimately did reoffend. This indicates the significant role in desistance from IPV played by reducing the opportunity for violence. This research also brought into question whether marriage stability has an inhibiting effect on IPV perpetration, when it has been found to be related to desistance from general crime and violence through informal social control. It appears that the quality of relationship is more crucial for IPV desistance than simply the presence of marriage (Walker et al., 2013).

Johnson (2003) utilised data from a random sample of 12,300 women who undertook a telephone survey about their experiences of physical and sexual assault by spouses. A subgroup of 1326 women, who had experienced at least one incident of violence from their partner, but not had a re-occurrence within the last 12 month period, formed the sample for this study. They identified that maturational variables are important predictors of violence cessation, with older age, legal marriage and longer relationships being associated with greater rates of desistance from IPV. This study has particular significance in that its conclusions are drawn from a general population and not just those who experienced extreme forms of violence. It did however not examine the prevalence of non-physical forms of intimate partner abuse.

The persistence and desistance of physical IPV perpetration across relationships were studied using data from a nationally representative sample of 6446 adolescents, who reported on two recent relationships (Whitaker, Le & Niolan, 2010). Of those who were violent in the first relationships, 70.3% desisted in the second relationships. Men's and women's persistence of physical partner aggression perpetration was found to be nearly identical. This shows a higher rate of desistance of IPV across relationships than the 23.9% to 69% range given above for desistance within a relationship. Significant predictors of persistence of physical IPV across 2 relationships were frequency of physical partner aggression, co-current partner aggression and cohabitation in the second relationship. Also, interestingly, many of the variables typically associated with the occurrence of partner aggression (early peer violence, child maltreatment) were found to be either weakly related or unrelated to the persistence of physical IPV. Whitaker et al. (2010) proposed that these factors may therefore not predict IPV persistence, suggesting that relationship interventions may be useful under some circumstances.

When considering perpetrator characteristics and typologies, there is a small body of research that has examined the association with desistance. Age has been identified as a predictor of persistence of IPV, with younger individuals tending to maintain violence more (Johnson, 2003) and older couples showing higher rates of desistance (Caetano,

Field, Ramisetty-Mikler & McGrath, 2005). Longitudinal data from 102 couples, where male IPV was perpetrated, was examined to identify the stability of IPV typology subtype differences over 3 years (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2003). The results revealed the highest levels of IPV were reported by borderline/dysphoric (BD) and generally violent antisocial (GVA) men, with GVA men being the least likely to desist at 7%, followed by BD at 14% then low-level antisocial (LLA) at 23%. Family only (FO) men, who showed relatively low levels of IPV, were the most likely to desist at 40%. Contrary to the previously held theory that FO men represent those in the beginning stages of IPV, who subsequently progress to severe violence over time, the findings indicated that this group was the most stable. This could be particularly useful as Walker et al. (2013) state “this would suggest that an examination of the characteristics associated with these individuals may give an insight into correlates of desistance e.g. little evidence of psychopathology, not generally violent and low impulsivity” (p.275).

Little attention has been given to examining behavioural change in perpetrators of IPV, with research focusing on how perpetrators perceive they change from being violent to non-violent within their relationships being even scarcer. The early work of Fagan (1989) suggested that desistance from IPV began with some aversive experience for the individual, leading to a decision to stop offending, with the individual being required to develop a conscious behavioural intent to stop. There is a lack of clarification as to the types of aversive event experienced and how this development of a conscious behavioural intent happened, was defined and measured. Fagan's model of desistance includes 3 stages: (1) building resolve or discovering the motivation to stop, (2) making and publicly disclosing the decision to stop, and (3) maintenance of new behaviours and integration into new social networks. This model is significant in that it brings attention to the important role of agency in the process of change and IPV, but has limitations in explaining how resolve is built, or how motivation to stop emerges, and what new behaviours are attained.

The only qualitative research included in the critical review by Walker et al. (2013) was by Scott and Wolfe (2000). This analysed interviews with 9 male reformed IPV perpetrators, who had attended feminist orientated treatment programmes for a median of 35 sessions. The study participants were deemed to be free of perpetrating physical violence and extreme psychological abuse for at least 6 months by themselves, their counsellors, and their partners. The men had all completed a 20 week structured programme for voluntary and court mandated IPV perpetrators. After being judged by their counsellors as having benefited significantly from this program they were invited to attend an advanced group. The advanced groups were semi-structured, varied in length from 14 to 20 weeks, and covered topics such as relationship resolution, healthy relationships, communication and listening skills and personal growth. The analysis of the interviews was undertaken utilising 28 a priori

coding categories obtained from nine theories that seem applicable to understanding change and abusive behaviour: feminist, social cognitive, personality, systems, attachment, deterrence, the health benefit model, the theory of reasoned action, and the information-motivation-behaviour skills model (Scott & Wolfe, 2000). This was based on the assumption that men's narratives would link coherently into traditional theories of change for IPV and the goal would be to identify those aspects of men's narratives that were a good fit to the variable processes implicated by these theories. During initial coding, there was the opportunity to add variables not originally proposed, which did result in 3 additional variables which were not identified by traditional theories of change (open mindedness, lifestyle changes, understanding the need to give and take in a relationship), and 3 sets of variables were combined due to difficulty in distinguishing them (perceived benefits with attitudes toward performance, perceived susceptibility with perceived severity, and reduced dependency with jealousy).

All the variables codes, bar two, were used at least once, with 4 variables being endorsed by more than three quarters of the men interviewed. These included: responsibility for past behaviour, communication, empathy and reduced dependency. Other variables receiving more than 50% of endorsement included: perceived susceptibility/severity, knowledge about abuse, responsibility for personal power, cues to action, involvement in other treatment or social action, feeling identification and reduced anger. Limitations of this research must be acknowledged in the form of a small sample, short time of desistance, and no control group containing men who had completed the programme and did not desist. It does however identify a number of processes relating to desistance from IPV, which warrant further research.

Overall the review by Walker et al. (2013) mirrors a number of aspects of desistance identified in how ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives. Maruna (2001) identified the following factors: social bonds (the quality and nature of relationships creating reasons to stop), narrative identity (past offending is seen as part of own identity with lessons learned from this) and maturational change (growing out of offending). As in criminology they also bring attention to the role of agency in the desistance process, that the shifts in attitude and changes in behaviour need to be of personal significance and value to the man, and that mounting costs or external forces and accountabilities are not sufficient to compel desistance (Pratt & Cullen, 2000).

The variables related to change from the study by Scott and Wolfe (2000) have been adapted and utilised in the study by Smith (2011) with different results. Using a qualitative methodology, Smith (2011) interviewed 18 male, heterosexual perpetrators, as to their perceptions of change, on completion of a living without violence programme, and then at 3, 6, 9 and 12 months follow-up. A content analysis was then conducted and data was coded and mapped against the Scott and Wolfe

(2000) a priori variables. Whilst responsibility for past behaviour, communication, empathy and reduced dependency all gained over 75% support for the Scott and Wolfe (2000) study participants, for the (Smith, 2011) study, a reduction of anger, and an increase in communication and assertiveness skills, gained support by almost all participants. An increase in ability to think prior to behaviour, and responsibility for personal power, gained the support of 50% of the participants. Responsibility for past behaviour, empathy and reduced dependency all gained less than 33% in the (Smith, 2011) study. Communication/assertiveness did however rate highly in both studies, indicating the importance of gaining skills in listening, body language awareness and the use of assertive communication skills. The differences exhibited between the 2 studies may be due to a number of factors including the different theoretical background and subject focus used in the LWV programmes, the theoretical focus of the researchers or perhaps even the different cultural backgrounds of the study participants as the Smith (2011) study took place in England and the Scott and Wolfe (2000) study took place in Canada.

The Scott and Wolfe (2000) research is also one of 6 studies included by Sheehan et al. (2012) in their systematic review of qualitative studies that investigated the factors, situations, and attitudes associated with IPV perpetrators decisions to change their abusive behaviour. They identified that more recent research has investigated why perpetrators of IPV change, attempting to elucidate the mechanisms or process factors associated with positive outcomes at an individual level. Many of these have researched the application of theoretical models, like the Transtheoretical model (TTM) of behavioural change, to populations of IPV perpetrators. The TTM proposes that change occurs through a set of stages, called the stages of change, in order to take action and maintain behavioural change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986).

These studies have examined the association between stage of change and quantitative variables such as the proportion of IPV perpetrators at each stage, attrition rates and readiness to change but few describe the factors or situations that underlie the processes of change in these individuals. For this reason Sheehan et al. (2012) focused their review on studies utilising qualitative methods, stating that this may be a better tool for elucidating data on processes that require insight into social, emotional and experiential phenomena. Chang et al. (2010) had already used qualitative research to examine the concept of turning points in the lives of victims of IPV. They defined turning points as any specific incidence, factors, or circumstances that leads to permanent change in how the victims view the relationship, the violence, and how they wish to respond. These were often associated with empowerment behaviours or help seeking.

The aim was to undertake the first study examining the concept of turning points in the perpetrators of IPV and through the synthesising of themes found in previous

studies to generate a more complete understanding of the catalysts for and processes of change. To be included in the review by Sheehan et al. (2012) the following criteria needed to be met: address factors, situations, or attitudes that facilitate perpetrators decision to change their abusive behaviour; include data obtained through interviews, observation, or focus groups; analyse that data using qualitative or phenomenological methodologies; be written in English; and have been published in a peer reviewed Journal. The 6 studies, included 5 from North America and one from Finland, with all utilising different qualitative methodologies, containing between 6 and 32 men with a median of 10, with 4 out of the 6 utilising purposeful sampling and only 3 out of the 6 stating whether non-violent behaviour had been exhibited.

15 themes and concepts emerged from the data. The only theme to be identified in all 6 studies for perpetrators who change was taking responsibility for past behaviour, with feeling that their decision to stop the abuse was autonomous identified in 5 studies. Whilst it is not clear whether taking responsibility is a predictor or correlate of behaviour change these two points have been found to be as important for perpetrators who were court mandated to attend a LWVP as for voluntary participants. This emphasises the importance of LWVP participants feeling that they make the actual decision to change their behaviour through their own volition and control, which is consistent with quantitative research where the TTM has been applied to IPV behavioural change (Babcock, Canady, Senior & Eckhardt, 2005; Murphy & Maiuro, 2007; Brodeur, Rondeau, Brochu, Lindsay & Phelps, 2008; Eckhardt, Holtzworth-Munroe, Norlander, Sibley & Carhill, 2008; Simmons, Lehmann & Cobb, 2008). These studies identified the perpetrators in the early pre-contemplative and contemplative stages of change did not see their behaviour as problematic, cannot commit to change and will generally be resistant to change. Conversely, those men who are in the later preparation, action, and maintenance stages of change recognise problems in their behaviour and are able to make a decision to actively modify these.

In five of the studies there was recognition that developing new skills was beneficial in the change process. These included, in descending order of studies: communication, emotional education and anger control; assertiveness and increased empathy; and knowledge about abuse. As all of the men had participated in LWV programmes, they spoke about learning how to apply these skills in their lives. The importance of support from their fellow perpetrators in the group were seen as beneficial by participants from two studies, which has also been evidenced by Taft, Murphy, King, Musser and DeDeyn (2003) who found that group cohesion was associated with decreased abuse at follow-up. As Murphy and Meis (2008) have identified, groups can have this positive affect but can also produce negative effects if there is a lack of group cohesion caused for example by differences in personality type and level of readiness to change.

In relation to turning points, the majority of the studies showed a correlation between the recognition of a specific event or situation and perpetrators desistance from IPV. These included fear of losing their family or partner, criminal justice sanctions and an awareness that they were becoming like their abusive father. Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) compared facilitator and perpetrator accounts of behavioural change in a LWV programme and found that perpetrators were more likely to identify external factors like criminal sanctions or fear of losing family or partner as playing a role in the change process than facilitators. As most research examines internal motivation for IPV change, this may indicate that more research focus is required to examine the effect on motivation of external events. Alongside this are the questions of how to identify when these external factors become motivators and which intervention processes may assist their recognition, as the article does not clarify whether the perpetrators cessation or reduction of IPV is actually related to the turning point that they identify.

The study by Sheehan et al. (2012) demonstrates that a mixture of external and internal motivators can produce movement towards desistance and the actions required to maintain it. It also identifies a number of processes that men experience in LWV programmes that have been helpful for them in desisting from IPV. However the studies by Sheehan et al. (2012) and Walker et al. (2013) did not include a number of un-published doctoral theses and other published studies which have interviewed men in relation to their desistance from IPV, the process of change from undertaking an LWVP, and some which interviewed couples who had experienced the transformation from using IPV to desistance from IPV.

Stefanakis (1998) interviewed 20 previously violent men, with at least two years of desistance, to investigate how men, who have been violent, negotiate nonviolent identities through their discourse while accepting responsibility for their past behaviour. He undertook a narrative analysis of these interviews and identified that the process of desistance incorporated a cyclical series of advances and setbacks, which could be described using the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) of change. The analysis identified the importance of the meaning negotiated from events or factors in motivating change and how the men were caught in dilemmas related to their struggle to be accountable for their use of violence as well as being seen as redeemable as people.

The men in the study identified negative sanctions and experiences as being significant in creating crises that motivated desistance from IPV. These included social sanctions (e.g. loss of relationships, jobs, material goods, or public exposure of the violence), official sanctions (e.g. arrest and imprisonment), negative personal experiences (e.g. accidents, illnesses) and dissonance (e.g. acknowledgement of the harm they caused, feeling empathy for the victim). Also significant in desisting and sustaining desistance

from IPV were events that encouraged personal responsibility and non-violent norms. These included intervention strategies (e.g. skill and knowledge development, group counselling), social and spiritual relationships that served as new reference groups, and new and unique events (e.g. role transitions, increased education, nonviolence despite provocation and offering assistance to others). Stefanakis (1998) noted that no single factor created change, that the same factor may motivate one man and yet have the opposite effect for another, and that the meaning ascribed to these events by each individual man, within the context of their own lives, was important in making them significant motivators to change.

Relationships that encouraged personal responsibility and non-violent norms were also identified by the men in the study as facilitating the change process, but not as being causal factors that created change. Stefanakis (1998) identified the significance of these relationships were the way they helped the men create new interpretive frames of reference to replace those challenged by the crises experiences, and how they enabled them to construct the necessity of external intervention for providing new interpretive frames to guide behaviour while positioning themselves as actively choosing to take advantage of these new opportunities. This helped the men protect their identities from claims of characterological flaws due to past use of violence, by constructing external help as necessary for change.

An analysis based on the TTM of change as well as the Affective Change Processes model (ACPM) (which utilises cognitive behaviour theory and the TTM) was undertaken for a doctoral thesis by Pandya (2001) and later published as Pandya (2009). The study followed 14 domestically violent men who had completed a group therapy programme grounded in attachment theory. Three interviews were undertaken, one prior to starting the programme, one on completion and the final interview one month after completion of the programme (with only six of the men completing the final interview). She identified three factors affecting the decision to make a change to non-abuse in a majority of the participants, which included: a commitment to change; a self re-evaluation that prepared them for change; and finding resources, support and information which were of meaning to the persons understanding of the need to change. The final component included materials used in the group, mutual support by group members and facilitators along with some form of support from outside of the group. In relation to the change process models the study found that themes from both could be found in all biographies, with change processes described by men with emotional and behavioural symptoms patterned more closely to ACPM and those with alcohol and substance use problems patterned more closely to TTM.

Anderson (1996) undertook a qualitative study involving observations of group meetings and semi-structured interviews of 20 current and former group members

and for group leaders exploring what they found most and least helpful in the batterer's intervention programme, and their experiences of change that they attributed to the programme, to the leaders and to other participants. Participants reported that the most helpful part of the programme was the group discussions, that they were profoundly affected by the interactions with the group leaders and that whilst they began the group programme with initial negative attitudes, these gave way to positive feelings with continued attendance. Whilst all the men reported significant or total elimination of their abusive behaviour, most men spoke of valuing long-term involvement in the program as they still considered themselves to be at risk.

Wangsgaard (2000) studied factors that facilitated change in batterer group treatment by employing qualitative, grounded theory methods in conducting four focus groups and 21 follow-up phone interviews with 23 IPV perpetrators. He attempted to establish a collaborative relationship with the participants, in which they were given the opportunity to identify the helpful and unhelpful aspects of the group treatment. He concluded that the key factor in promoting change was establishing a sense of safety and trust within the group setting among the participants and between the participants and the facilitators, which he labelled as "the establishment of the 'asylum'" (p. 256). Within this emotionally safe treatment atmosphere men were able to engage in the 'talk-share-common ground' process, which helped them to re-humanise themselves, to recognise how their behaviours have been abusive, and to accept responsibility to change these behaviours to more co-equal patterns. Without the mutual respect of the asylum, men would feel more isolated and be more likely to respond with defensiveness.

Edmiston (2005) undertook an interpretative, qualitative study, to identify causes for and processes of change in IPV perpetration by examining the content of interviews with 10 formerly abusive men who self-reported ideological change in their view of women and abuse, and had sustained non-abusive behaviour towards women for at least one year. The purpose of this study was to examine how formerly abusive men learn to become nonabusive, and what kind of ideological changes in their understanding of abuse, women, and the tenets of patriarchy have resulted in the cessation of the abusive behaviours. She sought to examine abuse as an ideology; ideological change from abuse, involving the context, provocation and mechanism for ideological change; and whether transformative learning theories are an appropriate framework for ideological change in abusive men.

The results of the study by Edmiston (2005) showed similar incidents had preceded change for all the participants, including episodes of intense IPV, being confronted by their abuse in varied ways and overt action (such as leaving) on the part of the partner, all of which resulted in feelings of loss or aloneness. Mechanisms for change included participation in an abuse prevention program, finding support and acceptance from

someone who assisted them in the change process (primarily a staff member of the abuse intervention programme) and engaging in critical reflection of previously held beliefs. One participant reported encounters with spiritual and religious experiences being significant in affecting change. Behavioural changes were also similar with the majority being able to articulate a complete acceptance of responsibility for their actions, a sense of awakening or being more open to others, and a greater ability to reflect on, recognise and understand their feelings, including an awareness of the depth of hurt and pain they had caused. Benefits resulting from these changes included the satisfaction of seeing themselves as better people than before, improved relationship communication, better connections with their children, while some abstained from alcohol consumption and several became active in helping other men through working in intervention programs.

Four men and three of the female partners were interviewed about their experiences and perspectives to determine how they had succeeded in changing their battering behaviours. In the study by Southers (1999) all of the men had completed a 24 week violence intervention programme and then maintained physical nonviolence for at least 6 months. An ethnographic research methodology was utilised and the following major content themes were obtained from the experiences of the former batterers. They had (a) an increased levels of self-awareness and self-acceptance, (b) a decreased need to exert control over their female partners, (c) moved from feeling a lack of control of their angry behaviour to actively considering and making more suitable behavioural choices, (d) moved from attempting to deny their battering behaviour to becoming the nonviolent person they felt they were inside, (e) been raised in families who utilized physical punishment to discipline, (f) stated they were influenced by their family of origin, (g) drunk alcohol and used drugs during the period of time they were violent, (h) described being happier, safer and more cared about by their partners after completing violence intervention, (i) initially resisted violence intervention, became comfortable with the leader and others in the group, then participated actively in the program, and (j) experienced increased spirituality after violence intervention. The steps identified in moving from battering to non-battering were (a) being on automatic pilot, (b) gaining self-knowledge, (c) honestly assessing the self-knowledge, and (d) making the behavioural change.

Fenlason (2009) also undertook inquiry into couples with a history of intimate partner violence, with the aim of understanding better the nature of change from the couple's perspective. Using a qualitative, grounded theory approach he interviewed 7 heterosexual couples who had experienced IPV in the relationship, had received an intervention and/or support services specifically addressing this violence (including individual and/or relational), and had been free of physical violence for more than a year. He noted that all had shown some positive change in IPV (over a period between 1.5 and 13 years), with some making significant change after approximately 20 years in

the process, but that all were still in the process of change. This highlights the study's first point of significance, which was how change is seen as a process, not an event and was non-linear, but rather went through periods of progress and setback, and for almost all the couples included times of separation. These times of separation often marked the need to return to earlier stages in the model that Fenlason devised, where individual work needed to be undertaken. The second is how a driving force is required to propel a person through the change process. All the couples had Protestant Christian beliefs which strongly influenced them all to stay committed to the relationship and to change.

The third was that separation was the critical event to initiate the beginning stages of the change process, and for several couples, separation happened multiple times. This occurred due to the woman or an external authority (law enforcement, counsellor, community leader or committed friend) either instigating separation or threatening to do so if the man did not immediately seek help and start to make significant changes. Fenlason (2009) notes that all of the couples saw the time of separation as an important stage in the change process, often marking the need to return to earlier stages in the model that Fenlason devised (described below), where individual work needed to be undertaken and with uncertainty of reconciliation being important in motivating positive change.

The data analysis process that Fenlason undertook culminated in a 5 stage model to describe the change process of the perpetrators which he named the Change Model of Intimate Partner Violence (CMIPV). The CMIPV as number of similarities to the TTM, with both models showing change as a process rather than an event, both have clearly defined stages that are presented in linear, successive fashion but understood to be more cyclical, and both accept the change is a process of successes and setbacks, with change involving learning from the failures. The CMIPV stages are: wake up and listening, gaining awareness and understanding, caring and responding, becoming safe in relationship, and communication/conflict resolution. These compare the TTM stages of: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. The comparison of processes between CMIPV and TTM is that CMIPV processes include: conceptualising a driving force (beliefs and commitments), conditions (internal attitudes and external intervention) and 3 domains of change (self, other, and relational) whereas TTM categorises experiential and behavioural processes (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986).

A study by Bonham and Vetere (2012) aimed to explore both men's and women's understandings of successful remediation of the violence in their relationship. The factors of particular interest included what the men and women perceived to have led to the cessation of violence and what kept them together and continue to do so, despite any concerns that IPV may re-occur. 6 British couples were interviewed

separately about their experiences of the IPV that occurred, their understanding of why it stopped and what effect this now had for them in the relationship. The interviews took place before and after the man attended a Duluth model therapeutic intervention and were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

For the 6 couples the main initial prompt for the IPV to stop came when the woman insisted the man sought help for violent behaviour. Attending the therapeutic intervention brought attention to the seriousness of the violence which supported motivation to stop. This was further supported by both men and women becoming reflective on their experiences of previous violence, subsequent violence in the relationship and the connections between them. The men found the intervention programme a helpful first step in dealing with their struggle to manage the intensity of feelings that provoked the violence but it did little to help them understand the roots of the violence, which the couples felt was imperative to prevent further violence erupting. Some began to recognise the existence of violence in society and the potential in their own environments. Attachment processes could be seen in some cases where feelings of abandonment were replaced by feelings of belonging, highlighting the paradox between the familiarity of violence and the need for a secure base. This recognition of having experienced unsatisfactory nurturing from their parents led many of the men to want to explore their feelings further.

In New Zealand Ruwhiu et al. (2009) undertook research to explore how Tane Maori (men) become and remain free from violence within their homes and community through korero (conversations) with 20 Tane Maori (selected by Wahine Maori; partners or service organisations who viewed these men as Safe Tane Maori) and 7 Wahine Maori (women; partners and immediate whanau (family) of these Tane Maori). 7 key themes emerged from the interviews about the transformative journey: seeing the pain (being motivated by feeling the loss or separation from loved ones), touching the heart and clearing the mind (challenging logical thinking patterns which maintained violence in the home), Wairuatanga – a 'God and I' moment (connecting to spirituality through engaging with religion, whakapapa (geneology), whenua (place) and/or identity), one does count (family members, close friends or respected associates who assisted stopping and maintaining nonviolence), establishing new boundaries (engaging with family and friends who support nonviolence, disengaging with those who don't, attending men's groups and/or transformative training workshops), healing in service (giving back to those they had abused, the whanau and wider communities), and healing and remembrance in Te Ao Turoa (environment) (being part of the land).

Morran (2013) undertook a study focused on what processes and experiences might be involved for men who had completed IPV perpetrator programmes, acknowledged their violence and abuse, and through gaining supportive evidence from agencies or

partners, could be described as nonviolent. He interviewed 11 men and concluded that the desistance process requires a developing sense of self-awareness; continual attention to self-monitoring and regulation; the availability of opportunities for engagement in generativity and alternative networks, priorities and activities, along with the desire to utilise these and most importantly, the ability to seek and receive guidance and support to sustain the desistance process, possibly over several years, as desistance is best understood as a process and not an outcome.

The review of the extant research literature examining men's desistance from IPV perpetration shows that quantitative studies have limited success in identifying the processes involved in men's desistance. The recognition of these limitations has led to a number of qualitative studies, many of which have utilised men's narratives of their experience, and a few that have also engaged partners of the male participants to gain their perspective on the transformation to IPV free relationships. Some progress has been made in the understanding of how men cease their perpetration of IPV and what men find helpful to make this change. However, research into desistance from IPV perpetration is still limited and in order to gain the evidence required to support interventions that successfully decrease/eliminate this serious health and social issue, further investigation is required. In light of the need to improve our understanding of IPV desistance, the current research project was undertaken, utilising a qualitative research approach outlined in the methodology chapter that follows.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This research project evolved out of the recognition that a better understanding of the IPV desistance process for men is required to support evidence-based interventions to decrease/eliminate IPV in our society. When researching this topic it became evident how few studies focused on men's desistance from intimate partner violence (IPV) and that there were even fewer where this research explored men's knowledge about their experience of change or desistance from IPV. This chapter will outline the rationale for utilising a qualitative research methodology and in particular interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), reflexivity and my role as the researcher and the project design and methods. It concludes with a table of themes that resulted from the analysis.

Traditionally research in the social sciences and in general has been quantitative, being based on the empirical, epistemological assumptions that all objects of study can be controlled, quantified, categorised and manipulated in order to uncover relationships between cause and effect (Punch, 2013). This is also true with research into IPV. A considerable number of research projects, have outlined quantitative research on recidivism, or evaluating the effectiveness of stopping violence programs and other treatments, or aim to test hypotheses for the mechanisms for men's violence. In the area of Change Process research (CPR) the traditional mode of understanding assumed to operate "has been realist and causal in nature, as revealed by the use of implicit physicalist metaphors such as 'change mechanisms' (change process as machine) and 'effective ingredients' (a pharmaceutical metaphor)" (Elliott, 2012, p. 70). Elliott goes on to state that quantitative process outcome research designs are often inadequate for understanding the complex and nuanced process of change and that qualitative discovery-oriented methods are especially appropriate here.

There has been a movement in recent years towards the qualitative style of research in areas such as health, criminology, sociology and psychology (Smith, 2004); all areas of research into which IPV may fall. Qualitative research provides a paradigm which is process oriented and assumes that there are multiple and dynamic realities which are contextual, where the data precedes the theory, where the researcher is an instrument and works with the research participant, and that the experiences and understandings of the subjects are at least as valid as those of any experts, in the field of study. This has parallels with an increasing focus in psychological, health and associated areas, to acknowledge and incorporate the experience of consumers, when producing knowledge and identifying more appropriate and effective practices in these fields.

As shown in the literature review there is only a small number of studies that have explored or give an understanding of the lived process of men desisting from IPV. It is rare within IPV research to hear from the men themselves. More often the men are the objects of the research rather than being actively involved where their knowledge is taken into account. Instead the researcher is seen as the expert. The aim of this project is to return to the experience of those men who have lived through first, using intimate partner violence, then making steps to reduce this violence or to stop it completely and lastly to maintain a “violence free” lifestyle. A methodology was sought that would value and give precedence to the men themselves as the experts in their own process and which did not start from assumptions, theories or hypotheses that were to be tested, but rather from the men’s stories.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen as it makes a commitment to give voice to the participant’s ‘lived experience’ whilst being coupled with a subjective and reflective process of interpretation in which the researcher explicitly enters into the research process (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). This allows me to use the experience and knowledge I have gained both personally and professionally to interpret their accounts in a manner that stays respectful to the men’s lived experience.

IPA has increased in its significance and contribution to social science research since its inception in 1996 (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith, 2011). This has been evident with research in the area of change and violent or abusive behaviour, covering young and adult violent offenders, convicted sexual offenders, experiences of anger and aggression, and domestic violence from both perpetrator and victim perspectives (Aresti, Eatough, & Brooks-Gordon, 2010; Blagden, Winder, Thorne, & Gregson, 2011; Bonham & Vetere, 2012; Eatough & Smith, 2006; Eatough, Smith, & Shaw, 2008; Evans, Ehlers, Mezey, & Clark, 2007; Reynolds & Shepherd, 2011; Swanston, Bowyer, & Vetere, 2014). IPA has also been utilised to examine addiction cessation and recovery (Rodriguez & Smith, 2014; Shinebourne & Smith, 2011a, 2011b; Vangeli & West, 2012; Watson & Parke, 2011).

The central concern for researchers using IPA is the meanings that individuals ascribe to events and it is not used to attempt to test any predetermined hypotheses (Harper & Thompson, 2011, p. 101). Smith (2004) suggests that whilst the analysis is informed by a general psychological interest, it should not be invoking ‘a specific pre-existing formal theoretical position’ (p. 45). This allows for the focus to be on the self as a meaning making agent following a particular experience, in this case the process of change in the use of IPV.

The epistemology of IPA is interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology. “Key interests are a person’s relatedness to the world and those things that matter to them through the meanings that they make” (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, p. 102). It is based on a number of assumptions: in order to understand the world, an understanding of experience is required; the participants in the research are ‘always-already’ immersed in a relational, physical, cultural and linguistic world and in order to focus on a particular experience in detail an idiographic approach is necessary; that a process of inter-subjective meaning making is utilised to access a person’s experience in their account; and for researchers to engage with the participant’s experience and views they need to be able to identify and reflect upon their own assumptions and experience. Along with this is an acknowledgement that long-term pro-social change comes more from respecting and utilising people’s intrinsic motivations than by forcing change upon them.

The historical origins and influences of IPA begin in Phenomenology. Phenomenology is the philosophical study of ‘Being’, of existence and experience. Phenomenology identifies our perception of the world as coming from our engagement in it and its meaning is a function of our relationship to the world, i.e. inter-subjective. It can be considered as a personalised variant of social constructionism, in that it is concerned with how a person makes meaning of their own experiences, what happens to them (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

The foremost concern of Phenomenological Psychology is with understanding people’s lived experience of the world (Langdrige, 2007). It gives attention to meaning and how meaning arises in experience with a focus on description and relationships rather than interpretation and causality. The role of the researcher is recognised in the co-construction of the topic being investigated, as is the understanding that experience must be considered within a context (historical, personal and cultural).

There have been two important historical phases in phenomenology: the transcendental and the hermeneutic or existential. The transcendental phenomenology of Husserl (1931) aimed to reduce our understanding of any given experience back to its essential core structures. His phenomenology was about identifying and suspending our assumptions from culture, context, history, etc. through a process called ‘epoché or bracketing’, in order to get at the universal essence of a given phenomenon, as it presents itself to consciousness. This process entailed placing to one side our own views and assumptions in order to experience the event in its pure form. In this way it aimed to transcend our everyday assumptions. These concepts have been influential in the more ‘descriptive’ forms of phenomenological psychology.

IPA combines this ‘descriptive’ process with the key conceptual criteria of hermeneutic phenomenology and ideography. It is concerned with meaning and process rather than

events and their causes. Meaning making is focussed at the level of the person-in-context. The IPA researcher focuses firstly on the meaning of an experience e.g. a relationship, event or process, to a given participant and recognition of the significance for that person. This focus on the particular rather than the general illustrates IPA's commitment to an idiographic level of analysis (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

IPA does not aim for transcendent knowledge. It draws upon the later adaptations of phenomenology developed notably by Heidegger (1927/1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962). They suggest that we can never make Husserl's 'reduction' to the abstract, because we are making these observations from somewhere. They emphasise that phenomenological enquiry is a situated enterprise. Heidegger sees persons as completely entangled in the world and in relationships with others to be inseparable (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, p. 102) and Merleau-Ponty adds that we are always embodied too. Our perceptions are therefore shaped by these facts. This position is commonly called hermeneutic phenomenology to emphasise that, although it may aim for description, it can only ever be interpretive in its implementation. In IPA there is a two-stage interpretative process (Smith & Eatough, 2007) or a 'double hermeneutic', where the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their experience (Smith, 2011, p. 10).

Reflexivity and Role of the Researcher

In contrast to quantitative research, where the researcher makes considerable effort to maintain distance and objectivity, in IPA it is considered desirable for the researcher to have a degree of closeness to the subject or subject group (Smith et al., 2009). This gives the researcher an insider perspective. It is also seen as important that the researcher has an outsider or expert perspective so that they can use their own conceptions in the interpretative process. Brocki and Wearden (2006) note that an important facet of IPA is for analysts to explicitly recognise the theoretical preconceptions they bring to the data and their role in interpretation. In order to assist the reader of the research to trace the analytic process they state: "perhaps including more acknowledgement of analysts' preconceptions and beliefs and reflexivity might increase transparency and even enhance the account's rhetorical power" (p. 101).

Langdridge (2007) outlines a number of reflexive questions to be utilised throughout the research project. I have found that reflecting on these questions at different times in the project, alongside the use of journaling, has been beneficial to the interpretative process. For this reason I include here a summary of my reflections.

My interest in Family Violence research is both professional and personal. I grew up in a household that revolved around surviving an unpredictable world dominated by the actions of my violent and abusive alcoholic father. I experienced the fear, shame and harm caused to my mother, brother, sister and myself by violence and abuse

perpetrated by a parent and husband to my mother. As much as I wished to never be like my father I proceeded to act the same way in a number of my own relationships. Stopping my own use of violence and abuse and dealing with its effects on myself have been major components in my life. This has taken me through many years of psychotherapy, self-help groups including Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics, and various men's support groups and led to my first contact with family violence work.

Early in 1987 I joined a small group of men who wished to stop using Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). This was in London, England when Living Without Violence (LWV) programmes were rare. We supported each other to explore our use of IPV and how to make change. Our work together developed into the Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP), which provided programmes for male IPV perpetrators and a women's programme for those who had experienced IPV. I continued working with the project until the end of 1996, when I returned to New Zealand. In NZ I facilitated LWV programmes with Man Alive in Auckland from 1997 to 2003 and from 1999 to 2003 also worked with children and adolescents in the Family Violence team at Waitakere Abuse and Trauma Counselling Service. Since then I have continued to work in this area as a supervisor of facilitators of LWVP and consultant for these programmes.

Alongside this work I trained in London as a Psychotherapist and Counsellor, began a private practice in counselling and more recently have supervised counsellors, both practicing and in training. For the past five years I have also lectured in the Counselling Programme at Manukau Institute of Technology.

Over the years I have come into contact with a range of philosophical and theoretical perspectives to work with men who perpetrate IPV. My initial experience at DVIP included using a combination of the Duluth (Pence & Paymar, 1983) and San Francisco Man Alive (Hamish Sinclair, 1987) programmes. Both of these models use a feminist framework and gendered analysis of power that challenges the patriarchal attitudes and beliefs of men who condone IPV. Alongside this my psychotherapy and counselling training has brought me into contact with a variety of therapeutic approaches, including Gestalt therapy, Client Centred therapy, Cognitive Behavioural therapy, Metaframeworks family therapy and Emotionally Focussed therapy. In New Zealand the Man Alive programme employs a strength based approach incorporating exploration of power and control, sex role socialisation, hurt and shame/whakamaa, and utilises cognitive approaches, skill training, family systems theory and trauma-based approaches (Man Alive, 2011).

My belief is that when working with the issue of eliminating IPV perpetration, whilst holding firm to the use of violence being unacceptable, the person's reality must be acknowledged, and that any theoretical approach must always be considered within the context of the person's experience. It is therefore more relevant to utilise a

theoretical perspective that works to support a person's change process rather than try and fit the person into the theory.

When looking for a research project I had a number of possibilities in mind and one in particular that I intended to proceed with. However, I changed my mind when, as noted previously, I discovered the dearth of research on IPV desistance that has a focus on learning from the experience of men. This I felt more passion for, for a number of reasons. Primarily I think my passion comes from my own experience of having a lived experience of desisting from violence and recognising how difficult making this shift is. I had decided that, I never wanted to be like my father and use violence towards my partner, but I used it all the same. I knew that it was wrong to use violence and that it was harming the ones that I loved. But this was not enough to help me to stop using IPV. My experience was that the process of desisting from IPV consisted of a number of turning points that included interactions with people that made the difference between living the life I live now and one where I could as easily have been in prison.

But even recognising how my life could have gone in a very different direction has come from reflecting back over my life. I have also had the experience of working with men to help desist from using IPV. My attitudes within this work have changed over time. I know a time when I acted like the policeman counsellor, who held men very closely to being responsible for their actions, to the point that I stopped seeing them as being humans who are doing the best they know how according to their life experience. My attitudes and actions were motivated by my own feelings of guilt and shame for the actions that I perpetrated and ongoing feelings of powerlessness to rid myself of my own motivators to violence. Over time I found that holding a person centred approach, where I show respect and acceptance of the men is both far more effective in helping to guide them to a better future but also is better for my own health. I have experienced a parallel journey where I have learned to show respect and dignity to those men I worked with and to myself.

Undertaking this research has been an emotional rollercoaster for me. It brings me face-to-face again with my past abusive actions and also with what might have been if I had not experienced the conditioning I had. It has been challenging to recognising that if I had experienced a different life history, free of the violence and trauma that occurred, this could have meant not only living an IPV free lifestyle, but also a more fulfilling life in general. This comes through with some of the stories the men have shared with me. This is however not a plea to feel sorry for myself or other men, but rather to keep the perspective that men who use IPV are still people, and people who are more often than not doing the best they can, with what they have been given. It has been important for me to keep this idea in mind during the research, by staying empathetic to each man's experience, whilst also keeping vigilant to evaluate each

man's understanding of desistance and the level of desistance they had attained. More and more I see how luck plays a large part in how a person's life unfolds and that for many people who do not perpetrate IPV, they are the recipients of the saying "there for the grace of God go I". What came through during this project is how everyone in society can help to improve people's chances of leading IPV free lives.

Larkin et al. (2006) state "it is not actually possible – even if it might be desirable – to remove ourselves, our thoughts and meaning systems from the world, in order to find out how things 'really are 'in some definitive sense" (p.106). They go on to state that it is not the experience that is being explored and analysed, for example love, but rather this person experiencing love. So here I am not looking to give the definitive experience of desisting from violence, but rather each man's experience of desisting from violence, which will have similarities and differences to other men, including myself. I believe having this experience in this area positions me well to undertake this research.

Project Design and Methods

Introduction

In looking to interview men who have desisted from intimate partner violence I first had conversations with the living without violence (LWV) agency that I have been involved with for the last 15 years. When I spoke to the facilitators and program coordinators, in particular the clinical manager, they were enthusiastic about supporting research in this area. In order to obtain a range of participants, who come from different demographics, I also approached a second LWV programme. Although they had some concerns about having the time and resources available, the overriding desire to support this particular research meant that they found a way to participate that did not stretch them. An agreement form was written up for both agencies to sign (see Appendix 1). Difficulties in sending out invitations transpired for the agencies once the ethics proposal had been accepted. Financial cuts and the fact that one of the agencies was supporting a larger research project into family violence meant that both agencies were spread thin for workers. I must add this was not due to a lack of desire or will on the part of these agencies, which I appreciate, as they did all in their power to continue their support.

Ethical Considerations

Undertaking research in the area of domestic violence should involve increased awareness and provision for confidentiality and safety. Understandably there is concern for women and children who have become and/or could become the victims of domestic violence. This is one of the reasons that most research is aimed at

identifying the prevalence and destructive effects of domestic violence, in order that the justified attention is given to such a serious issue.

One concern in doing research with men who have used IPV is the safety of their present or past partner and children. This can be relevant when trying to ascertain whether the man is continuing to use violence, as the most reliable witnesses are usually the partner and children. It was not the intention of this project to find evidence that men were violence free, especially as this would entail a more extensive process to ensure the safety of partners and children. Instead this project utilises men who testify to being at least 6 months violence free in their present relationship, with the meaning the participants give to 'violence free' becoming part of the analysis and discussion. Partners were not engaged or questioned in any way in order to not put their safety at risk.

Participating in an interview where you explore your own use and experience of violence, will bring up uncomfortable feelings. All participants were informed of this possibility and actions taken to reduce this discomfort for example being able to pass on any questions, stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time (up to 2 months following the interview). Time was scheduled after the interview to address any upset or distress and the participants made aware of the counselling services available at the agency and support services such as Lifeline. Consideration was also taken for the possibility that the participant may disclose intentions to harm themselves or others. Action that might be taken in this situation, for example contacting the police or crisis intervention team, and the reasons that confidentiality would be broken were spoken about and written into the client information sheet (see Appendix 2).

Although the issue of a participant's use of violence is being discussed, physical risk of harm to the researcher was not anticipated, as in over 20 years of experience in the field the researcher has never come to any physical harm. However, safety precautions were taken. These included the interview taking place in a LWV agency or place agreeable to participant and researcher where there are people available to be called upon quickly if help is required. Also the cell phone number used was specifically available for the research only and the email address given was the researcher's Massey email and not a personal email.

Living and doing research in New Zealand is always important to consider ethical issues regarding Maori. Kūkupa Tirikatene (Kaiākau at Manukau Institute of Technology) was consulted as to the involvement of Māori in the research process. It was agreed that, given the small size of the sample to be involved in this study, that ethnicity should not form the basis of analysis. Should Māori participants be recruited for the project he will be available to provide cultural advice and support. Papa Fred Holloway (Kaumatua for Man Alive) also gave his verbal agreement to be available to provide cultural advice

and support. The facilitators of the Man Alive Maori programme, Te Ara Taumata Ora, were also consulted (see Appendix 3).

As the participants came from only two agencies they were informed of the potential limitations in regard to the guarantee of confidentiality and this was included in the Information Sheet (appendix 2). All participants were given a pseudonym in the transcript, which was used throughout the research. All other identifying details such as names of partner, children etc., were obscured during transcription. The participants were given the option of receiving a copy of the transcript and making any changes, including identifying details, if they wished. Once they were satisfied that the transcript was acceptable they signed the Authority for the Release of Transcripts (see Appendix 4).

For security, all data was stored in a password protected memory stick and all audiotapes and consent forms were kept in a locked filing cabinet until all recorded material was transcribed at which point audiotapes were wiped. Data will be held for a period of five years (with exception of audiotapes as described above) and will be deleted or disposed via a confidentially secure processes available at Massey University.

The Massey University Human Ethics Committee approved the procedures for recruitment and data collection under Southern B Application 13/41.

The Participants

Using IPA requires that detailed and rich data are taken from small numbers of cases, in order that they can be adequately situated, described, and interpreted, usually with 5 -10 participants (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011; Larkin et al., 2006; Smith, 2007). Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) suggest having between three and six participants for an undergraduate or master's level IPA study. A consideration in the interview process was that participants may present as having perpetrated violence in the last 6 months even though they had not identified this prior to the interview beginning. For these reasons the intention was to recruit between 6 and 10 participants. Six participant interviews were utilised in the analysis.

To be eligible to take part in the study, participants were required to have used IPV historically and to testify to being violence free in their present relationship for at least six months. Other criteria for selection included having sufficient proficiency in English to discuss and describe their change process.

Participants were recruited through two Living Without Violence (LWV) agencies in Auckland. These agencies identified potential participants and sent a letter of invitation (see Appendix 5) to them along with a covering note outlining the agencies support for the research. I was not given any names or addresses directly. Those

potential participants, who wished to proceed, contacted me by email or by text. I then contacted them and the project was clarified, any questions answered to ensure they were fully informed and the place and time for meeting arranged. At the meeting the potential participant was given the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 2) to read and any questions answered to ensure full understanding before the Participant Consent Form (see Appendix 6) was signed.

Seven men responded to this letter. During the resulting conversation it became evident that one of the men did not fit the criteria of being violence free for at least six months in a relationship. This was discussed with him and he did not become a participant.

In order to protect the privacy of the participants, information given about them has been generalised to help protect their identities. Six men were interviewed. They ranged in age from their early 30s to mid-50s and had been in their present relationship for between 4 and 37 years. One man had separated 4 months prior to recruitment. All of them testified to being violence free for at least 6 months, with 5 participants reporting being free of physical violence for between 4 and 24 years. One of the men had not used physical violence in his relationship but acknowledged a period of psychological abuse that occurred 11 to 12 years ago. The participant who had been separated from his partner for 4 months, testified to being physically violence free for over 6 months, but uncertain whether he had been abusive approximately 3 months before the relationship ended, as he was drunk at the time and although he had asked about what happened, the two people present had not confirmed to him what he had done. This uncertainty is taken into consideration in the analysis.

Two of the men identify as NZ Pakeha, two as Pacific Island (with one having a parent of North American descent) and two as European. One of the men had no children, 3 had one child (with 1 man also being a care-giver to 3 of his partner's children), one had 2 children (with 6 grandchildren) and 1 had 6 children.

Data Collection

As is typical for IPA research, verbatim transcripts of a first-person account were required and semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were used to gather the men's accounts (Smith et al., 2009). This format allows for an opportunity for the researcher to establish rapport with the participant, provides space for the participant to follow topics that they see as important, and gives the opportunity to ask more in-depth questions. A list of questions was generated prior to Ethics approval, all with the aim of aiding the participant to tell their story (see Appendix 7). These include questions such as: What is your experience of using violence towards your partner(s)? What is your experience of stopping using violence towards your partner(s)? What and who helped

you make this change? What and who didn't help or got in the way of you making these changes?

I suggested to the participants that we meet for the interview at the LWV agency that they were connected to, as they were already familiar with the place. Five of the participants agreed to this and one other was interviewed at an alternative agency, which was more convenient for them.

Prior to starting each interview I spent time with the participants going over and clarifying information sheet and consent form, and chose a pseudonym that would be used for the research. I also spent some time in general conversation to help the participant feel more comfortable. As a researcher my intention was to stay neutral and facilitative. Recognising that this is impossible to do completely, I attempted to stay mindful of my own expectations, assumptions and interpretations in order to keep any questions open and exploratory and my body language and tone in order to not give preference to particular avenues of experience and meaning. In this way I engaged with the participant to capture an account that was rich, detailed and reflective, with a focus on exploring meanings rather than collecting facts.

The interviews took between 60 to 90 minutes to complete. At completion, time was taken to talk informally and to ensure the participant was not distressed before leaving. I later transcribed the audio recordings word for word.

Data Analysis

The aim of using IPA was to identify what matters to the participants as is shown through their narratives. This is achieved through a sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation. The analysis process, as outlined by Larkin and Thompson (2012), was followed.

Reading and Rereading

The first step was to immerse myself in the participant's original narrative, one at a time. This involved reading and rereading the transcript. Initially I listened to the audio recording at the same time, which reminded me of the tone the participant used, including pauses, hesitations and emphases in the narrative. At the second reading I began a process termed by Larkin and Thompson (2012, p. 106) as 'free' or 'open' coding. I wrote notes, which included my own emotional reactions to the participant and their story; initial ideas about possible themes; metaphors and imagery that took my tension; and any psychological concepts that came to mind. The aim here was to get initial ideas down, without concern for accuracy, before proceeding on to a more systematic and consistent focus. This process helped me to stay open minded to my own assumptions and biases, to reflect on these in my aim to minimise their impact.

These notes were processed through reflexive journaling, supervision and peer discussions.

Close, Line by Line Analysis (Coding)

The transcript was then analysed line by line noting in one column 'objects of concern' (areas that matter to the participant e.g. values, relationships, events, etc), and the linguistic and narrative clues to their meaning, 'experiential claims'. Possible interpretations began to be generated which I aimed to keep close to the data, through staying with the original language and reflective on my own potential parallel process.

Identification of Emerging Themes

A second column was now used for identifying emerging patterns and commonalities (themes). Succinct phrases that the participant had used were underlined in the text alongside the theme, in order to be able to return to the participants own words. These phrases were then made into a chronological list. I examined this list and clustered together phrases with similar meanings to make themes. This was undertaken firstly for one participant and subsequently for the other five participants, noting phrases that fit into these themes and any new ones. 17 themes were identified.

Connecting Themes

The 17 themes identified were then compared to identify the relationship between them. Each cluster of themes was given a name, which produced five superordinate themes. The thematic structure of the results is shown in Table 1, Master table of themes, on page 42.

Introduction to Chapters Four to Eight: Analysis and Discussion of Themes

The following five chapters cover the analysis and discussion of the themes shown in Table 1, each chapter covering one superordinate theme. The analysis of the data brings together examples from the men's accounts, using their narrative to describe the events which they experienced as significant in desistance and the meanings they ascribed to these events. Understandings of their experiences did change for some of the men during the process of the interview. The connections that a participant made across the interview are included in the analysis along with connections and interpretations made by myself, through the process of reading and re-reading the transcripts and immersing myself in the literature. Each theme is then discussed in relation to the extant theory and research. A brief summary of historical factors the men related to their use of IPV and to the IPV that they perpetrated is given in Appendix 8.

Table 1: Master table of themes

Superordinate:	Sanctions
Subordinate:	Turning Points Incentives
Superordinate:	Acceptance and Support
Subordinate:	I'm OK, IPV is not OK I'm not alone Making the choice/autonomy
Superordinate:	Engaging
Subordinate:	Increasing Sensitivity and Emotional Awareness Affect regulation Critical Reflection Connecting to Values/Faith/Something Bigger Taking responsibility
Superordinate:	Becoming safe and respectful
Subordinate:	Using skills for respectful behaviour Experiencing being part of a team, group, "We" Setting boundaries in Relationships Making Lifestyle Changes
Superordinate:	Remaining safe and respectful
Subordinate:	Feedback and Making Amends Sharing the learning/Helping others It takes time and ongoing commitment

Chapter Four

Analysis and Discussion: Sanctions

This chapter covers an analysis of the superordinate theme of sanctions, including the subordinate themes of turning points and incentives. A discussion of the points raised by the analysis, in relation to extant theory and research, constitutes the final portion of the chapter.

Turning Points or Incentives

In analysing the data the theme of sanctions was identified in initiating the desistance process for the men, either in the form of a turning point or providing an incentive for deciding to stop. Turning points constituted some internal or external experience which led the man to feel sufficient loss that the pain of continuing to use violence and abuse was great enough for him to realise that this was a problem and some change in behaviour was needed. In contrast sanctions that acted as incentives did not have as strong an impact to cause a man to feel an immediate change of behaviour was required, but were important enough in order to support the initial call to change.

These sanctions came through a number of forms. Legal sanctions were in the form of arrest, conviction and/or imprisonment, protection orders, or child youth and family (CYF) investigations. Parental sanctions came in the form of possible loss of contact with children or image as a good dad. Social sanctions were in the form of possible loss of acceptance within society or social networks, loss of career or direction in life. Value sanctions took the form of recognising that his own actions were violent or abusive and the damaging effect that these were having conflicted with his image of himself or what he desired in life. Finally situational sanctions came in the form of moving place or unexpected events.

Three of the 6 participants experienced some form of legal sanction. David speaks very clearly of how the threat of being arrested and going to jail was a key factor to him stopping his violence:

“I think the order was, don’t get arrested, don’t want to go to jail, don’t want to hurt people who are nice to me, I want to be a better man, want to be a better partner or friend, that kind of stuff. I think the consequences, the jail thing, was a major thing that I was talking about, and there was a whole list of things that also supported me to be nicer.”

What is of particular significance here is that the threat of being arrested and going to jail made an impact once he was in New Zealand but didn’t when he was overseas. David reported that when he arrived in New Zealand he made the decision to stop

what he called, the serious violence. At the time he used the rationale that many men who perpetrate IPV use,

“as long as I don’t put my hands on you it’s okay. I thought I was doing a good thing; at least I’m not putting my hands on you, punching you. So I guess I was justifying, this is way better than grabbing you, so even though I’m being verbally or emotionally abusive, at least I’m not putting my hands on you. So that’s how I kinda, I was choosing to see it, in my mind the lesser of two evils.”

Overseas he had lived a double life between studying at university and being engaged in gang life. Being involved in gang life meant continuing to portray himself as tough and intimidating, so using violence and even taking the consequences of jail would have been considered normal. He had been arrested a number of times and received short sentences of incarceration, but this had little impact at the time on motivating desistance:

“Yeah, so looking back on it now, I mean I’m lucky, I could have easily have fallen over the edge and gone the other way, but for some reason I just kept making some good choices at key moments and so I never did go to jail, for long periods of time. It was just County jail for short periods of time.”

David considered that he stayed out of long-term jail through his good management. There was however a particular factor that appears to have made the difference in how David viewed the prospect of being arrested and imprisoned. Overseas when he had been arrested for IPV and other activities, including male to male violence, he had a number of people looking out for him, protecting him from the impact of the violence he used, including partners, friends, lawyers and even judges. These people would see the potential in David to be a role model, as a man of colour coming from a gang environment, transitioning to socially acceptable achievements. If David had received a criminal record this would have stopped his chances of advancing, and for this reason judge(s) were lenient with him. The fact that he was being violent towards women was overlooked in favour of his potential, which taught David that he could just continue the way he was, with little consequence, and no need for him to make changes. In contrast when he came to New Zealand, he didn’t have these people to protect him from legal sanctions, but rather would have faced greater consequences if he was arrested and prosecuted. These consequences the form of not gaining residency and possibly, as a Pacific Island man, the shame it would bring on his family in New Zealand, particularly his mother who he had come to visit.

For James being arrested and convicted for IPV appears to have both helped and hindered his progress in his desistance process. It led to him attending his second LWVP after violence towards his first wife and third LWVP due to violence towards his ex-partner. He was directed to his first LWVP by his employer for aggressive behaviour

at work and is still left with some sense of injustice and resentment at this, as even after completing it he was still fired from his employment. His willingness to engage in the second programme may well have been impeded due to him losing the financial security he had at the time and contact with his son, which after 6 years he has still not regained. Being arrested and convicted before his third programme did leave him with feelings of resentment that hindered his process of deepening and sustaining his desistance from IPV after the completion of the programme:

“You know, and I guess it’s that fuckin’ trying to push the blame thing and that I wouldn’t have ended up with another criminal charge if she hadda listened to me, I wouldn’t fuckin’, blah blah blah, because what happened there has, put a big hurdle in, block where I wanna go in life……. Cos it wasn’t just straight fuckin assault, it was something way worse. This fuckin serious thing that I ended up getting done for, over something that could have been avoided, if we had of been the adults. You know, if the adults had been the adults and not let the children be the adult. So I’ve always had a thing. That was always a problem for me.”

It is evident that James continues to blame his partner for her actions, which he is aware of and struggles to put aside, but he finds this difficult due to experiencing the ongoing effects of the criminal charges he received. It appears that his resentment is not about the police being called, as it was the police who laid charges and not his partner, but rather with his partner for not agreeing with his opinion on parenting and his subsequent use of violence to put her ‘right’. He continues to feel the effect, to this day, that having a criminal record has on him fulfilling his desire to be a responsible and respectable member of society and parent. James understands this resentment to be behind him not progressing to being fully safe and respectful. As with most of the men’s motivations there are other influencing circumstances here, in the form of James’s resentment at being placed second in relation to his partner’s children, to whom he is not the biological father.

The other man to experience legal sanctions was Frank. He decided to attend his third LWVP after being violent to his second wife, who signed an affidavit stating that he had exposed his daughter to domestic violence. This led to an investigation by CYF and the possible loss of parental access to his daughter. Attendance of an LWVP was recommended by his solicitor, which Frank complied with to gain favourable reception in court.

The reason for legal sanctions having such an impact on Frank was a potential loss of identity for him as a father:

“the first day, I was glad I was here, but, because I was going to get to see my daughter again, um but, I was, that was the motivating tool for me for being here.”

Frank was motivated to return to attending the LWVP primarily to regain contact with his daughter. James also told of his identity as a father being significant for him. Although incarceration or seriously harming someone was a concern for them, the impact this would have on contact with their children (for both, a child from a previous marriage) and the loss of their value as a dad was the greater motivation, as James says:

"I guess it's time. Back when I was growing up, I'd give a bit of lip. It's not socially acceptable anymore. And if you want to be part of society you've got to live within society's rules. Don't you.....I don't want to be a criminal with police knocking on the door every other week. I want to be a good role model for my son. I want to provide for him. I want to be able to take him places and do things for him. You can't do that with a criminal record. Well you can't do that. I don't want to be that end of society; I want to be this end. That's my motivation."

All of the men interviewed experienced some form of parental sanction, where they felt some motivation to change when they reflected on how they wanted to be seen as a father. For James and Frank this acted as a turning point to their use of IPV, whereas for the other men it acted as an incentive to continue desisting and adopt respectful behaviour. As John says:

"the kids are growing up, on their, they are teenage and my son married and also I realised, if I continue to do the same thing to my children I'll be expecting, what will be the same result and ah, I had to change the way, I, ah, in my life, how I approach my children and my wife, because if the past like 20 years, you know, on and out And I realise the time that I waste on the abuse, that I damage my family on it, so, yes I just wanna, to make a change".

John was very grateful that it wasn't too late to make a change, to create a positive effect on his family. For David having a daughter was the turning point for making changes to his behaviour and attitudes towards women. His partner at the time became pregnant, and although he didn't wish for her to keep the child, she decided to go through with having the baby. Unlike his previous experiences overseas, where undesired pregnancies with partners had been terminated due to pressure he brought to bear on those women; he was now left to account for his decision about whether to become involved with the parenting. He decided he wanted to be involved, because he didn't want to be like his father, who had not been around and made little impact on him. So he became a single dad, sharing childcare with the child's mum, but deciding not to stay together as a couple. Actively caring for his young daughter and recognising that she looked up to him for guidance, led to him fantasising or daydreaming about how she would be as an adult and how he would influence that:

“so I thought that um, what kind of guy would, if she grows up what kind of guy would she be attracted to, someone like her dad, who’s a jerk and a dick or someone who’s really nice who was respectful and was not abusive.”

He was confronted by the prospect that his abusive behaviour could lead to his daughter experiencing abuse from a partner, as an adult and was motivated to reflect on his attitudes towards women, and how they had developed:

“She’s my first child, but before I was justcause I remember my mum said, don’t, don’t have any girlfriends until you finish school. That was drilled into my head, so that’s why I always thought I’m never going to get married, I’m going to have fun, try and do school, but was distracted by other stuff. And so this is the first time I’ve ever actually said I’m going to be there for my daughter. And it really started to hit home when I started to look at all the stuff, challenging all my attitudes I have around women and I have a little woman right here, a daughter. And so, would I want somebody else to do stuff to her, like I did to other people, other women and yet the answer is no. So I really had to start thinking about what kind of man or role model I’d like to be for her.”

It is evident here that David’s beliefs around women, and his attitudes towards relationships with women, began to be questioned, due to him becoming the father of a girl. This was no easy task for him, as it meant facing up to the impact of his actions towards women, and the damage that he had caused. He was also questioning attitudes that he had gained from his mother, who he spoke about as being very important to him.

For Barry an incentive for him progressing with desistance was the possible sanction of losing his relationship and the people they both socialised with. When Barry reflected back on the time he was abusive towards his partner he recognised that the lack of sanctioning of his behaviour by his social group had effectively enabled him to continue to act abusively. Part of his journey of desistance was choosing a partner, and a social group that would hold him accountable for his behaviour. This had the effect of keeping himself vigilant of how he behaved:

“What am I going to do and like say, that was when I really started to focus very much on, well what do I need to do in the future, actually what do I want in a relationship, because I do want to be in a relationship, but I want to be in one where I’m, where someone actually holds me accountable for my behaviour. And that’s not me saying, I can do what I want and then someone tells me off and then I just bow down for a bit. And I hear this term bowing down, and I think its crap. You know but someone who says to me, you know what actually I’m not going to stick around if you behave like that..... She knew, we had lots of mutual friends as well. The situation was really

different. Suddenly there was a barometer to say, you can't treat this girl like shit cos you're going to lose all your friends if you do, you know."

Taking a very active stance to keep himself accountable for his behaviour was all part of changes Barry made as a result of reflecting on behaviour where he was abusive. Extra motivation came from experiencing a number of social sanctions, including failing his studies and losing the job he planned for, which led to him feeling he was at rock bottom. As a consequence he ended up working in a factory, where he had a lot of time for introspection and to realise:

"it was like actually I wasn't brought up to do this. Like I've never heard my father say anything like this. Actually none of the friends around me behave this way. I suppose starting to see things like that, like what is in my context, like what are the yardsticks, you know, actually these guys seem to have a really good relationship, what is it about that. And then I'd look back at decisions I made in that relationship and start to go, well actually I borrowed money that was a really big mistake and you know asking her to stay home when I wanted to go out. Actually if I wanted to be in a relationship with her, and there was part of me really did. Why didn't I want her to go with me? She wasn't unattractive, she was really friendly and she could be really fun. You know why did I do that, what was that all about?"

Barry recognised that he had not grown up in a home environment that supported his abusive behaviour and there were people around him who were experiencing positive relationships. This led him to the realisation that he had been making poor decisions and to losing trust in himself.

The turning point for John came when his minister intervened after being contacted by John's oldest son, concerning John's on-going use of violence towards his mother. As John is a Christian Pacific Island man, the pastor carried a lot of influence for him, and he would have experienced it as very disrespectful to not take on board what the pastor said and recommended he do, which was for him to travel to New Zealand and seek counselling help:

"I think for my sons ring the pastor, for, for my own benefit. You know, because it, only the pastor I could know, when he's walk in, for me I listen. It sort of, you know, otherwise there was no one else who, who will approach me. And I think my son notice that when he's around, you know I had to, you know, I have to, it's normal for me, otherwise I won't listen to anyone." (It had to be the pastor?) "Yeah. So, I mean, I won't listen to even my wife or the kids."

John goes on to explain how no one else would have confronted him about his use of violence, so that it had to be the pastor:

"I saw that it's a good thing. You know it helps me, because at home, or no one I don't think that anyone that I would listen. You know but, when my pastor came in, I just walk in and sit down, you know, and I know I need, I need help..... I think that I trust him, and I respect him, because when he advise me, I listen, and I have an open heart to his point. (But anyone else?) I sort of think twice. But yeah, so I respect, what the decision that I made, to come, now I think, I think I did the right thing."

For John it had to be a person of significance, whose opinion he highly respected and trusted, in order for him to open his heart to a different point of view to the one he carried. His beliefs about his position in his family and in society appear to have clouded his ability to perceive the effect his actions were having on his family and himself. Like Barry, John also didn't experience being called to account for his behaviour by his community, who may also have carried the same beliefs, which subsequently impeded them taking action to intervene.

For Barry the turning point came in the form of a situational sanction from an unexpected incident. His girlfriend became pregnant and the shock led to him questioning what he was doing in his life. His girlfriend chose to terminate the pregnancy; they separated, but continued to re-engage, even though both of them agreed that staying apart was the best decision. With the help of their parents they managed to stay apart. However, this did lead Barry to intentionally abstain from relationships and to question his actions and how they were fitting or not fitting with his life values and aspirations:

"So like I was saying I was single for about 14 months and during that time I thought a lot about what to I want to do, but I thought a lot about the baby, pregnancy situation and I went, I had a couple of periods away, sort of a month here and a month there, travelling and stuff, and it really got me to thinking that I don't, you know I don't want to be in another relationship like this is, so I can't just jump into things with two feet and figure it's going to be okay, actually it's really important to do, you know you don't sleep with someone the first time you meet them. Actually it was quite important to do, I do know, to be more respectful, you know that's what somebody else's interested in then that's okay I guess, but, but to be, I don't know, to take things slowly, to actually say, actually find out a bit more about the person, rather than finding yourself in a situation where you're, you feel trapped or stuck."

He realised that he had led a very opportunist lifestyle, which didn't include taking into consideration how his behaviour affected others, in particular this girlfriend. Reflecting on his behaviour led him to realise how his actions were abusive, how they harmed his girlfriend, and how this was not fitting with whom he thought he was or how he wanted to be. This caused a crisis of trust in himself, a self-imposed time of abstinence from intimate relationships, and a time of introspection to discover what he really

wanted in life and in a relationship, so that he could make better choices, with awareness and respect.

The values sanctions discussed related to learning what constitutes violent and abusive behaviour, how these behaviours negatively affect people (women partners, children, himself, and others) and how this doesn't fit with the man's values and his image of himself. This discrepancy or dissonance caused internal (psychological) stress for the men, which when great enough motivated change and can be seen to have motivated all the 6 participants, either as turning points or as incentives. For Martin this was a turning point in his desistance process:

"Um ah I think without being aware of it at the time ah um all these ways that we did our arguments and and especially at times when it didn't work out well we resorted to ah yeah to that disrespectful behaviour, it didn't give us anything it didn't give us more of what we wanted basically so it always left me feeling dissatisfied (ihm) and at times that that go either I'm going to try and do better next time or um I'm going try and be better guy you know listening and going along and being in partnership or the other extreme would be I 've had enough of this I want to get out. I've had enough of this going on and on, we never yeah, it goes well for a while before we fall back into our little patterns and habits, it happens I got a bit tired of that (ahim) so in terms of stopping that ah it really I think started with increased awareness and self-awareness where my wife started her training"...

Although this was a turning point for Martin, the options he was aware of to deal with his reactions and the conflict were limited. When his wife started a training course which included interpersonal and self-awareness work, they discussed what she was learning and they began to make changes in their interactions together. Without this facilitating factor his need or desire to change could easily have remained unresourced and therefore thwarted. Even so it wasn't till years later, when he first attended a LWVP, that he started to make sense of a lot of his reactions, learnt strategies for dealing with his triggers to abuse and for relating with his partner. This enabled him to progress to desisting from psychological and emotional abuse.

James had always thought of using violence towards other men to resolve disagreements or confrontations as being normal. He had also considered himself to be the protector of women and willing to use violence, against men, as a way to uphold this:

"I'd always been a violent person, but never towards females. So I guess that, that too has helped me to go, hey no, fuck, it's not good, you can't do it, just, it's also, this day and age, you don't solve shit like that. It creates more problems."

So when he hit his partner:

“But it scares them. For me it was a freaky thing to go through with hitting a woman. I’d push them around and I’ve grabbed them, but I’d never hit them, left a marks on them, I’d never done that before.....She said she’d never been hit that hard before. Like I hit her on the hip because I didn’t want to do any damage, so to speak. But she ended up, where she couldn’t walk.”

Feeling shocked by the impact of his violence caused him to be committed to learn how to desist from violence when he attended his third LWVP, which he found he gained the most help from. He came to realise that he carried underlying beliefs or attitudes that rationalised some use of violence towards women, in the form of grabbing and pushing, as long as it didn’t cause any perceivable physical damage. This realisation further conflicted with the image as the protector of women.

Sanctions in the form of legal, parental, social, values and situational have been explored with examples from the men’s narrative. These have been shown to motivate men to desist from IPV, either in the form of a turning point where they stop their violence towards a partner, or as an incentive, to continue this desistance or as a seed which later enables a turning point to occur.

Discussion

It is evident from the men’s narratives that there was a point in time when they stopped using IPV. Some of them could also identify the factors or critical incidents which precipitated this change, the turning point. These were experienced by the men as sanctions against the use of IPV. However what is also evident is that identifying a single factor that turned the man from violence is almost impossible. Although one particular sanction may be identified as the turning point for each man, other sanctions acted as incentives to desistance, and the man’s experience in the lead up to these particular moments in time had a significant effect on the sanction’s impact. The turning point is probably best thought of as the final factor that moves the man to change, rather than a single event that brings about desistance. It is also difficult to identify exactly when the desistance process began.

It can be identified that certain aversive experiences can act as triggers for the change process which is consistent with a number of studies (Fagan, 1989; Stefanakis, 1998; Edmiston, 2005; Silvergleid & Mankowski, 2006; Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2006; Fenlason, 2009; Ruwhiu, et al., 2009; Bonham & Vetere, 2012; Sheehan, et al., 2012). Those studies that identified stages of change for desistance of IPV identified the time prior to the turning point as ‘being on automatic pilot’ (Southers, 1999), pre-contemplation, as defined by the Transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986), (Stefanakis, 1998; Pandya, 2009), where there is no awareness of a problem that needs changing and the person feels coerced if encouraged to change. Fenlason (2009) described the impact of the turning point as the ‘wakeup and listening’ stage,

“where the man is confronted with relational consequences and is hopefully able to wake up to the problem and begin to listen” (p. 66).

The meaning of a sanction to a particular man was important in giving it the impact to bring about change, as a sanction for one man that helped desistance could have no effect or be a hindrance to another. This can be seen by comparing the experience of David and James when confronted by the legal sanction of arrest, imprisonment and a criminal record. Overseas David was protected from the full legal consequences for his IPV, due to the intervention of partners and judges. This had the effect of lessening their power to motivate desistance, even though imprisonment and a conviction could have destroyed his career path. It is significant that during his conversations with his mother in New Zealand David identified that he was only following this career path to please her and therefore it did not carry significant meaning for him. In contrast, once he arrived in New Zealand, conviction could have meant deportation, not gaining residency, and possible shame for his mother and family. This was of significance to David and therefore motivation for change. This is consistent with Stefanakis (1998) and Sheehan, et al. (2012), where the meaning ascribed to a sanction, whether conscious or unconscious at the time, was identified as an important factor behind its motivation.

In comparison, James experienced convictions as leaving him with resentments that hindered his continued desistance from IPV. It was as if he was left scarred, and even if he took positive action to be accountable for his use of violence and lead a respectful and responsible life, the convictions would leave him caught in uncertainty as to whether he could be seen as redeemable as a person (Stefanakis, 1998). The scar of being seen as a criminal probably had a strong undermining impact for James’s feelings of self-worth, with the lack of alliance in parenting with his partner leading to him feeling some sense of not belonging. This reaction could be consistent with James experiencing insecure attachment (Bowlby, 1984), possibly of a preoccupied nature, as he turned to violence when his partner withdrew and he perceived abandonment (Babcock, et al., 2000; Woodin & O’Leary, 2009). This is in contrast to what James found as one of the most important factors in assisting his desistance, which was the support of his partner with communication and implementing new non-violent skills. The positive interaction here with his partner would have helped to alleviate feelings of insecurity that he otherwise experienced.

The potential loss of contact with children, feeling the loss of contact with children and wishing to regain this, or feeling the loss of a man’s image of himself as a good father proved to be incentives for desistance. This was initiated by legal sanctions, in the case of Frank and James, the birth of a child for David, children taking action to show disapproval of IPV for John and Martin, and learning about and/or acknowledging the effect of IPV on children for all the men. The loss of contact with a child, children or

family as a motivator to change was also identified by Sheehan, et al. (2012), Stefanakis, (1998), Fenlason, 2009, and Ruwhiu, et al. (2009). In this study it was an important factor for Frank to re-engage in a LWVP and for James to be the driving force to hold onto a long-term goal or image of regaining contact with his own son and being the father for him that he wishes to be.

The LWVP group process with a focus on fathering and the effects of IPV on children reinforced Frank's focus on his goal to re-engage as a father. Attention was also brought to the benefits of improved relationships with their children, by desisting from IPV, for John and Martin. A factor also identified by Edmiston (2005). The desire of men to be good fathers or their fear of losing their image of being a good father was also highlighted by Stefanakis (1998) and Sheehan, et al. (2012). This came through most strongly in David's narrative. He was confronted with his memory of his father who was either not present or whose presence had little positive impact on him, and his desire to not repeat this. Again this appears to have affected David for a number of reasons. First is that he became a father, whereas previous pregnancies had been terminated due to the pressure he brought to bear on the woman at the time, so this time he was brought face-to-face with taking responsibility for his own actions. This would have been reinforced by being amongst family in New Zealand, and once again the possible shame if he dropped all responsibility for the child. As well, in the year prior to the pregnancy, he had bonded with his mum, a healing and re-sensitising process which would no doubt have also included some reflection on his relationship with his father, and on who he would want to be as a father. He was also gaining an image of himself as a respectable role model for the men he saw in his employment as a social service worker. All of these had significance for David so that rather than avoid the issue of fathering as he had before returning to New Zealand, he now approached fatherhood with a sense of purpose. David had already made a commitment to ceasing IPV and other forms of general violence and having a daughter initiated for him a process of self re-evaluation in his belief systems and actions towards women, a factor that was also identified as significant in studies by Edmiston (2005) and Ruwhiu, et al. (2009). He had the ability to imagine how his actions could negatively impact on his daughter, both as a child and as an adult, provided a driving force for him in desisting from IPV, and engaging in respectful behaviours as a father and towards women.

The potential for a person or people of importance to motivate a man to desistance was shown most strongly in John's narrative. For John to take note that he had a problem with IPV perpetration, he had to hear this from his pastor, as he would not have listened to anyone else. It was his pastor that he respected above all others. Whilst John's son showed the courage to contact the pastor, no one else in John's social group would speak up. This was also seen by Ruwhiu, et al. (2009) who refer to this phenomenon as 'one does count', where the men in the study identified the importance of a significant person supporting them to desist from IPV.

The severity of the violence that James perpetrated against his partner shocked him into realising the harm he had caused, especially when he recognised that he intended to only use enough force to get his way/message across; a motivating factor also identified by Scott and Wolfe (2000), Edmiston (2005), and Bonham and Vetere (2012). Becoming aware of his use of controlled violence and using IPV to maintain control, brought him into conflict with his belief that he was a protector of women. He also had the new realisation that his use of IPV was causing damage that could be irreparable and therefore destroying the relationship he wished to maintain. Even though James had attended two previous LWVP, he entered the third programme with an attitude that he had a problem to address and a commitment to utilise the help available. Stefanakis, (1998) identified a number of factors that lead to men experiencing a crisis, or a sense of hitting rock bottom. One of these he referred to as dissonance, when a man experiences psychological conflict between certain beliefs that he carries and the reflections of himself as someone other than who he wants to be.

Two other men in the study experienced dissonance, with the recognition that certain behaviours they used in the relationship were causing them dissatisfaction with themselves. Both men began to question what they really wanted in their relationships engaged them in reflecting on their intrinsic values. For Martin, the belief systems that he had about his position as a man in the relationship, along with a lack of skill to manage the frustration he felt when these beliefs were not met, underlined his IPV perpetration to maintain power and control (Pence & Paymar, 1993). This, however, conflicted with his belief in having an equal relationship, and experiencing this dilemma motivated him to commit more time to the relationship and his family and to act respectfully. At the time though, he acknowledges that he lacked the knowledge to do this. This gap was filled by his wife entering into social services training and sharing what she was learning about self-awareness and communication with him.

A number of studies have identified age and length of marriage as factors in desistance from IPV, with higher desistance rates from IPV occurring for older men and longer length marriages and that younger men are more likely to persist with IPV (Johnson 2003; Caetano, et al., 2005). Contrary to this, Barry is an example of a man, who in his very early 20s began his desistance from IPV, due to experiencing a form of dissonance. As a young man he engaged in relationships in an opportunistic manner, without any thought of how his behaviour affected the women he was with. He also consumed large amounts of alcohol at this time, when he entered a relationship where he was abusive. He reached a point of feeling at rock bottom, when he began failing his studies, losing jobs that he planned for, and his girlfriend at the time becoming pregnant. The pregnancy in particular, and his moral dilemma about this, caused a crisis for him, and a loss of trust in himself. He put into place a self-imposed time of abstinence from intimate relationships and engaged in introspection on how he led his life and how he wanted to lead his life. This action of a self-imposed time of abstinence

doesn't appear to have been recorded in the previous studies. But the action of causing separation of the relationship, whether due to legal sanctions or the woman separating has been seen to be helpful in assisting desistance (Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2006; Fenlason, 2009).

One particular sanction is absent from the study, which is widely reported in a number of previous studies. None of the six men interviewed spoke about relational sanctions, in the form of losing a relationship unless they made immediate and substantial changes to their behaviour. This is surprising given the number of studies that report men instigating desistance from IPV or being motivated to attend a LWVP, often in a voluntary capacity, due to an ultimatum from a partner for him to make changes in his behaviour or she will leave (Fagan, 1989; Stefanakis, 1998; Silvergleid & Mankowski, 2006; Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2006; Bonham & Vetere, 2012; Sheehan, et al., 2012).

Men's responses to different sanctions varied and a number of factors affected the interpretation and impact of each sanction for any particular man. In this study, the men's interpretations of their use of IPV varied and were influenced by their character and psychological make-up, their relationships in early childhood, alcohol and drug issues, attachment issues and social context. The social context is of particular importance and includes, amongst other factors, prior knowledge and self-awareness gained, possibly through access to interventions such as LWVP, counselling, mentoring, and other forms of engagement with helping people. The following chapter on the theme of Acceptance and Support will expand on these factors, primarily as significant in supporting sanctions to become turning points towards becoming safe and respectful in relationships.

Chapter Five

Analysis and discussion: Acceptance and Support

It has been shown that one type of sanction or another acted as an incentive for the men in the study to cease IPV. Whilst this produced motivation for change, additional processes were required in order that the sanctions became turning points for desistance. The men's stories speak out with examples of how they needed to gain some acceptance of themselves as being both worthy and able to make changes in their lives. This came from self-affirmation and most importantly the support of another or others, who were able to treat the men with respect and compassion whilst staying clear that change in the form of desistance from IPV was necessary. Along with the themes of 'I'm okay, IPV is not okay' and 'I'm not alone' emerged a theme of making the choice; that the men had autonomy in choosing to change.

I'm OK, IPV is not OK

Being able to experience the difference between behaviour not being acceptable and yet the person still being seen as acceptable was an important step for the men in the desistance process. Taking on responsibility for actions that have harmed those people the man is most intimate with can be a very threatening experience requiring resilience and inner strength. For this reason having someone to stand by you, who doesn't judge you for who you are, and who will act like a personal trainer to still hold you to task, proved very helpful if not essential for the desistance journey forward, according to the men in this study.

Each of the men had their own experience of finding acceptance, with Frank finding it in the facilitators of the living without violence group he joined:

"It might have been something M actually said or it could have been something S said, I just remember, um, and it sticks in my head, I can't remember who said it but it was definitely one of the facilitators at the group who said, it's okay. And I was, that was the first time that I'd heard that, without feeling like someone was saying to me, you're bad. By being accepted, I started to think, hahh, it was quite a weight. So I think that's what it was, it was a load coming off, going okay so it, I'm certain that it opened me up to, oh I think I can change something. I'm pretty sure that was the third week in..... Like a sense of letting something go and a weight lifting, because that's what it was like I was carrying a burden. It was extremely, it was funny because it was a tiny little thing but it meant so much that it stuck in my mind. So it was a moment, one of those poignant moments that stuck in the mind."

As Frank states, the experience of being accepted allowed a weight to be dropped, later described as his defensiveness, which he experienced very strongly at the start of

the group. As he gained trust in the facilitators and men in the group he experienced dropping the burden of defending himself from attack and opening himself up to view new perspectives and possibilities for achieving what was important in his life:

“because I went from being judged by lots of other people for things I hadn’t necessarily done or hadn’t intended to do, but still did it, and I didn’t understand what that meant and then I came to terms with what that meant and then learned how to vocalise it. So I was able to feel safe being here and saying I’ve done these things and I’m starting to recognise how I could have done that differently.....I was, I said before that I felt safe and it was because I started, I felt my tension dropping and I felt confident, not arrogant, confident. I felt safe to express myself in a calm, collected way. I didn’t feel like I was, people were going to walk all over the top of me if I did it.”

This is in contrast to when Frank first came to the LWVP, when he felt very afraid that he would be judged and attacked by other men, which is something he has also heard from other men during the nine programs he has attended:

“The first day was scary as hell. The first day, I’ll never forget the first day, the first time I did it was, I don’t know what came into me but, the first day, I was glad I was here, but, because I was going to get to see my daughter again, um but, I was, that was the motivating tool for me for being, but at the same time, there were these strangers around and I was thinking, somebody going to punch me in the head or, or will there be aggro, is there going to be, what the hell, what am I going to expect, it was scary.”

When Frank expected to be judged or attacked he put a lot of his focus and associated energy into preparing to defend against this, which included defending against accepting responsibility for the abusive actions he had perpetrated. As he says, when he felt his tension drop, due to feeling safe, he was able to take responsibility for these abusive actions, and to seek alternative behaviour.

The support by facilitators of the LWVP with strict guidelines that had clear consequences was important for James to recognise that there were consequences for unacceptable behaviour and that he as a person was being accepted:

“I think a lot of it was due to the strict parameters that they kept, like if you missed one you were kind of off the programme and just the way the facilitators were, they were real supportive. Still text from time to time. Still violence free, but everything is okay. And I’d get the text back, which is real cool.”

James felt held and supported, with clear boundaries that gave him a sense of safety, where he could risk allowing himself to be vulnerable. As we will see, allowing vulnerability opened the men up emotionally and mentally to engaging in reflection on their actions and the consequences of these actions.

When Barry spoke about the abuse he perpetrated he appeared to speak of a young man who lacked maturity and was caught up in acting like a lad:

“I absolutely shudder when I think about myself behaving like that, now. But at the time was a 20-year-old that was how I thought and I didn’t think that was particularly disrespectful behaviour, but I very quickly learnt that it was.”

The shock he felt when his girlfriend became pregnant brought to his attention how his behaviour was affecting his and other people’s lives. He recognised how much of his abusive behaviour revolved around boosting his sense of self-esteem:

“I think people are unfaithful because it boosts their sense of self-esteem, or they have several partners or are promiscuous, because a lot of that for me is about self-esteem and it was a way for me, I actually found a really good way of not being great academically or at sports or anything like that, but something boosted my self-esteem. And I guess that was it.”

He looked to his parents who may not have expressed a lot of love in the marriage and yet still had a commitment to each other:

“I don’t think my parents have the most loving relationship. I think they care about each other, but I think of that generation when they didn’t divorce. They would just stay together and get on and everything’s fine.”

When the time came for him to take responsibility for his actions, his parents were there to support him, both to get his life back in order and to stay separate from the girlfriend to whom he had been abusive. From among the men in this research he appears to have had the healthiest or least damaged relationship with his parents, so that when the crisis occurred he had the most resources available both internally and externally to make changes in his life.

David spoke about using violence towards men as well as IPV towards partners. He first desisted from violence in general, including IPV, when he arrived in New Zealand. At this time he re-united with his family, including his mother and siblings, who had moved to New Zealand some years prior. This was a change from his connections to gang culture and cousins outside of New Zealand. Overseas he had frequently been protected from the consequences of his violence and IPV by partners and judges, who would see the potential in David to be a role model, as a man of colour coming from a gang environment, transitioning to socially acceptable achievements:

“I think a lot of people had been looking out for me, in terms of my potential, which is why I got away with stuff.”

He had received a lot of affirmation of being special, through that protection, but this had also effectively reinforced in him the idea that IPV is okay, as he did not

experience any consequences for this behaviour. When he received media interest, the media did not probe into how he related to girlfriends and this was further affirmation of being protected from consequences for his violence:

“I guess that’s what contributed to me thinking that I could mess up, but I still got people covering for me. But I was also conscious about my, you know my girlfriends and they didn’t want to talk to my girlfriends. They just wanted to talk to some guys that kinda knew me, kinda thing. That’s why I didn’t worry about, and even if they found out that I beat women, so what? It is not a big deal.”

The move to New Zealand meant that the circumstances and people that protected him from being accountable for his use of violence overseas were no longer present. Although David may have felt special, due to the treatment he received outside of New Zealand, specialness didn’t extend to him feeling okay in himself, as he says here:

“And looking back now there was that self-harm. You, you, you have so much potential but you end up screwing yourself over, and I’ve done that a lot and it’s taken me a little while to get over that and to realise the whole. You know the cliché, you’ve got to love yourself before you can love anyone else, and I didn’t really understand that and I’m only just starting to understand that myself now and then I look back and I think I was really screwing myself over.”

In NZ the sanction of arrest, and possible imprisonment or deportation, for any acts of IPV, made it clearer to him that IPV and general violence is not okay. The threat or impact of sanctions due to perpetrating IPV however did require some reinforcement. This came from the reconciliation that occurred with his mother in New Zealand, where David was able to speak to her about his experience of his mother’s violence towards him and for her to acknowledge this. She then spoke about her history as a child of receiving violence and what it taught her about parenting. She had used physical punishment as a way of caring, to help her children stay on the right path:

“and then she wanted me to stay close, she didn’t want me to get killed or shot. Just because, because my relatives over there were saying. Yeah, some of my extra curricular activities.....Yeah, I think it helped a little bit, because I kind of felt, loved, a little bit, even though this person that I resented was the main one, that I didn’t like, because of what she did to me, and now she needs, wants me around, and what does that mean, because I always thought she was a mean witch and the mean things she said and some of the physical violence and stuff that she did.”

These conversations with his mother and her wish for him to remain in New Zealand, to keep him safe from the gangs, had the effect that David felt loved and wanted, which helped to heal his sense of being unloved and unwanted by his mother. David had received affirmation that he was okay, lovable and not in some way flawed, which is how he had made sense of his mother’s violence towards him. The reconnection to

his mother and feeling loved, meant that the potential consequences of violence with arrest, and possible deportation, could mean the loss of this connection.

For David and the other men in the study, feeling accepted for who they are by a significant person or people they respected, was an important factor for them to differentiate themselves as a person from the unacceptable violent behaviour they had perpetrated. They had become okay and IPV not okay.

I'm Not Alone

The theme of not feeling alone or the only man encountering issues with IPV perpetration emerged, with the associated effect of shifting men from feeling isolated with the problem to being able to reach out for help and connection. John's journey to seeking help started with his pastor. After hearing the concerns of John's children, the pastor acted by speaking to John and recommending that he seek counselling help. As mentioned in the section on sanctions, the only person that John would have listened to was the pastor, and John expresses how important this person was for him to desist from violence:

"I think that I trust him, and I respect him, because when he advise me, I listen, and I have an open heart to his point."

Listening to the pastor's advice to seek counselling would mean being away from his family for at least a couple of months and probably longer. This was a big step for him, full of anxiety and sadness and it was important for him that he had the support of his wife, which was given:

"For her part it's, it's releasing me.....To come. I mean, like she was support, she said go, even if it's hard cos she stays back with the kids, but she quite at peace that I come. So and then, once that's decided I came over, and we talked to our kids, daddy gonna go over to New Zealand. So then I came over."

It is significant that John uses the phrase, it's releasing me, as he experienced being supported by his partner to go to seek help, and even more importantly permission to take leave from his responsibilities as a father. This emphasises that he was not alone in facing up to the issues of perpetrating IPV, but that his wife, as well as the pastor, was supporting him seeking help. In New Zealand John had a church mentor, who was aware of all that had happened and what John had come to New Zealand to achieve:

"So he knew that, so I walk along with him, with everything"

Here was another person that John trusted to have his best interests, and those of his family, at heart. John was directed to counselling by his mentor and the counsellor educated John on what violence and abuse are and advised him to attend an LWVP. There is a sequence here of an initial person, who holds the trust of a man, not yet

ready for change, to help the man make the leap of faith to accepting that his actions are causing a problem, for which he needs help to change. This trust, or faith in the process, was passed down from person to person and then to the LWVP, which kept supporting John in his desistance process. Moving from feeling isolated to feeling supported in the process, also led to him feeling accountable:

“So but now I see the change, that’s something, I want to prove to my wife and my kids. That’s what it really matters to me. That I’m a changed person. So for them to feel confident in all that. That what really matters for me.”

Four out of the six men participated in LWV programmes. Although they entered the programmes with varying levels of awareness (including understanding what abuse is, the effects of abuse, and responsibility for their actions), all of the men mention how being challenged by the facilitators of the group and connecting with other men who had perpetrated abuse, soon showed them that they were not alone with the issues they experienced. There was a lot to learn and gain from participating. Martin had progressed some way in desisting from IPV prior to entering an LWVP. For him moving from being an isolated man working on the issues of abuse towards his partner to being part of a group helped him to make the next step in the desistance process:

“Even starting the programme even I remember that sense of oh this is so embarrassing, how come I’m going to participate in this together with all these other guys who have abused their wives, and who’ve been convicted of it, been charged with, how am I gonna handle doing 20 weeks of this? Ah, but the effect of the ah the challenges of the facilitators of the group and hearing and connecting with the other guys who had, soon showed me that there was a lot more for me to learn.”

Martin initially felt resistant to engaging in the LWVP as he thought that he not only didn’t belong in this group but that accepting some connection to them would undermine his character. However, by engaging with facilitators who supportively questioned his actions and intentions, and recognising that the men in the LWVP were going through similar experiences to him, led to him feeling a commonality with the other men. He came in with judgements about them, which he quite quickly dropped once he saw and heard how they were struggling with similar issues to his own. This was also experienced by Frank when he first entered the LWVP:

“When I saw all these people, and I had all these preconceived notions when I saw these people, which reminds me of how I was then, and then we got into the first group and we’re sort of looking around and there were people doing the same things I was doing. We were looking around, thinking why are you here and what have you done and then people started to talk and I went, holy crap and things started to change then. Then by the third week, holy crap, these people are the same as me and I’m judging that person because they look like this, but that’s not them at all. I don’t know them.”

So I realised I had these preconceived notions, these judgements that were completely misconceived.....so for me what was happening, I started to get a sense of feeling secure and having security, by being at these programmes. The people were everything you could possibly hope for in terms of support and helping change occur, for what I would now describe, for the people who wanted change to happen. And I was certainly at a point in my life where I wanted change to happen.”

Frank found that he was not alone in his experience and so could gain support from those men, who like him, wanted to make positive behaviour changes. He felt a sense of safety and security amongst other men, which he had not experienced previously. Moving from feeling alone and isolated to having the support of another person or a group of men on a journey meant the men in the study received affirmation that they were not strange or unusual in their experience. The feeling of security gained meant they felt less need to defend their sense of self. They could now open to feelings of vulnerability and confusion, which were normal experiences for the men during the initial phase of confronting their behaviour and coming to terms with having acted in ways that harmed people they loved and cared about. As John so aptly expressed, feeling released from holding to the familiar patterns of control gave an opening to pursue new possibilities.

Making the Choice/Autonomy

Being the one to make a choice to change their behaviour was an important factor for the men. The men may have stopped using physical violence, or at least more obvious serious violence, due to sanctions that they had hanging over them. But coming to their own decision that their present behaviour was a problem was a significant precursor to the men becoming fully committed to further behavioural and attitudinal changes. For Barry, the experience of ‘hitting rock bottom’ coincided with recognising that he didn’t like how he was behaving in relationships. Making a decision to stop using abuse towards women in relationships was for him a decision to search for the type of relationship he really wanted:

“And so what I started to think about was what do I want. Not like, what is good for now, but if I was actually going to want to be with someone, what do I want? What is actually respectful? What’s going to stop me actually behaving like a complete asshole?”

He was willing to become vulnerable and to experience some confusion that came with not knowing where to go next. At this point he didn’t know what the new form of relationship would look like but his search included firstly stopping himself being abusive and continuing the opportunist pattern he had to entering relationships with women. First of all Barry made a decision to abstain from entering a new intimate relationship until he could trust himself enough to make decisions that would enhance

the type of respectful relationship he wanted. He effectively committed himself to a process of change.

In contrast, the commitment to a process of change felt more like taking a gamble for Martin:

"I think I had gone through a couple of redundancies as well, so my sense of self was pretty low but I was humbled as well through the relationship ah crisis ah the sense of panic how close we had come to ah losing it all ah so as my self-esteem, core self-esteem was pretty low hers was increasing because of the new knowledges that she gained, her fellow students, the excitement of study and ah potential for work um but I guess that I, I trusted her, that was a choice, there wasn't something that was actually built yet at that stage because ah the trust was damaged um but I believe that was conscious, a choice to trust that process and it was going to work out, yeah, I guess it was a gamble."

Although Martin speaks about taking a gamble, it was still a gamble that he chose to take. Although he may have perceived forces pushing him in this direction, including the potential loss of his relationship and of his family, making the choice to change was his.

With Frank, attending the LWVP meant that his contact with his daughter was reinstated and his wife at the time returned to the family home. He had achieved his initial goal of regaining contact with his daughter and it would have been possible for him to stop at that point but he decided to continue:

"She returned to our home, and I started doing the anger management courses, the programs here, and I decided to keep coming and it felt quite safe."

In the LWVP Frank had found a safe place where he felt accepted for who he is and where he was challenged to make better choices in his life. He wasn't being told what choices to make but rather to search for the answers himself. This place of safety was encouragement enough for him to decide to continue the program and his journey of desistance.

The decision to commit to the ongoing process of desistance from violence and other abusive behaviours came for David when:

"once I got my permanent residency, then I got a real job. I had to leave doing that stuff with them."

His job in social services brought him face-to-face with other men who were experiencing the consequences of violence that he had been protected from. He now had the responsibility of helping these men make changes in their lives:

"I guess, um, um, realising I was missing out on opportunities, just realising that, that I want better for myself and it's not going to happen if I keep making choices these choices where I lash out, hurt people, which is breaking the law and then there are consequences to that."

He recognised that he had effectively undermined himself with a number of choices he had made up to this point. This had now become a problem for him, one that he could not ignore as he had done previously:

The whole ah, do you want to sabotage yourself again and put yourself into a position where you could actually screw yourself over or when are you, when you going to start getting serious with things..... so that's when I started shifting, you could say, my attitudes, and then they started, I started to get clients who needed to do anger management, LWV programmes coming through, then I read up on the programmes, and I visited some of those programmes, where I found out more about it, and then personally I was thinking, man I need to do this, I need to be in this programme."

The commitment David made to change his attitudes and behaviour came as a result of the challenges he faced with the men he was serving. These challenges included helping men face up to the consequences of their actions which he managed to not fully experience up to that point; recognising that the decision to make life changes was with him just as he was saying it was for his clients; and gaining knowledge about LWVP for the purpose of referring his clients to them also meant deciding to use this knowledge for himself.

Having become aware of the effects of violence that James had perpetrated meant he was now aware of what behaviour was wrong for him and what he wanted to change:

"You can't do this, you can't be like this and I guess most of it, is wanting not to. A lot of that is wanting not to. Cos you know what's wrong."

It was in the LWVP that he recognised it was up to him to decide to change, as he could see that a number of men in the group were not at the point of doing this, and he was choosing to change:

"And I guess the main thing is are you wanting to change, or knowing you need to. From what I noticed with my group, half of them it was just a lifestyle, it was what they did. And the other half were this is just not normal for us. Knew it was wrong and they wanted to change. For the people who want to, yeah it's real beneficial..... You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. Unfortunately it's one of those things. But for me it was bloody good and really helpful."

James expresses aptly the difference between men making the decision to take a new path of ongoing desistance from IPV or not. It came down to them deciding to take

advantage of the help and resources that were available to them. To do this they first had to confront what was normal to them and to recognise that the present normal was causing problems in their life. Once they recognised this problem and that they were worthy of something better they could commit to pursuing a new normal.

Discussion

Each of the men's narratives spoke of their experience of desisting from IPV being a journey. Stopping the physical violence could be very straightforward when the men experienced their turning point, but this could be short lived if other factors were not present. Being able to identify what the problem is and that the man is not the only one to experience this problem emerged as being important in order for him to choose to seek alternative behaviours to IPV. However a number of factors which hinder this process firstly need to be attended to. In this section, I will discuss how some of the men's narratives expressed feeling and acting resistant or defensive when their use of IPV was challenged, in relation to theories of IPV. Secondly I will discuss the factors which helped men to drop their resistance or defensiveness and continue the journey of IPV desistance. These included feeling cared for so the man could care for himself, identifying what physical violence is and that it is a damaging action that the man can choose to stop, overcoming feelings of shame and aloneness due to their behaviour in order to reach out and accept help and to experience the choice to change as being positive and their own, rather than conforming to the will or orders of others.

There are a number of theories explaining the use of IPV to maintain a person's sense of self related to their predominant schema, learnt behavioural patterns, attachment and emotional regulation mechanisms. Use of IPV may be seen as a defence mechanism against losing a sense of self or experiencing what Sinclair (1987) refers to as "a moment of fatal peril" (p.9); "a perception of total threat that his whole person is at risk if he does not act immediately" (Adams, 2012, p. 465). As such they will consciously or unconsciously perceive the use of IPV as a necessary defensive action. A 'rejection-abuse cycle' model was tested with 66 IPV perpetrators by Brown, James and Taylor (2010). The study supported the circular connection between 'rejection', leading to 'threat to self', leading to 'defend against threat', leading to 'abuse', and back to 'rejection'. If men experience this cycle, then any challenge to their perception, as can happen when a man experiences a sanction against his use of IPV and/or during LWVP intervention, may well produce defensiveness or resistance to further change. This was evidenced in some of the men's narratives.

Whilst Frank was motivated to enter the LWVP in order to regain contact with his daughter, he spoke of feeling defensive due to his expectations that he would be judged by the facilitators and men in the group. For him the pressure to conform to gender role stereotypes may have motivated him to use IPV in order to protect his sense of self (Woodin & O'Leary, 2009). This can be particularly relevant when a man

does not exhibit a clear masculine or feminine gender schema, but holds characteristics such as hostility, self-absorption and control as being concepts associated with masculinity (Jenkins & Aubé, 2002). Frank recognises that he exhibited these characteristics prior to entering the LWVP. He had experienced judgement from people for holding these attitudes which he would have seen as normal at the time. Expecting more of the same meant that he defended himself against attack when he entered the LWVP.

Both John and James linked their masculine gender identity with conservative gender role ideals (Bowen, 2011). John carried beliefs of being the head of the household, whose authority was not questioned. He acknowledged that he would have defended himself against challenges to his behaviour by anyone other than his pastor. Although he may not have fully understood or accepted why his IPV perpetration was being challenged by the pastor, he had faith and trust in his goodwill, so that he followed his pastor's advice.

James's masculinity was linked in with beliefs of being a protector of woman, having authority as a parent and a provider. Challenges to him exhibiting these characteristics were met with feelings of rejection and jealousy. This may well have been intensified due to possible insecure attachment, which Dutton (1998) and Brown et al. (2010) identified can cause difficulties in regulating emotions when feeling threatened with abandonment or rejection and that IPV may be used to defend against the threat. James also grew up in a family where his father modelled domineering behaviour towards his mother and he experienced deficits in conflict resolution skills, emotional regulation and social information processing (Woodin & O'Leary, 2009). All of these factors would have contributed to him remaining defended against learning from the LWV programmes that he had previously attended as he remained resentful for being sent and being punished as well. James spoke of being supported by the facilitators in his third LWVP, both through their encouragement and the boundaries they kept in the group. The actions of the facilitators may well have given him a sense of belonging in the programme by receiving acceptance and support along with consistency about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Not all of the men spoke clearly of feeling defended against challenges to their use of IPV, but what came through more strongly was how finding acceptance and support at the time when their use of IPV was being challenged helped the men to seek or use help that was available. The importance of receiving acceptance and support to enable studies (Anderson, 1996; Stefanakis, 1998; Southers, 1999; Wangsgaard, 2000; Pandya, 2001; Edmiston, 2005; Ruwhiu, et al., 2009).

Frank reported that he was profoundly affected by the interactions with the group leaders and whilst he began with negative attitudes towards the group, with time this gave way to positive feelings. The same experience was to some extent also reported

by the other three LWVP attendees i.e. James, John and Martin and was observed in the studies by Anderson (1996) and Southers (1999). Similarly the LWVP attendees also spoke about the sense of safety and trust that they experienced in the group which helped them to explore common ground with other men and not feel alone in the struggle with issues of IPV. This is mirrored in the study by Wangsgaard (2000) who reported the participants in his study experiencing “the establishment of the asylum” (p. 256), where the emotionally safe treatment atmosphere enabled the men to re-humanise themselves.

Out of the men’s narratives came the expression of a struggle to accept and acknowledge that they had perpetrated IPV, that this was an unacceptable behaviour, whilst at the same time remaining acceptable or redeemable as people. This took a number of forms, for example, Barry spoke about immaturity being behind his abuse of a partner in order to boost his self-esteem. The shock of his girlfriend becoming pregnant led to him feeling confused and subsequently questioning his actions. At the same time rationalising his use of such actions as being linked to being young and immature, along with a lack of awareness of the impact of these behaviours, was helpful for him to maintain some sense of self-esteem and self-acceptance. Stefanakis (1998) also identified that the men in his research were caught in a struggle to be seen as redeemable as people whilst also being accountable for their use of violence. Sanctions that they experienced caused a crisis that challenged their present interpretive frames of reference. He found it was important for the men in the study to construct external help, which they chose to use, as being necessary for change, in order for the men to protect their character from being flawed by the past use of IPV.

Other men in the study also spoke of accepting external support. Frank speaks of being told “it’s okay” by one of the facilitators in the LWVP and hearing this as being told for the first time, that he is not bad. This meant he could drop a burden he was carrying, the burden of defending his character, and become open to acknowledge his perpetration of IPV.

In contrast David, whilst overseas, experienced the support and acceptance from the community as legitimising his use of IPV, as the IPV was ignored in favour of supporting his potential. It wasn’t until he experienced acceptance and support from his mother that the consequences of IPV became too great a risk. The conversations that David had with his mother brought into focus how IPV and other forms of family violence were destructive but could end up being used due to having learnt that this was a way to parent or be in a relationship. In this case, the use of violence by his mother could be seen as both, having positive intentions as a way of showing care towards him, and being a harmful way to show this care. Feeling loved and cared for by his mother enabled David to begin to feel lovable and to accept himself.

John's narrative spoke clearly about the importance of support from his community, in his case the church, to feel accepted whilst having a clear message that IPV was not okay. This began through the actions of his pastor and continued with a church mentor, who supported John to accept the help of a counsellor and then a LWVP. Support and acceptance being gained from family, close friends or respected associates was also identified in studies by Pandya (2001) and Ruwihui, et al. (2009).

Interestingly, quantitative studies focussed more on testing extant theories of change did not tend to identify clear links to receiving acceptance and support. This was also the case with those studies that looked for the most helpful components in LWVP. These studies gave more evidence for what may be more identifiable experiences or skills e.g. acknowledging feelings, communication skills; in comparison to experiences that are less easily described i.e. feeling accepted and supported. They do however identify the importance of autonomy in the decision to change.

James aptly described how the offer of help to make changes from IPV would not be taken up by a man unless the man wanted to do this. Whilst a man was still engaged in defending his character there appeared to be no place for change in his life. Once these defences were dropped, due to being accepted and supported, they experienced change as no longer being forced upon them. The men in the study then spoke of recognising that they had the power to choose whether to stay as they were or to make changes. This is a theme that has been recognised in a number of other studies (Fagan, 1989; Stefanakis, 1998; Scott & Wolfe, 2000; Maruna, 2001; Pandya, 2001; Smith, 2011; Sheehan, et al., 2012). Sheehan, et al. (2012) indicated that the importance of men making an autonomous decision to change was consistent also with quantitative research where the Transtheoretical model (TTM) was applied to IPV behavioural change.

When comparing previous research that identified stages of change for desistance in IPV, with the acceptance and support superordinate theme, the TTM would place acceptance and support in the contemplation stage, where an interplay between a growing awareness that a problem requiring change exists and the man's justification and excuses for his behaviour occurs (Stefanakis, 1998; Pandya, 2009). Southers (1999) refers to this stage as 'Gaining Self Knowledge' and an even clearer similarity is found with a process of change that Stefanakis identifies as 'Gaining Awareness'. Here the man struggles to make his past understandable without excusing it and to accept responsibility whilst remaining redeemable. Stage two of the five stage Change Model of Intimate Partner Violence (CMIPV) (Fenlason, 2009) is described by the man gaining awareness and understanding, rather than externalising the problem and blaming others. Fenlason's study participants included couples where IPV had been perpetrated, and this stage was punctuated by the couple separating. He identified that some of the men were too emotionally enmeshed to separate their issues from

those of their partners. Although a couple of the men initially resisted separation they later recognised that being in the relationship at the time “would not have been a safe place for them to be vulnerable enough to explore what they were doing and what was going wrong for them internally” (p. 69). The need for some men to have a separate arena to the relationship where the man could experience safety and vulnerability, in order to explore his predicament, was shared by the present study participants. Examples came in the form of implementing a time of relationship abstinence, engaging in discussion with a family member and being part of a LWVP.

The themes covered by support and acceptance indicate the importance for a man who has perpetrated IPV to be able to experience himself as redeemable whilst acknowledging that the IPV he has perpetrated was not acceptable. It is also crucial for him to feel that he is not alone in the world in facing up to issues of IPV and that he has the autonomy in making the decision to change rather than being forced. These experiences appear to be a prerequisite to the man committing himself to engage in self-reflection to aid stopping his use of physical violence and also to make learning alternatives to violence possible.

Chapter Six

Analysis and Discussion: Engaging

The narratives of the men in the study spoke of a time when, having made a choice to seek an alternative path to IPV, they began to engage in processes focussed on stopping violent behaviour towards their partners through increasing their awareness emotionally and cognitively. Having accepted that in some way they have a problem that they required support to address, the men engaged in utilising supports and resources that were available. The themes in engaging include: increasing sensitivity and emotional awareness, affect regulation, critical reflection, taking responsibility, and connecting to values/faith/something bigger than themselves.

Increasing Sensitivity and Emotional Awareness

With receiving support and acceptance, the men in the study experienced a greater level of emotional safety. They dropped some of the defensiveness they were carrying and began a process of increasing sensitivity to their own experience and those of others. Putting less focus on guarding their character from attack meant that sensations they would have not noticed came into awareness as did the effect that their actions were having on themselves and others. Frank articulated a range of sensations and experiences he became aware of, due to attending the LWV programmes. This awareness began in the initial program that he participated in and as Frank noted, expanded and was integrated due to ongoing participation in LWVPs. Once he felt safe in the initial LWVP he started to be re-sensitised to the feelings he experienced when he became aggressive and abusive:

“I used to feel sick, physically sick when I was, when I became aggressive and abusive and verbal and, there was something in me, and I would ignore it, I would ignore it and I would blame, I would blame outwardly, I wouldn’t look at myself. Once I got in touch with the fact that those things were happening to me, and there was a connection to the way I was thinking, as I stopped the behaviours, and I became more aware of them and less likely to do them, I started to feel healthier. And then I started to see behaviours around me and I started to think, this isn’t right.”

He became aware of physical sensations when his tension was rising, e.g. an aching head and sick in the stomach and he began to connect these to feelings, which had previously been ignored:

“Because I had connected to myself and so I had become aware of what was happening inside of me. I’d just ignore that once, I’d be like that wasn’t happening as far as I was concerned. That was always happening but I was just ignoring it. And so I started to feel, yeah, that was the biggest thing I would get.”

As Frank states the sensations and feelings were not new but rather had been suppressed. Feeling the safety to allow him the time and space to be aware of his feelings meant that he could also become aware of how to attend to them differently. He recognised that his initial feelings were of hopelessness or powerlessness and that his abusive behaviour was motivated by his desire to ameliorate these feelings. He did this by using actions to dominate and overpower others,

“I think it was about feeling powerless and trying to regain some sort of power.”

Attending to his sensations and feelings contrasted strongly to the previously desensitised life he experienced due to defending himself against perceived attack from others. This enabled him to make a move from reacting habitually with arrogance, by assuming what others were going to say, cutting them off, and overpowering them verbally or physically, to being able to listen to others and respond accordingly. Frank spoke about his experience of dropping the arrogant attitude he exhibited having an unexpected positive consequence for him:

“Yeah and in, inversely what that let me do was, believe in myself.”

The attitude Frank had carried in order to protect himself from expected attack also had the effect of keeping him distanced from his own values and abilities. Barry also experienced a shift from acting out of arrogance when he vividly described the experience of ‘hitting rock bottom’. He found himself in a position where he could no longer ignore the effect of his actions but instead became sensitised to what was happening for him:

“Like that’s what did it for me and I think I, I got to this sort of period in December, flunked this course at the last hurdle, passed everything else but at the last hurdle, which was a key one, I couldn’t get over, and then, I had this 2 week break over Christmas, when everything shuts down and I was like, this has got to change, I’m nothing now, I’ve had this huge fall from grace, you know, I’ve never really failed things before but now I have. So I failed this relationship through my own stupid behaviour, I failed this course because I was arrogant and my behaviour in that relationship was about, was arrogant.”

Reaching a state of feeling lost or “nothing”, was a shift from acting out of arrogance which had desensitised him to the effects of his behaviour and what he truly valued. This acted as a starting point to re-evaluate his life, his actions, particularly in relationships and ultimately what he wanted in his life.

The experience of feeling shocked by the severity of damage James caused when he hit his partner appears to have instigated James’ awareness of how his actions impacted his partner. This was reinforced by what he was learning about the effects of his abuse,

both from his partner and the LWVP he was attending. His learning became an ongoing reminder for him to stay aware and sensitive to the experience of his partner:

“Um, mostly it would be just raising my voice. Just, that was enough, apparently I’ve got a voice that always sounds grumpy. Which made it hard afterwards, you know. I knew, from the second I hit her, that was it, there would be no future. Because, she even said at the end, “I’m scared of you”. Even though I’d changed, there was always that, and I could see that in her when I started raising my voice, that she’d, she would just, shutdown, and ah. And that, that was sad to see, to be honest. That fuckin’ hurt, quite a bit, to see somebody you love so much, fuckin’ scared of you”.

As with other men, James’ increased sensitivity had an impact on his awareness of how his actions affected his partner, and how the actions or comments from other men affected him. For James this was his third programme. He spoke of feeling a positive connection to the facilitators in this program, an increased awareness that the programme could be useful in his life and also being able to differentiate what behaviours other men exhibited that he wished to associate with or that he wished now to move away from:

“No I had done a couple of other programs, which gave me some sort of insight, but the programme I did here built on that and really reinforced stuff. I guess the people. It was run slightly different. They told you basically the same thing, only slightly different. But I don’t know, this one seemed to sink in for some reason. And I guess it’s, probably the attitude too. Like I noticed other people, certain people on the course, when I was on the course, who had that old school mentality, that’s how things were supposed to be. “Fuckin bitch. Do what she is told”. But they were older and it was just ingrained, it’s how you were. Its environmental, I suppose, fuck everybody around them, that’s what they’re like. Which is, yeah, not where I came from. I never saw my dad hit my mum, ever.”

He now felt empathy for his partner due to being sensitised to the effect of his abuse on her. James also became sensitised to the language a number of the other group members used in relation to women, from which he appears to want to distance himself. It certainly starts to lead him to reflect on whether any kind of IPV is acceptable and the type of person he was brought up to be; in effect what values he carries in his life. He also became more aware of how aggressive people looked in public, giving the example of one man he worked with whom he saw as a control freak and very infuriating:

“I look at him and I go, oh fuck, I don’t want to end up like him. I hope people don’t see me like that.”

So James became sensitised to the effect on others of his own aggressive behaviour, through becoming sensitised to the effect on himself of aggressive behaviour. He

experienced how distasteful aggressive behaviour looked and was motivated to not act this way, as he now realised the consequences of his behaviour.

Living in a place where his abusive actions were not questioned allowed David to stay insensitive to their effect on others and him. On coming to New Zealand he reunited with his mother and with painful memories that the physical distance had previously enabled him to ignore:

“Yeah. It happened pretty much, ah, because up till that point our relationship was on the phone. It was just, if I don’t like what she was saying I would just put the phone down. Speaking to her face-to-face is kind of different. So, ah, that’s when I started to think about, ah, you know, ah I felt loved, I felt, you know, we had some deep conversations, that we’d never had before, because I was never around, I was away from her.”

In his narrative David spoke about fear and anger he carried for his mother, even as an adult. These conversations proved to be very positive for him; through allowing himself to feel the pain, he was also able to feel loved. This opened the door to experiencing a range of feelings he had previously shut out.

Learning what constitutes IPV and its effects was important for John as he became more sensitised to the effect on his family of his aggressive or abusive behaviour:

“I attend the programme and talk to one of the facilitators, I realise, anger it’s all right, but abuse, it’s not okay.....So the change, I have to change myself. I notice as a dad, when I speak they listen; when I get angry, they notice that I’m angry. You know, it’s not a good atmosphere in the home, because it cause fear in the children”.

As with most of the men, the effect of violence and aggression on their family, particularly the children, was a strong motivator to change. John indicates that he would expect to be listened to and noticed by his children, as he is their father and therefore the authority. However he now speaks of becoming able to sense how the children become scared when he shows aggression and is overpowering, rather than being respected and loved as a father.

None of the men found increasing their self-awareness of sensations and feelings to be an easy or simple process, as it was often difficult to articulate emotions or feelings, and to identify the physical sensations that they were experiencing. Some spoke about feeling deterred from this process as men and hence not learning to do this, as James expressed:

“this makes me feel like this, just talking about your feelings, about how something makes you feel, which, fucking Kiwi guys can’t do, can we?”

James spoke of frustration and having not learnt to identify and express feelings previously. For him and others, learning to identify physical sensations and emotions was often helped through support from other person including the facilitators of the LWVP, counsellors, mentors and partners.

Some of the difficulty in gaining awareness was expressed by Martin, who initially began the process on his own, then with his wife from what she was learning, and subsequently in an LWVP, professional training and personal counselling:

“I remember finding it difficult. I remember finding that whole process of self-awareness quite challenging, to, especially in the beginning, you know. What’s going on for me, I had not much of a concept about that and I needed to work very hard to identify what was going on for myself. Um, but I see with all this training and practicing and once I decided to do that, it became easier.”

Martin aptly expresses the need for time and support to practice self-awareness. Although gaining self-awareness appears most strongly under the major theme of engaging, like all of the subthemes mentioned in this chapter, it played an ongoing role in the desistance process for the men.

Affect Regulation

Learning to be aware of body sensations and emotions and how to manage these were identified by some men as occurring simultaneously and by others as separate themes. This may have been due to how the men were introduced to this process, in particular whether it happened through engagement in an LWVP or not. In the LWVP, processes and techniques that helped the men to build awareness of signs of tension and emotional build-up, like the tension scale, early warning signs, triggers, and volcano models, and ways to manage this, like the time out procedure were seen as very helpful in breaking the cycle of abuse. As mentioned earlier for Martin the process of awareness and managing feelings and emotions began by sharing these learnings with his wife and has continued over many years. This process gave him:

“a stronger sense of, gave me a stronger sense of self and therefore less of a need to um react to situations”.

Although Martin had ceased physical violence and gained significant awareness prior to entering an LWVP, he recognises that this process was continued, reinforced and made conscious in the LWVP. One part of this was that he also started to realise more about the dynamic in the conflicts that occurred between him and his wife:

“Well I didn’t understand or I wasn’t conscious of how um yeah how the effect was on the other because of their responses perhaps, again it would come back and escalate the situation, escalate rather than telling me that what I’ve just done, that it had an

effect. I'm not sure if I'm making myself clear, yeah it's much more vague, awareness first of all, that it was unacceptable and secondly what the effects were and, and a major thing when I come to think of it I probably didn't know or I didn't realize better ways to work to, to solve things. They were reactions, in the moment decisions."

In this extract, we can hear Martin talk about a barrier to him regulating his own emotional escalation, that of his partner reacting back, and his (and her) lack of understanding of the relationship dynamic. In a conflict Martin's tension and emotions would begin to rise, and when he acted upon these, his wife's emotions would escalate as well, which at the time Martin didn't understand and found to be threatening. This would lead to his emotions escalating further, and to him behaving, possibly abusively, but certainly in a way to cause distance between them. He knew at this point that using abusive behaviours was not acceptable but didn't understand that the fear these actions could cause might end up being expressed by his wife in a manner that he experienced as aggressive and/or threatening. The change that occurred during his time in the group was that he learned better ways of managing these conflicts, by using skills such as time out, to give him space or distance to manage his rise in tension, and time to re-evaluate his partner's reaction. Although Martin doesn't express this clearly here, in a later part of his conversation he spoke about how this was reinforced through conversations he and his partner had regarding the use of time outs during conflicts. These illuminated how they reacted differently in conflict, and how they looked to resolve the conflict in different ways, with Martin wanting to withdraw and his partner wanting to pursue the interaction until the conflict was resolved. Without awareness of this, the conflicts escalated, but with his newly learnt skill of using Time Out helped to deescalate the tension.

With the growing ability to regulate his emotions Frank experienced a growing confidence in himself:

"My heart wasn't racing, thinking this is an attack, this is an attack. I could sit back and go, wow, and I could be in a proper relationship with that person listening to what they had to say."

He was able to watch his tension, using the tension scale as a guide, and not let himself get to a point where he would boil over or explode. This opened up a whole new world to him where he could hear what other people were saying rather than assume what they would say and cut them off. Now Frank was able to make emotional contact with other people, including his partner, and therefore able to build intimacy. He went from being a man, effectively isolated in a relationship due to being defended, to one where honest and open communication and interactions could occur.

John became aware that he had been driven by his emotions, which he had not been aware of but acted upon. By recognising when his feelings and tension increased, he realised he was able to make a choice, to feel the anger but not use abuse. He states:

“What that really connect with me, to notice when my tension, it’s rise, I had to make a choice, to walk away or bring it down. Because if I carry on I’ll end up abuse, but I realise, the notice of my feelings and then I understand about myself more and then I practice that and then I see the benefit of it, you know, when my tension go up, I just walk away, or bring it down.”

Being able to notice when his tension was rising gave him the power to choose a different behaviour to IPV. He used the time out method, by walking away and reflecting on his tension level in order to de-escalate. He experienced benefits from not resorting to IPV and also from understanding his own process more. This began to open up new possibilities for relating better to his wife:

“In my thinking I said, I can’t carry on because I’m heading to the danger zone. You know, and also help me communicate to my wife my feeling. And when I’m in a situation like that, it keep going up I can, she understand me, you know, and back off, so we’ll come back later and bring it up again. So not only realise myself but also try to help my wife to notice, when I’m up to a stage, you know, we might as well just back off and have another approach and then come back later, and talk it out till, bring our tension down.”

John’s previous behaviour had been motivated by emotions that he was unaware of. Instead he would react with anger, aggression and IPV. Having learned that IPV was not okay, that feeling anger was okay, he was able to progress to being sensitive to the body signs and underlying emotions that motivated his anger and aggression. Through this process of managing his rise in tension and emotions, often with the use of time out, he gained the awareness of what he could communicate to his wife in order to de-escalate his feelings of anger.

James recognised the benefits of experiencing his feelings and being able to manage them so that he did not act abusively:

“You don’t have to get all emotional about things. You don’t have to let your emotions take you over.....Cos emotions can fuck you up. They’re the ones that make you do the silly things.”

He learnt the benefit of using time out and communicating to his partner what this was and why he was using it:

I used to go for rides quite a bit, or do the, I will be back in 10 minutes and go and have a cigarette, or whatever. And she would respect that and not try and chase after me cos she knew. She knew the process.

He also spoke about using singing to manage his emotional build-up which he was able to use at work:

Like I've got a guy at work and, fuck he rucks me up something chronic, ah, I just end up singing songs now, no matter how pissed off I am about it, which is something that I've learnt in here too, which has been helpful."

The ability to manage his emotional build-up at work was useful for James, in particular, as he had used general violence towards other men in the past and had lost employment due to his aggressive behaviour. Learning to regulate the rise in tension and emotion experienced in stressful situations with intimate partners, along with the use of de-escalation tools such as Time Out, meant the men were better equipped to resist using IPV.

Critical Reflection

Although men may have thought about their behaviour previously, the beliefs that they carried would most often justify their IPV perpetration and reinforced the position they took. The men's narratives spoke of finding a new way of thinking about these beliefs where they critically reflected on them. They thought about their intentions behind their actions, the beliefs they carried that supported these actions and whether these beliefs now fitted with the person they wanted to be. This became possible for Frank due to feeling safe and supported in the LWVP:

"I was constantly defensive, I've always thought I was having to defend myself. And I wasn't having to and once I was able to let that go, then some part of me went into, um, gosh, I think I became aware because of the, the support of the challenging nature of the group, I became aware of how I was impacting people. I would start, I would start to see people, flinch or react to the way I was treating them or speaking to them and I wouldn't see that before. Suddenly, because I was being challenged and, to be aware of it and to try it differently, think differently or even consider a different perspective, rather than just my own, so I was starting to empathise with how people were feeling, when I treated them a particular way. And I think that's what bought me into the, it drew me further and I was starting to have good relationships with people. And it was reminding me that, you're here because, it hasn't been working for you and actually things are starting to and someone said to me at one point, I remember way, way back someone said to me that, you're so different now. I really enjoy talking with you. And that person had basically told me to go away in a different way than that, quite aggressively because of the way I spoke to them. And to hear that was quite uplifting, yeah. So it was things like that, the impact I was having on people that

changed. I was able to stay in good friendships or I say, in good relation with people, and good relationship with people, suddenly it was working and I could feel my tension was down, I was, so I had more time to think, I wasn't reactive, I was able to appreciate people, which helped me also to empathise with their situation, so I was listening to them and hearing them. It made a big difference, massive, massive difference."

Here Frank describes how, once he felt safe enough, he was able to reflect on his assumptions and perspective when challenged by the facilitators and members of the group. This had been a difficult process for him previously, as he was vigilant to defend himself against expected attack. Being able to stop and reflect critically on his experience was important for Frank, as it opened up the opportunity to not only avoid perpetrating physical violence, but also to begin the process of considering the use of alternative respectful behaviours that could maintain long-term desistance. This enabled him to empathise with the experience of others in relation to his behaviour and then to implement respectful behaviours such as listening to others and taking their perspective into account. Receiving positive feedback about the changes he had made in his behaviour reinforced his desistance process. Reflecting critically meant that Frank was now questioning behaviours and beliefs that he took to be normal:

"Because that's what everyone else did. And then I realised in actual fact, regardless of what everybody else did, it's not okay".

And thinking about the way he viewed women, again beyond the belief system he had taken on to be normal:

"But I really learnt about appreciating people for their differences, because one of the biggest things for me was starting to value woman for what they did, instead of thinking there was some sort of entitlement, I stopped having a belief of this entitlement and started valuing them as a human being. It sounds horrible, actually when I word it like that. In essence that's what it was."

Rather than expecting people to meet his expectations Frank was becoming open to accepting and valuing difference. Feeling less guarded of himself had the effect of him acting less to control others and instead to see woman as people rather than objects. When Barry stopped to reflect on his girlfriend becoming pregnant and what he termed a disastrous relationship, he questioned how well the belief system he had been carrying up to that point was serving him:

"actually I wasn't brought up to do this. Like I've never heard my father say anything like this. Actually none of the friends around me behave this way. I suppose starting to see things like that, like what is in my context, like what are the yardsticks, you know, actually these guys seem to have a really good relationship, what is it about that."

He had not been taking account of his career and ended up in a factory job where he had a lot of time for introspection. Looking back he realises that if he had cruised through everything he may never have made the changes he did. The struggle that he found himself in became a catalyst for the critical reflection he engaged in and his change of behaviour and attitude.

Attending an LWVP helped Martin identify the relation between actions bringing short-term rewards but causing long-term problems, which led him to question a system he had automatically used up to that point and taken as normal:

“Yeah I believe the motivation for that was what I learnt at that at the programme, having the cycle of abuse explained, connecting with what’s going on for me through tension scale volcano models and how when we use, whether it be physical or emotional abuse or any of the other types that you we get worse off in the end, it’s that short term gain long term pain effect that I suddenly became aware of, it made sense I’d never seen it in that light never had it explained to me something that was so simple, that was the that was the most astonishing thing, yeah it was made to look so simple and I’ve experienced it in a way it is. It’s not easy to do but it’s simple and from that moment on ah it so that I became aware I could relate to those models and I had it in my head and I recognized situations when that occurred and a I found it really easy to not resort to the physical restraints or pushing at all.”

What is perhaps not evident here is that Martin was ready to hear how using abuse at the time keeps him in the cycle of abuse, that his action (which brought some immediate reward) was the cause for keeping himself a slave to that behaviour, and the subsequent long-term distress. If he still had a defensive attitude, it would have been difficult for him to stop, reflect and relate this concept to his own experience. Instead he was able to look beyond the instant gratification that can come with abusive behaviour and contemplate the long-term effect. He spoke about beginning to reflect on what his bodily sensations and feelings were telling him and how he interpreted these experiences:

“Like the gym. You go to the gym to build up something and um, that wouldn’t have been my cup of tea but in a similar way being self-aware was the discipline to ah become more and more self-aware, identify what was going on for me and I think that coincided with the whole process of actually acknowledging that there was something for self-affirmation as well, yeah. And if I was going to self-affirm I needed to know, to know what was going on for me.”

Through critically reflecting on his experience, Martin takes a step to trust his judgement and affirm the position that he holds. He is clear that he needs to understand how he is interpreting the information he takes in through his senses and his belief systems, so that what he affirms in himself is conscious rather than habitual.

This applied to any action he took, as he didn't want to cross that line into abuse again where it would be harmful to someone else and himself:

"Yeah, and an absolute and again a choice, I was very clear I that I didn't want to do that anymore, I didn't want to cross that line of, of um doing anything that was harmful to myself or someone else. So the arguments when they went beyond the acceptable, I, I felt it as harm to myself as well actually."

He recognised that perpetrating abuse harmed himself as well as his partner, with the damage to his own self-esteem lasting much longer than any brief benefit he gained from overpowering his partner.

David's narrative spoke of becoming aware that his use of violence had a short-term pay off but long-term costs. He had learnt during his childhood to use violence to protect himself:

"I mean there was a belief that you need to do this sometimes, you need to make sure everybody knows that you are serious."

But coming back into contact with his family, reunited with his sister who he had been violent towards as children, he realised how this was still affecting her. Whilst he wished to repair the relationship he found that the damage from that past violence was still hurting her. By recognising the scars that his past violence left on others, he also became aware of the cost to him and how difficult, if at all possible, it would be to repair this damage. It led him to reflect on the beliefs that he had lived by:

"There was a time when I thought violence was good, it toughens you up, it hardens you, so when you go out into the world you can handle people.... it wasn't till, obviously till a bit later that I realised, it's not, you know, it doesn't do that, it doesn't really build you up to be, to be able to, to be social, engaging and stuff like that, it actually has an opposite effect."

It still took some serious reflection on David's part to convince himself that the consequences of not making change were too large:

"I think I recognised, you know, dude if you keep on down this track, you're going to hurt or kill somebody or go to jail, so. And you don't want to hurt people that you love. These are the conversations that I would have with myself, and obviously it would help me, it would help me around clarifying the purpose of making this change. So yeah, and being aware of the consequences, and also being aware that it's not always going to be like this, but the first couple of steps are difficult and uncomfortable."

Acknowledging that he wanted to stop using IPV meant facing up to the effects of his past behaviour, which was painful for him. But he recognised that there were benefits that he would experience later, such as feeling better about himself and feeling closer

to those he loved, some of who he had hurt. His experience of being an athlete helped him to see the long-term gain outweighing the short-term pain, as being a sportsman had taught him about working hard now to reap the benefits later. Like Martin he recognised this principle but learnt it in a different way:

“I would tell myself, it’s going to be hard in the beginning, but if you really look at the big picture thing, it’s, it will, I’ll benefit from it later on down the line. And I think I have, I’m reaping some of the benefits, I’m happier, healthier relationship, you know people love me, like me being around them, I feel good about myself, I feel good about progress that I’ve made to get to this point, and time and effort.”

The ability to reflect on possible consequences of succumbing to acting for short term gain rather than focusing on long term gain has led to David catching his thoughts more quickly when triggered. He is now less likely to react and more likely to see alternatives. He gave an example of his experiences now:

“Yeah. Sometimes I think, what would I do if I punched that guy at the lights, who cut me off, you know the road rage stuff. You know I think about it for a split second, then I find myself thinking about other stuff. Which is good, because usually I’d dwell on it, I’d take it personal, I can’t believe this idiot cut me off. He did it on purpose. Look at him, and then I realise, and reflecting now, I wasted so much time imagining what people were thinking when they weren’t, they probably didn’t even know I was there. But yet it would consume me, and I would think I have to follow this guy, I have to give him a little piece of my mind at the lights.”

After a number of years of practising he now has the ability to reflect in the moment, which means he is less likely to be consumed by imagining others are purposely out to get him and therefore has to get them back. He has learnt to drop his defensiveness, which in the past would have motivated him to use violence against a perceived attack. He, like the other men, is experiencing the benefits of critically reflecting on the belief systems that he once carried, which supported his use of IPV, and violence in general, and to take steps to implement alternative beliefs systems that support peaceful behaviour.

Taking Responsibility

The men spoke about how taking responsibility for their actions had a powerful effect for them in both coming to terms with what they had done and also that they were the master of their own future behaviour. Whilst attending a LWVP Martin learnt to take responsibility for his own actions rather than blaming others for the situation or finding some excuse for his actions:

“Um, yeah everything in that programme I found really useful ah, the tools like time out, early warning signs um. Identifying behaviours I found really um useful and so it

was all about what I found really useful was the idea of taking responsibility. Beforehand it was so easy to turn the blame on someone else because I always found a reason to ah for something else to be blame for something that happened now um so by accepting responsibility um and really, really grasping that and really accepting that I think heaps has changed, yeah."

Recognising that he was in charge of how he behaved led to the understanding that he could change his own behaviour. He also learned that he wasn't in control of another person's behaviour, as he says:

"The benefits were ah no longer getting into situations where things would escalate, at least from my point of view ah more caring and ensuring that things wouldn't escalate from my situation on. I couldn't help someone else's escalation but at least I could look after my own".

Martin was taking charge of his own feelings and actions rather than reacting by trying to change the other person as he had in the past. This also helped him to recognise the consequences of his actions were the product of his choices:

"It's that thing about um when I engage with, with disrespect and become an active participant in that I always feel bad about myself later on and that effects the way I feel about myself so I suppose having to build myself slowly over the years, it was like guarding, guarding my, that core self-esteem. (Ihim, guarding?) Yeah, it's like being really careful with it and I didn't want anyone to chip away at it or any situation, least of all myself to um to have a go at it. Does that make sense? It does to me."

With taking responsibility for his actions, both abusive and non-abusive, Martin reflected on how any disrespectful behaviour on his part would decrease his own sense of self-esteem. He was now not blaming others or the situation for how he felt about himself but instead learnt to guard against perpetrating disrespectful behaviour. By taking responsibility for his actions the benefits of not engaging with IPV would be increased self-esteem. Conversely, using IPV or abuse would cause twice the damage to his self-esteem as previously; once for the act itself and secondly for letting himself down.

James began to see he had a problem with taking responsibility for his use of IPV towards his partner during the third LWVP he attended. He recognised the contrast between his willingness to take responsibility for his criminal behaviour, when he was caught, and how he had avoided taking the same responsibility for his IPV towards women:

"I guess the other times I was still trying to blame somebody else for my actions, as opposed to, you know, I'm in control of my actions, not anybody else. You know what I mean?Yeah I think, just the light went on. You can't blame somebody else. I've

never been one to, you know, I've had a bit of a criminal past, and every time I got caught, I'd say, yeah I did that. I'm not somebody that tries to, if you do something wrong, you pay the penalty, but I have always tried to excuse my behaviour from other life events or shit like that. You know what I mean?"

Becoming enlightened to personal responsibility was an important process for James to move from an external to an internal locus of control. This recognition that he was in charge of his actions also opened up a pathway to choosing to utilise alternative behaviours, which were not only IPV free but could also stimulate more peaceful intimate relationships.

In the LWVP John learnt he had the responsibility for choosing whether he reacted or responded to his tension and feelings, and that this choice made the difference between acting abusively or with care towards those he loved:

"You know, when I came back and do the living without violence, I notice, I'm responsible for my feeling. When my tension go up, I have to do something about it, so I understand more about myself. And that's the thing that I continued to practice and practice and live in it. And it happen.....So I, you know, to help me, to help my wife, to help my kids, you know I have to communicate my feeling, you know let them understand and I also have to, realise, I have to control myself, I have to look after my feeling. I'm the one who responsible to my feeling, not anyone else. I am responsible."

He had heard other men talk about communicating their feelings with their partner and came to realise that his wife didn't understand what he was feeling unless he spoke about it, as she couldn't just read his feelings or mind. He learnt to communicate his feelings when his tension was rising, so that his wife and his children could understand his need to take time out, and that he would return, with lower tension, and be able to talk about the situation.

"And for men, there are something that can't be changed, for example, for me as a father to my kids, I can't change. My (ethnicity), can't change, but my attitude can change, my anger can change, my feeling can change, so it possible you know and seeing in the program, it teach a lot about us as a man, our feeling and all that. So some things can be changed."

Once again taking responsibility for feelings and behaviour opened the door to implementing actions that could both stop the use of IPV and also improve his relationships in general. John summed up how taking responsibility helped him to recognise what he can't change and what he can change. For John and other men in the study the process of taking responsibility for their actions had an empowering effect, as it helped them accept the effect of their past actions and to be open to learning new safe and respectful actions.

Connecting to Values/Faith/Something Bigger

Connecting with their intrinsic values was very important for supporting change for the men from perpetrating IPV to taking on respectful/peaceful behaviours. This took the men beyond using IPV as a quick solution to the problem they were experiencing into connecting with the longer term goals and values that they had. They expressed these in a number of ways including learning to manage short term pain for long term gain, and seeing the longer term bigger picture rather than the instant gratification little picture, which could have a profound effect on how a man started to see himself and others. As Frank states:

“it’s almost as if I started to have faith in people again, or it was probably more that I started to have faith in myself, or started to connect with my, my real self, or what I believed in was the right way to be and as if I was sort of a different me, but I think it was because I was connecting to my heart rather than sitting up in my head”.

This meant that he showed value to the people he spent time with and wasn’t caught up in a win/lose battle. He felt he had the time to engage in a positive interaction and build positive relationships. He also started to see that there were people around him who were treating him well regardless of the fact that he was being disrespectful, that they could still see the good in him even though he was behaving badly:

“they saw good things in me and all was, was a case of me being able to see those good things too.”

Having others believe in him helped Frank begin to believe in himself and to connect to what he truly valued in his life. In the LWVP he experienced challenges to the way he rationalised his behaviour:

“a facilitator would interrupt me and say, can I ask you this and it would be confronting me about what I just said and was I being true to myself about that, was a really being honest about that to myself. So was it serving me, was it achieving for me what I wanted to get out of this program?”

Frank expresses the experience of being confronted by a facilitator as a positive one, in which he is being invited to reflect on how his behaviour is either undermining or supporting what he values. Being told that his behaviour was wrong or abusive would most likely have been received by Frank as an attack and he would subsequently have defended himself. Instead he engages in reflecting on how his actions have consequences, the movement towards or away from his life goals, and opens up an opportunity for him to choose the actions that will help on this journey.

A value that was important for John was his role as the head or leader of his family. Recognising the impact his use of IPV had on his family became an important source of motivation for him to become the type of role model he wants to be:

“I affect my home, my wife, affect my kids and the kids will be affect, too. Because of one person, change. That something I learnt from the programme, you know, it possible, if I change, it possible that everyone change.....Yes of course we can change, but my change as a father who lead home, will be impact the wife, the kids, the grandkids, by one man’s decision, of his change. So that’s something I learn about myself from the program and also I want to pass it on.”

His identity as a Pacific Island man whose role is to lead his family comes through strongly in his words. Prior to recognising the full effect on his family of his perpetration of IPV, John remained caught in using short-term solutions in the form of violence. Reflecting on what he values and how his actions will either support or undermine these values, also brought him in touch with what positive effect he could have on his family through making positive change in his own behaviour. There is a sense of liberation for John to be able to be the man, father, grandfather and role model that he truly wants to be. This is John’s bigger picture which includes the values that he wishes to live by and, as he states, to pass on to others.

David was also challenged to put his life on track when he became a role model for men he was seeing as clients in his social service role. He was guiding these men in the desistance process from criminal (including violent) behaviour. He saw that these men looked up to him for guidance. This caused him to address his own behaviour and thinking, which at first he found difficult because it meant remembering some of the bad things he had done. It did however lead to him reflecting on where he wanted to go in life:

“of course there is stuff that you want, want to have a family, a happy relationship, partner, so then you kind of ask yourself what kind of things need to happen for that to happen. And there’s, a lot of stuff I need to work on, to get, to get where I eventually want to get to.”

Helping men to cease their criminal behaviour and find a new path in life challenged David to find what he truly valued and how to manifest these values in his life. Overseas, David had experienced being looked up to as a role model with men from the gang. They saw him as having the potential to succeed in a way that they never would (or could), supporting him by giving him money for books and checking with him as to how he was going:

“One guy said, dude, mate, you’d better not fuck up man, cos you, I wish I was there, you are smart dude but you do stupid things. I wish I was there. It was almost like, you

make it, we all make it.... Because, we're not that smart. I didn't think I was that smart either, but that's what they said."

Although it didn't make sense to him at the time, on reflection he now understands that they were saying they were proud of him:

"So that also contributed to my thinking about, I can't keep messing up like that, why am I messing up? Am I afraid, am I afraid of failure or success, I was just thinking about those things."

The fact that he did 'mess up' overseas and didn't fulfil the potential that these men saw in him may have added to David's motivation to succeed as a role model here in New Zealand. Connecting to these values certainly helped him to maintain distance from IPV at the time. Later when he became a father he connected to his desire to be a positive role model for his daughter, both to avoid mistakes his own father had made and to prepare his daughter to be a strong woman in the world. It was when his daughter was very young that he realised she looked up to him for guidance, both in what he told her but more importantly how she saw him behave in relation to women. This motivated him to question how he viewed women and how he behaved towards them, with the effect being that he identified other forms of abuse that he used towards women and stopped using these.

Finding faith in Christ helped Martin to connect with the values that he considered important. He and his wife found a joint faith that supported them as they became Christians at the same time:

"In a sense all of a sudden we had a world view we can relate, that we could relate with, ah um, there's plenty in that that was problematic in terms of the institution of church but ah for us but there was enough there for us to to yeah to adopt and to use as our foundation to our relationship, to our family, that worked."

Christianity gave Martin a set of values that he could relate to and aspire to. Becoming Christian with his wife was another support for them feeling united in their journey forward, especially as they found couples within the church who supported some values that ran counter to those the church taught; non-patriarchal values:

"we very quickly, ah, encountered people in the church as well, or befriended, who had ideas that were more like our own. So they more or less mentored us and giving us the freedom to have our own values as well and not, not to take on everything that was preached. So they gave us permission, or that gave us the permission to, um, to be discerning about what to take on and what to leave out."

The process of whether to become Christian had included many conversations between Martin and his wife. As they had already gained some communication skills

from sharing in what Martin's wife was learning from her social services training, they were both better able to express their opinions on the subject. Although they were not always in agreement, they were able to find common ground:

"Absolutely and I think those were the reasons why yeah the good times lasted longer and the conflicts were further and farther between, ah yeah definitely it gave us ah a purpose really for the relationship and for the family and hope connected with the goals of my wife's study and of course in the faith there is hope built in anyway, things make sense and create meaning um."

For Martin gaining purpose, hope and meaning gave him more confidence in himself, which had the effect of decreasing his defensiveness towards his wife and others:

"So the faith helped me to actually take distance from those characteristics which I think again helped help me in my relationships, more tolerant, less judgement ah more acceptance I think that was some of the benefits for me of finding faith."

Here there are a lot of similarities in Martin's narrative with what other men spoke about once they connected with their values, faith or the bigger picture for their life. Like others, not feeling the need to defend or prove himself meant that he gained a number of personal qualities that enabled him to be more caring towards himself, his wife and others. Qualities such as tolerance, acceptance and being less judgemental began to grow, enabling Martin and the other men in the study to be more open to engage in peaceful interactions.

Discussion

The superordinate theme of engaging covers experiences that the men in this study found useful in order to identify where the problem lies in their use of IPV and the strengths to make changes. All of these themes cover intra-psychic activities that the men engaged in. Although these processes may have happened in an intervention group such as LWVP, in counselling, with the support of friends or family, or predominantly on one's own, they entailed psychological and cognitive processes that the man now felt safe enough to confront. In this section I will be discussing the relevance of each sub-theme to the desistance process, firstly in relation to some differences in learning styles experienced between the participants, and secondly in relation to previous research.

The themes included in the section on engaging involve gaining insight into social, emotional and experiential phenomena. The men tended to require a higher sense of safety to engage in discussing these processes, in their own lives and also during the interview. In conversation they might initially not wish to divulge this information or at first not remember its relevance. In the interviews undertaken for the present research the amount of information given, specificity and detail concerning these themes varied

considerably between participants. The four men who attended LWVP tended to give more detail on topics related to emotional awareness and regulation than the two men who did not participate in any LWVP. This difference is probably due to the focus that the LWVP had on attending to emotional awareness and affect regulation and to articulating these experiences.

The narratives of the two men who had not attended a LWVP as a participant tended to speak less of the emotional processes and more about cognitive processes i.e. critical reflection and taking responsibility. However, this did not mean that building emotional awareness and managing these feelings was not present in what they said or not important in their desistance process. It was just that they didn't speak specifically of emotions or activities to manage these but were more likely to talk around these issues or use metaphors to describe emotional content. An example of this was David saying, "I felt loved, I felt, you know, we had some deep conversations", which was his way of saying that they had talked deeply about the emotions they felt. This was a new experience for David that was catalysed by being face-to-face with his very ill mother, and set the scene to be open to the sensations and feelings he had repressed about the violence he had experienced in childhood and the violence he had perpetrated. Another example was how Barry expressed feelings of emptiness, desperation and shame by using phrases like "I'm nothing now, I've had this huge fall from grace".

The person who gave the most detail to these themes was Frank. Over the past nine or ten years, he has had considerable engagement in therapeutic processes including attending nine LWVP, personal counselling and counselling training. He was therefore well-prepared to be articulate concerning the engaging process he underwent and very enthusiastic to speak about this. Martin and John also gave considerable detail on these issues and both of them have also attended a number of LWVP and/or other interventions. They were all examples of how the continual development of the skills involved in these themes, or at least having the environment to engage in an ongoing manner, helps a man to integrate not only IPV free behaviour but also emotional awareness to support peaceful behaviour. In comparison, James made progress in these engagement themes but did not have the ongoing support, in the form of LWVP or other interventions to more fully integrate the learning. Subsequently he had limited success in integrating the learning he gained from the LWVP. He was successful in reducing and possibly ceasing his use of IPV, but his narrative both appears to show inconsistencies in some of his behaviours and a lack of capability to engage in peaceful interactions on an ongoing basis.

When comparing the superordinate theme of engaging with the results of past research, the themes in the section are found in a number of qualitative studies, but appear to be absent from quantitative research, which is consistent with the findings

of Sheehan, et al. (2012). Quantitative studies appear to be more able to identify external factors related to desistance from IPV whereas the themes outlined in the section involve intra-psychic processes. The use of semi-structured or unstructured interviews in qualitative research offers a space for men to express the relevance of these intra-psychic processes, providing that sufficient safety and comfort is achieved between the researcher and participant for the participant to openly speak.

Although the five subthemes in this section have distinct qualities their occurrence overlapped considerably in the men's narratives. When reviewing the literature, a number of studies identified the themes related to engaging (Anderson, 1996; Stefanakis, 1998; Southers, 1999; Scott & Wolfe, 2000; Wangsgaard, 2000; Pandya, 2001; Edmiston, 2005; Fenlason, 2009; Ruwhiu, et al., 2009; Smith, 2011; Bonham & Vetere, 2012; Sheehan, et al., 2012; Morran, 2013). They however do at times have different descriptions e.g. gaining empathy, cues to action, reduced anger, reduced dependency, and a re-humanising experience that emerged from the 'talk-share-common ground' process that occurred in the emotionally safe treatment atmosphere labelled as "the establishment of the 'asylum'" (Wangsgaard, 2000, p.256).

Comparing the TTM to the Engaging superordinate theme would place it in the planning stage (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986). This would be consistent with the men's narratives that spoke of building personal responsibility and encountering non-violent norms. The present research concurs with Stefanakis (1998), as both studies identify that the process the men experienced with facilitators of the LWVP enabled them to choose actively to reflect on personal responsibility, values and beliefs, by accepting that they needed external help to do this. Participants, engaged in relationships that helped them to create new interpretive frames of reference to replace the belief systems they carried prior to experiencing a sanction. The ability to accept help came from not feeling judged as a man and recognising they had a problem that they did not have all the answers to solve.

Fenlason (2009) identified a stage of his CMIPV model called, Caring and Responding, which has many similarities to the Engaging theme. During the Caring and Responding stage, "these men transitioned from gaining awareness and understanding to letting it impact them and attempting to do something about it" (p. 80). In the study by Fenlason, all of the men came from Christian backgrounds and experienced this stage and the re-evaluation of their beliefs in terms of their faith, which was also noted by Edmiston (2005) and occurred for Martin in the present study. Fenlason found that the men had gained enough understanding in order to accept help to reflect emotionally and cognitively on their experience and belief systems, but were not yet ready to make behavioural and relational change.

In the study by Pandya (2001) she identified a stage where a self re-evaluation is undertaken that prepared the man for the change to new actions, once the resources,

support and information that had meaning for the man were obtained. This process of self re-evaluation has similarities to the present study, as does the step called, Honestly Assessing the Self-knowledge, identified in the study by Southers (1999). During this step participants would experience increased levels of self-awareness and self-acceptance, a decreased need to exert control over their female partners, and gained a feeling of control over their angry behaviour.

Most of the men in the study expressed how important regaining sensitivity and engaging in emotional awareness was for their progress to IPV desistance. There are a number of components of significance. Firstly, as Frank most aptly described, it enabled the men to notice how uncomfortable it felt for them when their feelings of anger increased and subsequent aggressive behaviour followed. Secondly, it brought men in touch with the damage the use of IPV had caused to them, which Barry described. Thirdly, the men's empathy for their partner's experience, in particular as victims of the man's IPV perpetration, increased. This was described by James, as was the fourth significant factor, which was becoming aware of how distasteful aggressive behaviour and disrespectful language was when it was observed in other men. The fifth component was that it not only opened the men up to recognising the build-up of anger, but also allowed them to experience other feelings, like hurt, sadness and powerlessness, which lay beneath the anger, as well as feelings like love, of which David spoke. The effect of connecting increased sensitivity and emotional awareness to the previous five points assisted the men to connect with the values and beliefs that are important to them and then to assess how their actions rated against these values and beliefs. And finally, becoming aware of sensations that related to their escalation towards violence was pertinent, as it laid the foundation for men to regulate these feelings, the tension associated with them and to engage in deescalating processes.

It was apparent from the men's narratives that they had difficulty in experiencing or expressing sensations and feelings, due to factors such as repressing them, learning to devalue them or simply not notice them, and as James pointed out, just not having the experience of talking about feelings. This made the process of increasing self-awareness difficult for most of the men, as Martin pointed out. A number of the theories that attempt to explain the use of IPV may also shed light on the difficulties named here.

Suppressing sensitivity and emotional experience has been linked to early childhood trauma or negligence and attachment issues (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Siegel, 2013). In order to not be overwhelmed a person may use defence mechanisms, such as suppression, in order to regulate his feelings. Over time these defence mechanisms become habitual and move out of awareness, causing the suppression of all sensations and emotions, to some degree, in particular those causing discomfort. Although a man may have suppressed these sensations and emotions, this does not protect him from

acting upon them in an aggressive or violent manner. Greenberg (2004) states “Secondary emotions are responses to prior thoughts or feelings or to complex sequences of these. Sequences such as, feeling angry in response to feeling hurt or feeling afraid or guilty about feeling angry” (p.8). Feeling angry can therefore be a maladaptive secondary emotion, which is driven by underlying adaptive primary emotions of powerlessness, fear, sadness and hurt. Because emotion is a primary signalling system that communicates intentions and regulates interaction, acting out of a maladaptive secondary emotion such as anger can lead to aggressive and violent behaviour. It is therefore important to be able to access primary emotions for their adaptive information and subsequent capacity to organise action and to regulate and transform maladaptive emotions. This was the therapeutic rationale behind the LWVP designed by Stosny (1993) that provided the participants for the study by Pandya (2001, 2009).

Similarly insecure attachments have been linked to disturbances in emotional regulation causing decreased self-esteem and increased interpersonal dependency and the formation of maladaptive secondary emotions such as anger and jealousy. The level of insecure attachment can vary and has been connected to the perpetration of IPV, especially amongst men identified as having more severe preoccupied or dismissive attachment styles (Bowlby, 1984; Dutton, 1998; Babcock, et al., 2000; Johnson, 2009; Bowen, 2011).

It is perhaps no surprise then that the men identified gaining an emotional awareness and the ability to regulate these feelings as being significant support in desisting from IPV. The men’s narratives echoed those that Wangsgaard (2000) reported from participants in his study, where touching on sensations and emotions, which they were able to express in the group, had a re-humanising effect. Being able to identify their own sensations and emotions appears to have made it possible for them to empathise with the sensations and emotions experienced by others, in particular their partner and children, a connection that Edmiston (2005) also specifically noted. Being able to acknowledge and accept the impact of their IPV perpetration on the partner and themselves was an important step in being able to take responsibility for those actions.

Whilst gaining an awareness of sensations and emotions was beneficial, the men’s narratives also spoke of the need to be able to regulate their affect. In the LWVP they learnt to do this using techniques such as the tension scale, a scale ranging from 0 (no tension) to 10 (explode or collapse), often utilised in the form of a volcano, to represent the decreasing ability to manage tension as it rises to the top of the volcano; early warning signs of tension build-up including emotions, body sensations, thoughts, and actions; triggers including places, times, people and events which were known by the man to be problematic; and the use of time out to de-escalate the tension, which involved leaving, using breathing or physical activity to decrease physical tension,

reflecting on the situation in order to find perspective, and then returning after a set time agreed with the man's partner, at which time they might talk or set the time to discuss the situation.

Learning to self-regulate his emotions by using time out became a worthwhile activity when Martin experienced his tension rising. This helped him to avoid becoming abusive by withdrawing from the interaction and having time to reduce the emotional intensity that was beginning to overwhelm him. Conversely Martin withdrawing felt threatening for his wife, who would then pursue the interaction in order to regain contact with Martin. This had the effect of feeling threatening for Martin, and he would attempt to withdraw more. This is a familiar cycle in many intimate couple relationships that has been identified through Emotionally Focused therapy (Johnson, 2009) and family systems theory (Bowen, 2011), where the couple attempt to manage conflict in a way that matches their attachment styles, but where the interaction can become aversive and hostile. The study by Bonham and Vetere (2012) identified the same attachment processes happening in some of the six couples who participated. Martin and his wife were able to discuss this pattern, understand the roots of it and their family background, and find a compromise that met both their needs. This is a good example of how Martin began to use his growing emotional self-regulation and empathy for his wife's experience to be able to engage in such a negotiation. This is also a testimony to how his wife was able to do the same, and how working as a team can enable peaceful interactions to develop.

Greenberg (2004) identifies that "emotion thus regulates self and other, and gives life much of its meaning" (p. 3), which highlights the importance of building awareness of sensations and emotions is to cognitive processes including critical reflection and identifying values, purpose and beliefs. The emotional connection to our various values and beliefs allows us to identify whether our actions support or undermine those that give us purpose. In order to begin the process of critically reflecting on their actions and beliefs the men either felt some sense of desperation and/or felt safe enough to be challenged in these areas. Desperation was probably more the case for Barry, David and Martin where critical events occurred that led them to begin this process on their own or in conversation with family or friends. Martin also later joined a LWVP where he mentions how the questioning from the facilitators challenged him to critically reflect on his actions. John, James and Frank also spoke of being challenged by the facilitators and how they felt safe and supported to consider whether their actions were meeting their values and needs.

The process of critical reflection usually requires a person to slow down their thinking and emotional reactions to a situation, in order to view it from more than the habitual position that they take. In the LWVP, facilitators holding men to view different perspectives taught them that they could see alternative positions that could lead to

alternative actions to IPV. The process of reflection in the LWVP the men attended, usually involves exploring what intention their action had, whether their action fulfilled this intention, and what the consequences were to this action. There would then be time to explore how an IPV free action could fulfil the intention desired, without the negative consequences previously experienced and instead with positive consequences.

All of the men's narratives showed that they reflected on their beliefs, that had supported abusive behaviour towards their partners. Many of the beliefs that they held regarding perpetration of IPV were formed through life experiences and included social constructs related to masculinity and how they should be as men, conservative gender role ideals related to being a protector etc., and gender role expectations of male dominance and privilege (Woodin & O'Leary, 2009). By critically reflecting on their pre-sanction/LWVP belief systems and attitudes the men were enabled to look beyond these, and to construct belief systems that supported the non-violent person they wanted to be.

Increased emotional awareness and regulation skills, supported by the growing ability to critically reflect helped men to differentiate what actions they were responsible for and what belonged with another. Rather than blaming others, in particular their partner, for their own use of IPV, the men could recognise that it was their own choice. The locus of control moved from being external to internal, therefore empowering the men to take alternative action. The relationship between taking responsibility for past behaviour and aiding IPV desistance has been identified by many of the previous studies on desistance (Stefanakis, 1998; Southers, 1999; Scott & Wolfe, 2000; Edmiston, 2005; Sheehan, et al., 2012).

There are different ways that a man can take responsibility for the IPV he has perpetrated. One is to acknowledge that he has committed a particular action. To also acknowledge that the act is abusive would be an increase in a cognitive recognition of responsibility. What appears to be more significant in aiding the IPV desistance progression is to emotionally acknowledge responsibility, through an awareness of the affect that an act of IPV has on the victim, those close to the victim and to the man himself. An emotional recognition of the effects of IPV helped Martin to identify how his use of IPV would cause long term harm to his relationship and to his self-esteem. Learning how to manage his emotions assisted John to take responsibility for recognising his own build-up of anger, regulate his build-up and also to inform his family of how he was feeling. For John and other men, recognising what they were responsible for and had control over, led to less blaming of partners for conflicts and IPV perpetration by them. It also meant they were more likely to leave their partners to run their own lives. An important revelation for John was that his partner could not

read his mind and was not obliged to act to manage his feelings, whereas he was responsible for this.

The process of increasing emotional and critical reflection enabled the men to evaluate how their behaviour supported or undermined the values that they had a growing awareness of. Frank identified that he was now connecting to his heart rather than sitting up in his head, which meant he could appreciate that there were people that saw the good in him and treated him with respect. Martin found that he experienced less judgement and more acceptance of others and himself when he connected to a Christian value system. Becoming a Christian was particularly helpful to him in his IPV desistance as, because both he and his partner made the decision to take on this faith, they gained a joint belief and values system. The importance of connecting to spirituality as a support for IPV desistance was also reported in studies by Southers (1999), Edmiston (2005) and Ruwhiu et al. (2009). For some men connecting to something bigger than themselves came through a desire to be an IPV free role model for a section of society they felt most relationship with. For John he wished to be a positive role model for his family and children and for David it was the men he worked with and his daughter. The connection with a man's value system was also reflected in the study by Stefanakis (1998), with the growing awareness of IPV free values and beliefs supporting the development of an IPV free identity.

Increased emotional and psychological safety enabled the men to engage in self-awareness and self re-evaluation. Their level of sensitivity to their own experience and that of others increased along with an increased awareness of their emotions. This increased emotional awareness was balanced with learning to regulate any rise in tension and tools to avoid the use of violence towards their partner. Self re-evaluation took the form of critically reflecting on beliefs and behaviour, which led to an increased awareness of personal values and responsibilities. The men were now ready to become pro-active in their desistance process, to go beyond simply stopping the use of violence, and to initiate behaviour to become safe and respectful.

Chapter Seven

Analysis and Discussion: Becoming Safe and Respectful

Becoming safe and respectful went beyond not using physical IPV and into the area of desisting from other forms of the partner abuse including psychological, emotional and financial abuse. Here the men are doing more than just managing their behaviour to not be violent or abusive; they are taking action to build a new identity based on behaviours that support safe and respectful interactions in their intimate relationships with women. The themes in this section include using skills for respectful behaviour; experiencing being part of a group, team or 'WE'; becoming discerning about relationships; and making lifestyle changes.

Using Skills for Respectful Behaviour

All of the men who attended an LWVP spoke about learning skills to behave safely and respectfully in relationships. One of the tools that Martin used was time out, which involves leaving for an agreed time when arguments are escalating, in order to bring tension back down and then to talk through the issue more calmly together. He found the time out worked well in helping him not become abusive, but that there was a way in which it did not work for his partner. Martin's partner, who came from a family where arguing out the issue was normal, had learnt to pursue the argument until there was some resolution. In contrast the Time Out was fitting well with Martin's desire to withdraw from conflict. Previously he was passive in these situations and would not mention or deal with the conflicts, unless they were initiated by his partner, but he was now developing assertion skills and the ability to talk about difficult issues that arose. Whilst talking about the Time Out process, he and his partner found an understanding for how each of them reacts differently during conflicts. Even then, he found withdrawing and avoiding the conflict to be his preferred action:

"Yeah, yeah. Um, I think what helped as well was, that whole idea of t.., what that, of being more open and honest about things. If there's something I don't like to say it and taking the risk in saying it. Yeah, I think I, in the past I would have been guilty of just letting things slip because I wasn't the one, I didn't like creating conflicts, or bringing conflicts to the fore, I was one of those, more passive guys, that would let it go and hopefully it would stay away. If you know what I mean. And ah, so I think I've learnt to be more ah assertive in that respect by bringing things up, in effect, if things weren't OK for me. When the risk of cre.., yeah, of displeasing the other person, and, and, yeah, I've been able to do that better. So it was important for me to bring it up anyway, and even though that may have been, ah, uncomfortable for my partner."

What encouraged him to be assertive was that he had learnt a motto that related short-term gain to long-term pain. Keeping in mind that dealing with the confrontation

or conflict would bring long-term benefits in the form of resolution of the issue and increased intimacy, helped him to manage the short-term pain that he experienced as threatening and confusing. He learnt to bring up uncomfortable issues so they would not fester and become bigger problems later. This also led to Martin and his partner gaining a better understanding of each other's needs during conflict, so that they were able to find a compromise and a healthy way to resolve these conflicts.

John also learnt to communicate in the LWVP and with his wife and children, in particular about his feelings, which he was motivated to do after hearing the positive experiences of other men in the group:

"I had to communicate a lot to my wife about my feeling, you know, and when I'm frustrated or anything, I have to let my wife know, and also when she realise the trigger, it's always, I communicate and make her understand, that will help me, you know, cos if it carry on we end up with the same result what has been happening in the previous. So I, you know, to help me, to help my wife, to help my kids, you know I have to communicate my feeling, you know let them understand and I also have to, realise, I have to control myself, I have to look after my feeling. I'm the one who responsible to my feeling, not anyone else. I am responsible. (When did you start talking to your wife about this?) Um, when I said the violence, the living without violence. You know and some of the class, they talk about communicating your feeling, and ah, so then I realise I have to communicate it, because sometimes my wife don't understand, you know, my feeling. When I notice, this really important, I have to communicate my wife my feeling and let her understand on that, and then I notice it's helped me, it's help her, it also help to create a different atmosphere in our home, you know."

Gaining the tools to communicate how he feels to his wife and children was a new experience for John. Previously he had no expectation of himself to do this, probably had few if any role models showing him how to do this, and therefore needed to overcome these barriers before he could initiate new behaviour. He was now open to seeing the other men in the group as role models. They showed him how he wasn't communicating his feelings and that his wife wouldn't know how he felt unless he expressed it. He observed how other men expressed their feelings and learnt to do the same, firstly in the group and then with his wife. He experienced how communicating his feelings improved how he felt, how his wife experienced him and how the whole family benefitted.

What helped Frank to recognise whether his actions, during a conversation with his wife or other people, were impacting them negatively, was learning to recognise other people's body language, for example flinching or going quiet. Alongside this he has learnt to recognise the signs of people feeling comfortable around him:

“and I’ve noticed that if I act in a way that brings people closer, then I’m not acting in a way that pushes people away.”

Learning to use this feedback loop has meant that he ceases using any actions that are impacting on people negatively far more quickly, if at all, and has learnt how to moderate his actions, for example to soften his voice so he spoke respectfully to people. Frank is also learning the importance of listening:

“So especially when my, my wife speaks with me, I’m ready to hear and I try to be as, instantly ready to hear whenever I possibly can with her, because that’s important for her, to feel heard……. Yeah valuing her as a person, because that’s what I’m asking for, so if I am asking for it, I have to be also willing to offer that, because then it’s a mutual relationship, not just one-sided.

Learning to listen to his wife required a large change in attitude for Frank, from being in control of the situation by taking action to accepting that listening was action. Now that he was talking about his experiences and feelings, he came to recognise that being heard was crucial to feel valued and empowered. Feeling valued was what he wanted in a relationship and he learnt that by showing value to his wife, in this case by listening, and by communicating how he felt, his new skills strengthened their intimacy.

James also learnt communication skills in the LWVP, which he was able to utilise with his partner. Her reciprocating this communication encouraged him to work harder at acting safely and peacefully:

“Coming here was part of that. But I’ve got to put it down to her, communication, with her. You know, good communication with your partner would have to be the key to everything.”

He went on to describe what good communication means for him:

“Honest responses. Not ones that are set in fear, you know, responses from partners, that aren’t, I’m saying this so I don’t get bashed. Honest, full on, proper communication.”

He began to recognise that his partner might respond to him in order to protect herself from IPV and that this would be done out of fear rather than intimacy:

“There’d be times that she’d shut down and say I can’t talk to you about those. I’d say, nothing is going to happen and reassure her that way, and she’d talk about stuff and we were able to, okay, this makes me feel like this, just talking about your feelings, about how something makes you feel, which, fucking Kiwi guys can’t do can we? (We’re not taught to.) A blokes a bloke. You’ve got a problem then sort it out. It’s your

problem then you sort it. You don't talk to anybody else about it. That's not what men do".

James makes a point here about how talking about his feelings was a new experience for him as he had learnt not to, in order to be a 'real Kiwi bloke' (a stereotypically silent, strong New Zealand male, who is definitely not emotionally vulnerable or communicative). It is important to recognise here that his partner did still feel anxious that James might react to what she said, and it is unclear whether she felt pressured to talk. Even if James managed to reassure her in a safe manner it would be understandable that she still felt anxious and hesitant to engage in a conversation. The rest of the interview with James implies that he went some way to ceasing physical violence but that he still used behaviour such as raised voice, aggressive body language and tone of voice, which was intimidating for his partner. He expressed the frustration he felt, as he faced the difficulty to unlearn what he had thought normal for a Kiwi bloke, to cease using an aggressive tone and body language and to replace this with safe and peaceful actions.

Although Barry didn't attend an LWVP he did make a point of speaking about how he had behaved abusively towards a previous partner, when he entered into in a new relationship:

"And we talked a lot about this relationship I'd had where I had behaved so abysmally. So abysmally, yeah, we talked a lot about that and what that was about for me, really along the lines of the conversation we've had today. And I think that was a really useful way of processing a lot of stuff and in those conversations I was really clear, this is not okay."

By communicating with his new partner how he felt about his behaviour in his last relationship, he learnt how to communicate his feelings more openly and honestly and to experience the benefits of doing this. He was also able to reinforce in himself how the abusive behaviour was unacceptable and to make a statement to his partner and himself that served as a pledge to move to using respectful behaviour.

David also didn't attend an LWVP, but spoke about being motivated to communicate respectfully with the mother of his child, as he realised that he was causing his daughter the same kind of tensions he felt as a child, when he felt caught between his acrimonious parents:

"Yeah, when I pick her up or drop her off, we speak in front of her, our daughter. So our daughter can hear what we're saying about rules and regulations and discipline, whether she's following the programme, that kind of stuff. So yeah, the communication has been good. It wasn't that good in the beginning, but now it's improved a lot. And so, our daughter understands that we talk and she can't, she can't get away with stuff in one place, which is what happened".

He made the change to speak openly and honestly with his child's mother after realising that she was important to his daughter and that speaking disrespectfully to her was being disrespectful to his daughter as well. He now recognises the benefits for all three of them when he communicates clearly. David did speak about attending a parenting course, which helped support his desire to be affirming of his daughter while still being able to hold clear and safe boundaries with her. For the last nine years he has been in a new relationship, with his partner living in a different city:

“And I’m conscious every time she comes to spend time with me, I’m conscious about, you know, how precious time is. You know, enjoy, maximise the whole time thing. And fighting and arguing is just a waste of time, precious time, especially if you have to return back to So maybe it is a conscious thing, the effort that I make, and then I look back, and I didn’t really make the effort. I let them do all the hard work.”

Here David has been motivated to use communication skills to engage positively with his partner rather than entering into arguments, as he came to recognise what he had lost in previous relationships by being abuse and taking those women for granted. Whilst he did not go into detail about the skills he used, he stressed that he learnt to be proactive rather than expecting women in his life to do all communication work.

All of the men's narratives spoke of learning to use a range of respectful communication skills which both enabled them to express how they felt and thought, to act assertively in situations where they may previously have avoided or used abuse, and to use respectful tone and body language. Gaining these skills and using them with their intimate partners and for David, with the mother of his child, brought benefits of more peaceful and satisfying relationships. It also brought with it the responsibility to use these skills, rather than the once familiar abusive behaviours.

Part of a Team or Group, ‘WE’

Many of the men spoke about a change from feeling alone or isolated to feeling more connected to their partner and/or other people, such as the men in a LWVP. This was expressed as becoming a team or group with common goals. Some spoke of feeling they had become a ‘We’, rather than experiencing being an individual with another individual in what was called a ‘relationship’. In this section I will firstly outline the examples the men gave of how feeling alone or isolated in the relationship hindered the desistance process from IPV and then how the building of a team, group and ‘We’ experience helped their desistance process.

How individualist action hindered IPV desistance

Most of the men talked of entering their relationship with a lack of maturity and without an understanding in how to be in an intimate relationship. Once any conflict began to arise in the relationship the men experienced resentment or frustration

towards their partners, which they had little understanding of or few relationship skills to manage. This set up an adversarial and competitive relationship, leading to the men (and possibly their partner as well) acting as an individual fighting to win a situation rather than as partners working together.

James began the relationship with his last partner, when she escaped her ex-partner, who perpetrated IPV against her, and went with her children to stay with James for safety. Providing a safe haven for her seems to have fulfilled a need in James to have some purpose, that of being a dad and a protector of women. Her escape came at a time in his life when he felt low in self-worth due to losing contact with his son, losing the relationship with his son's mother, and losing his sense of respectability due to gaining a criminal record:

"I had them there for a week or so, until then they went back for a couple of days and then they went to a woman's shelter, and then they basically, from the night they moved into the place they went into after that, I was basically, I pretty much stayed with them, because she was scared he would find them. So she wanted me there for security. I still had my own other place, but, not that I was ever there. So I was there to take care of them, take the kids to school and pick them up after school..... I sacrificed my ability to generate an income, in kind."

However, James's role as a protector eventually established a relationship dynamic where he could feel taken for granted or not appreciated and at times not trusted for how he took care of the children. Not feeling trusted in his parenting was the precursor to violence towards his partner. This led to him attending the third LWVP, after which he eliminated the physical violence. But the issue around parenting was not resolved and did leave James feeling some resentment:

"I always had this bit of annoyance I guess, in the back of my mind, that fuck, she chose her daughter over me, and I was right and she was wrong, and I ended up getting it.... Ended up being a bit burnt out. I suppose, that's part of why, it ended....It's just, yeah that ending part, yeah, nah, that was, I suppose she was shutting down. So it started, but I was, but I still managed to, nah, ha....You'd have to, and that started coming back at the end of the relationship. So I guess, she actually did us a favour, because it would have eventually, I think, could have gone back there".

This extract shows how James and his partner had not achieved a sense of cohesion or partnership, which left James feeling annoyed and eventually feeling burnt out. As James states his behaviour was deteriorating so that his partner began to shut down and if they had stayed together without resolving this issue he may have relapsed to physical IPV.

For Frank being in a relationship was necessary to fill a void in his life, so he approached relationships as a way of fulfilling his individual need, rather than seeking to build a partnership:

“because I felt empty and alone and incomplete if I wasn’t in a relationship, because I’d grown up believing that what you do is have relationships.”

The belief he carried that he needed to be in a relationship to be seen as normal or successful meant that he felt dependent on his partner to provide a sense of safety, security and feeling complete. Given his dependence on his partner and his belief that relationships are something you ‘do’ to avoid being alone, Frank’s individual approach inhibited a collaborative approach to partnership.

Having lots of sexual relationships gave Barry a sense of self-esteem, motivating him to act in an opportunistic manner in relationships with women, and to treat one of his partners abusively:

“in some respects I had no self-respect. And that probably was part of what allowed me to do that. You know coupled with the fact I had a lifestyle around getting pissed all the time and not really thinking about consequences and living for the day rather than thinking about the future and actually working towards things....I think people are unfaithful because it boosts their sense of self esteem, or they have several partners or are promiscuous, because a lot of that for me is about self-esteem and it was a way for me, I actually found a really good way of not being great academically or at sports or anything like that, but something boosted my self-esteem. And I guess that was it.”

Barry’s understanding of why he acted abusively was a lack of maturity and having a ‘lad’ mentality, where treating women like entertainment and consuming large amounts of alcohol was the norm. Both Barry and Frank were using relationships with women to fill insecurities they had, and were motivated by beliefs that were outside of their awareness. It wasn’t until they engaged in some critical reflection on these beliefs that they learnt to reciprocate support and could engage in relationships with women in a respectful partnership.

Lacking maturity also resonated for David, because he recognised that he had little understanding of the effect of his disrespectful and abusive behaviour on women. His role models for relationships had been twofold, firstly having the experience of his parents separating, with subsequent animosity between them, and where he felt caught between two individuals rather than relating to parents in partnership; and secondly, from his uncle, who whilst married, treated his wife with little respect by being violent to her and having ongoing extramarital affairs. Neither of these role models gave him positive training in how to relate as a partner or to deal with conflict in a respectful manner.

How being part of a team, group or 'We' helped IPV desistance

For those men who attended an LWVP, being in a group of men focused on relationship issues had the positive effect of learning to give and receive help and support. Once they overcame their initial anxieties that they would be judged or attacked, they realised that they were not alone as a man, who had made mistakes by using IPV, but who could still find acceptance as a person. Over time, this also extended to feeling like part of a group or a team, which gave support to their commitment for growth and change. The group experience produced a feeling of being part of a bigger project, in that their learning was supported both from receiving from others in the group and also giving to them. John spoke about how this was very important to him, as a man with other men developing how to be respectful men and fathers:

“Yeah. I learned a lot about myself, about my emotional, you know I learned a lot about that. Also, seeing, ah, the men coming together, you know try to sort themselves out, and for me something I am passionate about, that I learn, if I change as a dad, that change take place in the family. You know, that’s something I love to see, you know in the man’s coming to group.”

Men working together and taking responsibility for their actions and their families helped John to learn this lesson for himself and then to be able to pass it on to other men in the group. The sense of belonging and purpose in being part of a group, with reciprocal processes, was experienced as assisting desistance by those who attended LWVP. Even though Martin had made many steps in desisting from IPV on his own initiative, he discovered that he had more to learn when he engaged in his first LWVP:

“Ah, but the effect of the ah the challenges of the facilitators of the group and hearing and connecting with the other guys who had, soon showed me that there was a lot more for me to learn.”

The connection to other men in the group led to them learning from each other through hearing other men talk about how they had used new non-violent and safe, peaceful behaviours. Along with this came the experience and benefits of being listened to by other men. The men began to care about each other and recognise that there was reciprocity in the relationships they had with the other men, which was later transferred into the relationship with their partners.

The men started seeing a contrast between how perpetrating IPV left them feeling separate or isolated and how building a partnership that supported positive change for them brought the benefits of feeling closer and supported along with experiencing a more peaceful, intimate relationship. Working through difficulties together helped men overcome a sense of isolation, defensiveness and lack of trust, and gradually built the experience of “WE”: a team working together for mutual benefit and reciprocal

support. Martin spoke about how he and his wife had worked through some difficult times together which brought them to the brink of separation, but having the joint vision of preserving the family unit for their children meant they continued to find a way to work through differences:

".... We matured very quickly, we had grown up....., I think my motivation had increased therefore I was more careful, I think I used more care in the relationship in terms of um attending to the relationship, by spending more time, by by spending time as a family, as a couple, communicating, listening, speaking...."

This led to an ability to choose to trust, to take "a gamble" that behaving differently would work, that it wasn't the soft option or losing himself:

"the fear at that time would have been that I would give up too much of myself".

For Martin going through the process of deciding to become Christians with his wife supported their experience of being together in a relationship. This had been a long journey in overcoming disagreements and discrepancies in their beliefs, which was reflected throughout the relationship. The process of deciding on Christianity allowed a shift from win-lose mentality to a win-win, as Martin states:

"rather than if she's winning I'm losing it became more like let's be happy together, yeah and therefore the need to put her down or to call her names or to feel threatened by her became less as well."

It is very significant that Martin talks of feeling less threatened once he began to appreciate that they were working together. This is in contrast to his experience prior to becoming Christians together:

"I think it comes from a place of a lack of self- confidence. A lack of self-belief that what I had to contribute wasn't important enough. That and then the feeling of discomfort that came with that of, would express itself in the violent reactions because beforehand I may have been a lot more black and white in terms of my opinions and judgements of others as well."

Moving from an individualistic win-lose position to the win-win position of working together helped to alleviate Martin's underlying feelings of doubt and low self-confidence, with a corresponding decrease in attitudes of defensiveness, intolerance and competitiveness.

Frank echoed this experience:

"And I think it's because, as I, as my energy lowered, my tension lowered, I felt like I had more time, I wasn't so reactive, I wasn't up there where I was constantly, win or lose, there wasn't any win or lose. It was both win, win."

Working together as a team over time had the benefit of strengthening the men's experience of not only being with another person but also about being in a relationship together, as Martin says:

"Yeah it's interesting. So that would suggest something about my identity closely interwoven with ah the identity of our relationship ah? Yeah. I think it also reflects the fact that, that we've had such a long journey in overcoming those disagreements and discrepancies, ah, ah, it's been a long journey and we've come out, more or less, moving side by side on a lot of the issues. So it has become more and more, we."

Here Martin acknowledges explicitly that he and his wife have built a joint identity, "WE", a partnership of two people working together, which is linked in with their individual identities.

James spoke about a number of aspects in his relationship where he felt they worked as a team and how important having support from his partner was, when he employed alternative behaviours such as time out,

"A couple of times I had to go, hey look, I'm getting fucked off now and need to go for a ride, let's talk about this later, which is stuff I'd learnt here. What helped with it all is that she was on board with it and helped me..... If it was somebody else, that, um, didn't want to help you change, to change these behaviours, it would have made it really, really difficult, I think."

Through using the time out to stay IPV free he built up enough trust with his ex-partner for her to communicate honestly about how she experienced him, and how scared she felt when he got angry, because of how he looked. From this James learnt to modify his behaviour and expressions. It also encouraged him to stay committed to change, and vigilant and aware of the impact that his expressions and actions had on others:

"Well it was only because, I guess what helped me most was the feedback I got from my partner. She said that scares me, so then I was aware..... she helped me realise a lot of things, as far as, what I look like, what I act like, what it seems like. Apparently I'm quite scary when I get angry. Which is not a good thing, so I try not to get angry and that seems to be working."

The feedback James received from his partner helped him to recognise how he affected her, so he was able to empathise with her and to begin to identify the signs of fear in his partner, when he acted with aggression:

"and I could see that in her when I started raising my voice, that she'd, she would just, shutdown, and ah. And that, that was sad to see, to be honest. That fuckin' hurt, quite a bit, to see somebody you love so much, fuckin' scared of you."

James gives an example of how difficult it is to repair a relationship after having used IPV. Although he was making changes by decreasing and perhaps ceasing the use of physical violence, his tone of voice and aggressive actions felt intimidating for his partner, as she still associated these with the build up to physical violence that she had experienced.

Barry found the support of his partner very important in desisting from IPV and taking on respectful behaviours. He was honest about being abusive in his last relationship, talked about what he had learnt from this, and asked for the help of his partner to cease the abusive behaviour:

“Actually I know this behaviour is not right and actually I don’t want to behave like this and actually if I could ask one thing of you in a relationship, it would be that if you see me behaving like this, you have to tell me. And I knew in saying that, she would anyway.”

His decision to be with his partner had included an awareness of her strengths to not tolerate disrespectful behaviour from him, which he also saw in the support that her friends provided her. Having taken the time to critically reflect on what he valued and wanted in a relationship and his future, his thinking developed to be inclusive of his partner:

“It wasn’t just about what I wanted, it was actually about what we wanted, what we would build together and there was a lot of give-and-take. I wasn’t going to win all the time. You know it’s that idea, but if you’ve got a winner, you’ve inherently got a loser, so what’s the middle ground look like.”

In a similar way to how other men spoke about moving from an individualistic win-lose mentality to wanting a win-win situation in the relationship, Barry consciously made a decision to move away from using relationships as a means to boost his self-esteem and to engage in relating to his partner to gain mutual benefit. Here Barry talks of developing from a man who lives as an individual, without taking into account how he affects and is affected by his relationships, to being part of a system involving reciprocity and mutual benefit and based upon respectful behaviour. This had the added benefit for him of increasing his own self-respect.

Entering into being part of a group and having a sense of belonging, with other men in an LWVP, and/or in partnership in their intimate relationship, was important to becoming safe and respectful. By this point the men were actively investing themselves emotionally into the relationship, and engaging in mutual help and support.

Setting Boundaries in Relationships

Gaining the ability to discern who was and wasn't supportive for the man and his journey of desistance from IPV and to set boundaries in relationships came through as important in the men's narratives. The men made better choices about who they wished to be close to in their lives and who it was better to distance themselves from. Frank was becoming more sensitised to the people around him who were undermining of women and of the changes he was making:

"But I was also having relationships with people that, to be fair it was men, that were saying, so you're gay, you've turned into a soft cock, dadada, just fuckin tell her what to do mate, this kind of thing and I was thinking, actually I can't believe you're saying that, and then I would reflect and go, wow did I just think that? That's, that's different of me. And I suppose I simply distanced myself from that which meant that the relationship inevitably died, at that time."

He became aware that these men carried attitudes and beliefs that he no longer held and felt confident enough to not associate with them. Frank was no longer reacting aggressively to negative thoughts he might have, but rather he could take the time to reflect and speak about what he was feeling. He found that he could talk about his experience because he was now choosing people he could trust not to put him down:

"I wasn't getting kicked in the face or told, harden up, or you soft blah blah, or don't be a blouse."

Over time, his confidence and self-belief increased as did his ability to be assertive, due to gaining skills from the LWVP he was attending:

"Nowadays, I would actually come to that person and I wouldn't let that friendship die. What I would do I would actually confront the behaviour and I'd say, I want this friendship but I'm not able to accept that type of behaviour or that language."

As Frank says, with practice he has learnt ways to keep friendships with men whose attitudes differed from his and at the same time be clear with them that he doesn't accept abusive behaviour. This is a development that aids maintaining IPV free behaviour or more specifically the ongoing development of advocating for respectful behaviour towards women.

James also separated from his partner, and afterwards he was able to reflect on how his values clashed with hers:

"Yeah, I see it as, I can't, you can't blame others for what you do. You got choices. And finishing my relationship is probably the best thing I could have done. It's lowered my stress levels. It's helped me see things for what they are. It's made me look at what I value in life, what should be a mole hill and what should be a mountain. 'Cos that was

always a problem in the relationship, what I saw as a mole hill she would see as a mountain and what I would see as a mountain she would see as a mole hill”.

As he says, many of the disagreements between him and his partner appear to have arisen from having different values and goals in life. It may have been possible for James and his ex-partner to have worked through these differences and find some understanding, but instead it led to resentments and lack of trust.

Reflecting on his past relationship behaviour, Barry realised that who he associated with had an impact on him behaving disrespectfully in relationships:

“I guess the sad thing, in hindsight, you know, I couldn’t get away from, at that time I couldn’t get away from myself, which was actually like, which was all the lads stuff about racking the numbers up, things like that, and being in a relationship gets in the way of that”.

Better knowledge of his values meant he could make a more aware choice of who to enter into a relationship with and the type of people he chose as friends. In his new partner he looked for qualities like a strong sense of self-worth and assertiveness, which were qualities he valued and wished to aspire to. He recognised that the people she associated with would not accept disrespectful behaviour towards her.

Being able to identify and move towards those people who supported the new attitudes and behaviours that the men were exhibiting in desisting from IPV, and to identify and move away from those who were undermining of the men’s change, proved to be an important factor in a number of the men’s narratives. Instead, they were looking for people who shared the values that they carried, and with whom they could engage in relationships based on mutual help and support.

Making Lifestyle Changes

Many of the men’s narratives spoke of making lifestyle changes that were either identified as necessary, in order to support desistance from IPV and/or proved to support the man in desisting. Three of the men spoke about the part that overuse of alcohol and/or drugs had played in their perpetration of IPV and that they needed to decrease their use to support desistance. James told of two situations that led to him identifying that his use of drugs and alcohol needed to be addressed if he wished to decrease his use of violence:

“I had a bit of a P problem. It caused me to get violent, probably, short tempered. Yeah, I used to do P. I’ve been clean 6 years, seven years. Yeah, but at the time, I ended up telling my manager I was going to break his legs if he tried to, told me to do something.”

James was able to connect his Methamphetamine (P) use to his increase in aggression. He was sent to an LWVP at the time, by his employer, to work on the aggression he was exhibiting at work and he sorted out his use of P for himself, by abstaining from using it. More recently James had an incident related to his overuse of alcohol where he was rougher during sex than was agreed with his partner:

"I don't remember any of it. I got too drunk. Although I have, I haven't, because of that I've stopped drinking so to speak. Now I only have one, instead of six, now, kinda thing.....Cos I didn't remember any of it, which was scary for me, to think that I could do that to somebody that I cared about so much. Obviously, I have some issues somewhere over women that I need to deal with."

Reflecting on his excessive drinking in this situation, James realised that he was holding unresolved resentments towards his partner and that his actions were meant to punish her. Although he would normally control himself to not act abusively, he recognised how he got drunk so that he could act out aggressively towards his partner. Feeling regret for his actions he took steps to cut back on how much he drank at any one time.

Barry also identified the connection between alcohol use and perpetrating abuse towards partners. At the age of 20, being caught up in a "lads" culture of drinking as much as you can and using women for entertainment or status/esteem, was recognised by Barry as a factor that he needed to address in order to both desist from abuse towards women and to put his life on track with what he valued:

"And I think one of the things that escalated significantly during that time was probably my drinking, was my drinking, in terms of the fact, you know, I was drinking dozens, 50, 60 pints a week, going out 4 or 5 nights a week. And the pits of my behaviour were always when I was really intoxicated. And that's not an excuse for that behaviour, in any way, because I chose to drink but actually I, after that relationship finished, um, I actually had some issues about not whether I could trust anybody else, you know people have trust issues, actually I didn't trust myself."

The experience of hitting rock bottom, both for his behaviour towards his girlfriend and how he was ruining his life, led to him critically reflecting on his behaviour and how this was not supporting what he wanted in his life. This led to a number of changes that he made in his lifestyle, over the coming 10 to 12 years:

"And my lifestyle changed hugely. I moved away and I had no money. I stopped drinking, I didn't stop drinking, but my alcohol consumption slumped. Instead of drinking significant amounts each night, I became a real binge drinker, at weekends and such, but that steadily declined and tailed off over the years, to the extent now that I hardly drink at all. I guess I became more active. You know I had other interests."

Back then all my interests were, to be honest was getting pissed and having a takeaway. That was my interest. And now it's not."

For Barry taking stock of where he was in life and how alcohol was affecting him led to deciding to decrease his consumption or at least the way that he drank. As he grew older he continued to decrease the amount he drank and was proactive with taking up activities that helped to improve his fitness and health and ability to implement his life goals. David also noted the effect that alcohol had on the rise of his use of IPV:

"you know, you're popular with women, and you take advantage of that, and there's alcohol and all kind of stuff. So combine that with, you know, my beliefs about how to treat women that I picked up from my uncle. Yeah, I was pretty out of control."

Having alcohol and drugs readily available is identified by David as amplifying the abuse he used towards women. Taking control of his life meant changing his patterns of alcohol and drug use and work. David took up employment as a social service worker which was a move that signalled a change of direction in how he wished to live his life:

"When I got my first job once I got my permanent residency was..... Go figure. I would never have thought I would ever go and do anything like that. Just cause of my attitude towards authority, police and that kind of stuff.....then I got a real job. I had to leave doing that stuff with them. So, um, yeah so I was even doing messed up things even when I got here. But once I became a and I started working with men, offenders,and people coming in and interviewing guys....., you know that's when I started thinking about what I was doing. The whole ah, do you want to sabotage yourself again and put yourself into a position where you could actually screw yourself over or when are you, when you going to start getting serious with things.

Deciding to become a father was another lifestyle change that he implemented. Previously he would not have taken up this responsibility:

"Yeah, I felt I didn't have to cause I didn't feel like there was any young girls looking up to me anyway. But having a daughter, that's a little different cause now you've got someone who's looks up to you, to a certain point so I thought that um, what kind of guy would, if she grows up what kind of guy would she be attracted to, someone like her dad, who's a jerk and a dick or someone who's really nice who was respectful and was not abusive."

Both of these lifestyle changes had the effect of bringing into focus questions about how he related to and behaved towards women and also motivated him to put into place safe and respectful behaviour. These have remained as incentives to maintain safe, respectful behaviour.

Becoming a Christian engaged Martin in a new way of life:

“It coincided with, as well, shortly after that crisis we ah, we ah, found religion so to speak or or we we um got involved with people um with faith and started discussions and found ourselves drawn towards that. Um, So, so that coincided with all that as well. So the values that we had personally had an echo I don’t know, the ethics of faith we embraced at the time, if you know what I mean..... there was enough there for us to to yeah to adopt and to use as our foundation to our relationship, to our family..... it gave us ah a purpose really for the relationship and for the family and hope connected with the goals of my wife’s study and of course in the faith there is hope built in anyway, things make sense and create meaning.”

The values that were encapsulated in the Christian faith helped Martin to feel contained and supported in the changes that he was making in his relationship with his wife. Becoming a Christian at the same time as his wife meant that they shared a purpose along with maintaining their family and their relationship. It gave Martin faith in the vision he had for his life, whereas previously he had lacked confidence in his own judgement, and would frequently go along with others. His confidence was building as well and he began training in a different career:

“my own personal development definitely, through the inspiration of my wife’s study and the and I started doing more and more study myself as well which and that definitely helped um. Gave me more confidence as well um. Ah I did some pastoral care and counselling papers early on. I did some industrial chaplaincy part-time work um before I got into the counselling course proper. But all that slowly helped to give me a stronger sense of, gave me a stronger sense of self (ihim) and therefore less of a need to um react to situations.”

Actively going out into the world to invest time in training and self-awareness work meant Martin felt the benefits of being proactive with his life direction. Having a sense of being more in charge of his own life led to him feeling less dependent on his wife to provide direction. Subsequently his resentful towards her decreased as did his aggression.

The narratives of the men spoke of making changes in their lives that supported the desistance process from IPV and/or were initiated due to the man’s focus on desistance from IPV. Putting these lifestyle changes into practice brought the men more on track with their values and led to improved confidence and satisfaction in their lives.

Discussion

When the men in this study utilised the actions covered by this superordinate theme of becoming safe and respectful, they were holding to their commitment to desist

from IPV. They had found ways to cease using physical violence and through critical reflection on the behaviours they used in intimate interactions they had also identified other behaviours that were causing damage to their relationships. These behaviours included intimidation, psychological and emotional abuse, financial abuse, and nonphysical sexual abuse (including coercion and other forms of psychological or emotional abuse focused on sex and sexuality). The men realised that they needed to take action to decrease and preferably cease behaving in these disrespectful and abusive ways, in order to repair and improve their intimate relationship and because these behaviours were identified as potential escalators to physical violence. Becoming Safe and Respectful involved transitioning from internal processes contained in Engaging to external processes involving actions that made contact with their social environment.

All of the men gave examples of using new communication and assertion skills and how successfully using these skills was essential to building safety and respect. The skills they mentioned included listening, expressing their feelings and thoughts safely, speaking up about uncomfortable situations that might risk displeasing their partner, recognising what their partners body language is telling them in relation to the level of safety they are experiencing, learning to modify their own tone and body language to present themselves safely, and entering into open and honest discussions. All of these actions required making a conscious decision to put the effort in, which the men spoke of as producing positive benefits that outweighed any initial anxiety or discomfort. The men became proactive in building caring and respectful relationships rather than simply leaving this process to their partners or to chance.

When Martin left the initiating of conversations to his wife, he would usually avoid confrontation and placate his wife by agreeing with her, but because he was left feeling resentful, he would undermine his wife behind her back. At some point, the resentment and displeasure would rise and he would act aggressively towards his wife. By taking an assertive step to risk displeasing his wife and express his position, he brought himself into the relationship where the two of them could negotiate and build a partnership. He then felt satisfied rather than resentful with his action and experienced more closeness and intimacy with his wife.

The importance of gaining skills in listening, body language awareness and the use of assertive communication skills in the desistance process is reported in previous qualitative studies, including Stefanakis (1998), Southers (1999), Wangsgaard (2000), Pandya (2001), Edmiston (2005) and Fenlason (2009). Both Scott and Wolfe (2000) and Smith (2011) identified communication/assertiveness as gaining over 75% support from the men in their studies, making it the most consistent theme between the two studies. Sheehan, Thakor et al (2012) state “those who were successful in changing

their behaviour learned how to apply these lessons from the BIP (batterer intervention programme) to their lives outside of the treatment setting” (p. 36).

It was apparent in the current study that most of the men were learning new communication skills, especially to do with expressing their feelings, whilst some were learning to make use of skills they would use in some environments, such as work, but not with their partner. Whilst processes such as critical reflection brought to the men’s attention the need to use communication skills like listening and expressing feelings and thoughts clearly, in order to build closer relationships with their partners and to de-escalate conflict situations, certain deficits or barriers needed to be addressed before successful communication could be implemented by the men.

Whether the men in the study had communication skills deficit or have these skills available to use, but did not use them in their relationship, may be explained through a mixture of sociocultural, attachment and social learning theory (Wooden & O’Leary, 2009). James expressed his frustration at how men, or at least New Zealand men, are taught not to talk about their feelings and experiences, but to be silent, staunch and just sort the problem out. When he stated, “A blokes a bloke,” he appears to be speaking about having learned to conform to behaviour identified as masculine, and perhaps more pertinently, not feminine, as is consistent with gender role theory (Bowen, 2011). Similar narratives were given by James, Martin and Frank who all expressed the pressure they experienced to conform to this male role stereotype. It was in retrospect that they could identify the stress they felt to not discuss conflict situations and the anxiety, confusion and powerlessness they would feel, which at the time they experienced as anger. Frank and Martin also spoke about how they would use passive aggressive or aggressive behaviours, such as putdowns, name-calling and shouting down, in order to gain back a sense of power and control (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Frank identified experiencing a sense of self-absorption and using hostility and control at these times, which is consistent with the study by Jenkins and Aube (2002) who found that men may act this way because they believe this constitutes proper male behaviour. James had also spoken about his experience of watching his father talk down his mother in conversations or arguments. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1997) would explain this as James’ father role modelling how to deal with conflict through shouting louder than the other person and/or making them give in to his superior rationale.

Similarly to the present study, Stefanakis (1998) brings attention to differentiating between those men who had the skills to communicate respectfully but did not use them in their relationship and those for whom there was a skills deficit. Either way he saw that “skill development was a useful resource with which to build nonviolent identities” (p. 192). What was apparent in the present study, is that by men learning new communication skills they were also able to participate in conversations, where

they reflected on the beliefs that hindered communication and brought into awareness nonviolent options. Gaining alternative non-violent options meant that the men could no longer use 'lack of choice' as a justification for using IPV but instead could begin to identify themselves as nonviolent through safe and respectful behaviours.

Attachment theory appears to be relevant when considering barriers for men to engage in successful communication with their partner. Martin's narrative spoke about a desire to withdraw and avoid conflict due to the fear that he might displease his partner (Brown, et al., 2010). More recently, in discussions with his partner, he has discovered that the two of them have different coping strategies with conflict, with his wife preferring to address the issue immediately. Johnson (2009) would describe this as Martin exhibiting an avoidant attachment style, where his desire to withdraw is a response to his attachment belief that, whatever he does or says will not be right or good enough, and therefore he will be abandoned by his partner. He then feels threatened, anxious, and confused, leading to feeling overwhelmed, and if unable to withdraw becomes aggressive and may resort to IPV (Greenberg & Safran, 1987; Dutton, 1998).

The study by Pandya (2009) analysed the data using attachment theory and provides an example that mirrored the experience of Martin, with a man using newly acquired communication skills with his wife, and receiving an anger provoking response from her. The man managed to stay focused on the new communication skills and not be triggered into an angry reaction. Pandya points out that he appears to have achieved the two change processes of "taking responsibility for affective experience" and "modifying dysfunctional affective responses". Using new communication skills is not only an individual process but entails interaction with another person and the responses or reactions of those people. For the man to be able to utilise new respectful communication skills, he needs to be able to manage his own emotions, in order to initiate communication and to manage reactions from the other person that could be potentially triggering. Having an understanding of how his partner may react can help the man to de-escalate his own reaction (Johnson, 2009). Johnson points out that a more effective method for learning how to manage attachment reactions in couple interactions is for the couple to work together to understand each other's attachment styles, potential reactions to abandonment issues and associated needs. Martin's narrative gave a good example of how this can work, once sufficient safety from IPV has been attained in the relationship.

The present research identified that gaining awareness of affective dysregulation and/or belief systems that may hinder the use of communication skills is important in order to use these effectively. The man has responsibility for managing his own reactions and implementing safe and respectful behaviour, and once sufficient safety

exists, a more effective method to attain successful interactions would appear to be through both people working on these issues together, for instance in couples' counselling or couples groups (McCollum and Stith, 2007; Bradley, Friend, & Gottman, 2011; Stith & McCollum, 2011).

Working together to improve communication interactions links with how experiencing being part of a team, group, "We" supported becoming safe and respectful in partnership. Most of the men in the study entered into the relationship(s), in which they perpetrated abuse, with little preparation or guidance on how to be respectful in an intimate relationship. A lack of maturity was noted by a few of the men and this is also reported in the study by Johnson (2003). Johnson (2003) and Caetano, et al (2005) both identified older age and longer relationships being associated with greater rates of desistance from IPV. The lack of maturity identified in the narratives was associated with acting out of gender related beliefs systems, including stronger masculine gender identity issues and competitiveness; attitudes of defensiveness, intolerance and competitiveness (Jenkins and Aube, 2002); low empathy for their partner and greater dependency on their partner; holding to a 'lad culture', which endorses 'racking up the number of sexual conquests' and heavily drinking alcohol (Woodin & O'Leary, 2009).

Becoming part of a team or group or experiencing the relationship with their partner as 'We', played an important part in becoming safe and respectful. For three of the men this process began in the group experience of a LWVP and was then transferred into their relationships. In order that a man would feel safe and trusting enough to become part of the group he required a number of factors, which mirrored those required to build a safe and respectful intimate relationship. These safety factors are summarised well by the seven heterosexual couples in the study by Fenlason (2009). They identified the following elements being necessary to constitute safety: "(1) safe to confront – safe to address problems and tell the truth without defensiveness or retaliation, (2) safe to be vulnerable – safe to show weakness and struggles without ridicule or taking advantage, (3) safe to be different – think and feel differently without criticism, (4) safe to be disappointed or cause disappointment, without someone feeling threatened or running away" (p. 95).

Most of the men's narratives, in this study, gave examples of achieving the four elements of relationship safety outlined by Fenlason (2009). The clear exception was James, who talked about his partner's fear of speaking freely and visibly showing her anxiety with him. There was some progress in improving how safe he was in the relationship, through using safety plans like Time Out and improved communication in the relationship. However even when progress was made in stopping physical violence, this change was still fragile and easily broken as there was insufficient integration attained. It would appear, from examining the stories of the men who succeeded in maintaining desistance, that more support and assistance, for instance in the form of

continued attendance at an LWVP or other therapeutic intervention, would help in making lasting change.

For those men who attended an LWVP, the process of coming together with other men who were focused on building respectful relationships, gave them the experience of giving and receiving help and support. Reciprocal help and support was also specifically identified as aiding desistance from IPV in the studies by Wangsgaard (2000), Scott and Wolfe (2000), Taft, et al. (2003), and Edmiston (2005). It is perhaps significant that one of the three coding categories added to the list of 28 a priori change process categories identified by Scott and Wolfe (2000) was 'understanding the need to give and take in relationship'. This theme was identified as being evident in the narratives of the men interviewed but not apparent in the nine change process theories they had analysed. Learning that relationships depend on reciprocity of care in order to build and maintain closeness, contrasted with the men's previous experiences of isolation and competing with other men. Gaining a sense of fulfilment, satisfaction and belonging from the group process of giving and receiving, appears to have been important for the men to be able to transfer the learning into action in their relationships.

Experiencing a sense of being part of a team or 'We' with their partner allowed a shift from a win-lose competitive attitude in the relationship to a win-win mentality, and feeling more closely connected. Bonham and Vetere (2012) observed attachment processes in their study participants, with feelings of abandonment being replaced by feelings of belonging, associated with a decrease in IPV and an increase in mutual help and support. As was shown with Martin's example, the potential for attachment issues causing difficulties in a relationship including IPV is evident, along with the contrasting potential that building a respectful and safe relationship has for the filling the need for a secure base.

Setting boundaries in relationships became important to support the men's growing IPV free identity. The men in this study were entering into social interactions with new violence free behaviours and attitudes. They became more observant of other men who were disrespectful towards women and/or were more attached to stereotypical masculine gender ideals. These men could be dismissive of the participant's new-found awareness and desire to express themselves emotionally. Frank stated how he experienced put-downs from these men and found himself unwilling to go along with the put-downs of women. In order to support the changes he was making he looked for and stayed with those men and women who would be accepting of his new behaviour. The study by Ruwhiu, et al (2009) also identified this as significant in the change process. They called this theme 'establishing new boundaries', where a man engages with family and friends who support nonviolence and disengages from those who don't.

Becoming more discerning about the intimate relationships that they chose also occurred for some of the men and came about through reflecting on what values they wished to have in a relationship. This was certainly a change for those men, who had previously entered relationships with little reflection on their compatibility. Those who did enter a new relationship were also open and honest with their new partners about their previous abuse, their learning about abuse and relationships, and how they would stay safe and respectful. They were in effect making a pledge to remain IPV free.

Support for an emerging IPV free identity also came through making lifestyle changes. Alcohol and/or other drug use was identified by three participants as playing a part in their use of IPV and being a risk factor for continued perpetration. The abuse of alcohol, has been widely linked to higher rates and severity of perpetration of IPV (Foran & O'Leary, 2008; Klostermann, Kelley, Mignone, Pusateri & Fals-Stewart, 2010; Testa, et al., 2003). All three men made the decision to cut down or cease use of alcohol and/or methamphetamine due to its connection with the perpetration of more general violence and disruption to their lives, or due to specifically connecting overuse of alcohol to perpetrating IPV. Others studies to link decreasing drug and alcohol use to aiding desistance from IPV or as a consequence of focussing on IPV desistance include Pandya (2001), Edmiston (2005), Southers (1999) and Stefanakis (1998). Some of these studies show the importance of making drug and alcohol interventions available to the men, as ongoing abuse of alcohol was seen as increasing the risk of relapse to IPV.

Three participants experienced making a career change or undertaking training as supportive factors in desistance. This was significant as the men took charge of their life direction. Subsequently they experienced more confidence in their own abilities and less desire to control their intimate partners. They became less dependent on their partners to provide either direction or self-esteem. This is an area that was apparent in only one previous research study, Stefanakis (1998), perhaps due to these actions not being easily related to the work undertaken in an LWVP, from which most research participants were sourced.

Two of the men in the study spoke of the support that religion and spiritual beliefs gave them. Martin spoke specifically of finding Christianity, along with his wife, which gave them a joint purpose and a feeling of acceptance for Martin. Connecting to spirituality has been reported by several studies as a significant support for men in their desistance process (Stefanakis 1998; Southers, 1999; Edmiston, 2005; Fenlason, 2009). Ruwhiu, Ashbt et al (2009) identified the theme as Wairuatanga, a 'God and I' moment, by connecting to spirituality through engaging with religion, whakapapa (genealogy), whenua (place) and/or identity. They describe how the experiences of connection with spirituality, heritage, place and identity are intertwined. When these are engaged they bring an increased sense of self and

identity with a corresponding decrease in the desire to control others and/or the outside world, as was experience by men in the present study.

A number of studies noted equivalent steps, stages or superordinate themes that correspond with the superordinate theme of becoming safe and respectful. Southers (1999) outlined her fourth step, 'Making the Behavioural Change' corresponding to the action orientated themes included in *Becoming Safe and Respectful*, where the men put behavioural change into action, once they had become "more aware of their thoughts, feelings, internal dialogues and levels of anger" (p.137).

A comparison with the Trans-theoretical model (TTM) (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986) would place *Becoming Safe and Respectful* in the action stage. Here a person puts their plan into action through some form of public commitment to stop a behaviour or action a new behaviour. The present study concurs with the TTM analysis undertaken by Stefanakis (1998), who noted, "for the men in the study, opportunities occurred in the form of group intervention, social support, education, skill training and spiritual teachings" (p.191).

Interview data gathered by Pandya (2009) was analysed against the TTM as well as the Affective Change Processes Model (ACPM). The ACPM "identifies "cognition" (thoughts about situations or events) and "emotions" as targets of change" (p.129), with the model being linked closely to attachment theory and stages of change (Greenberg & Safran, 1987). There is some concurrence with the ACPM in the present study, where the men's narratives gave examples of how the use of new communication skills with their partner were hindered by the couple's attachment patterns being triggered.

The study of heterosexual couples by Fenlason (2009) identifies stage four for his Change Model of Intimate Partner Violence (CMIPV) as *Becoming Safe in Relationship*. It is defined as beginning the hard work of moving towards learning how to be safe in relationship, just as the present study involves actioning safe and respectful skills. The women partners identified that any change in behaviour by the man needed to have a corresponding change of attitude or heart to confirm safety and to enhance the partnership, otherwise the behaviour change appeared more as an individualistic, self-serving action.

Engaging in or successful completion of the *Becoming Safe and Respectful* stage did not mean that men might not lapse into abusive behaviour, but that they were quick to acknowledge their failures and to learn from them. An observation also noted by Stefanakis (1998), Pandya (2001) and Fenlason (2009). Examples of lapses were given by two of the men in the present study, along with how they were able to acknowledge and learn from those failures.

The themes discussed in this section involved the men in the study taking action to not only stop the perpetration of violence towards their partners but also to use respectful

actions to improve their safety in relationships. They were now initiating and engaging in respectful communication; interacting with their partner, family and/or men in an LWVP with a sense of belonging; identifying whether particular relationships were supportive or detrimental to their desistance progress and acting to set boundaries around these; and making lifestyle changes, including reductions in alcohol and/or drug use, occupational changes and engaging in spirituality. Having become safe and respectful their task now was to maintain this.

Chapter Eight

Analysis and Discussion: Remaining Safe and Respectful

The stories of the men who participated in this study all indicated that desistance from IPV is not a final destination but rather an ongoing journey. A number of the participants stated that the temptation to go back to old habits of abuse resurfaced from time to time. There were a number of themes that the men mentioned that helped them to stay aware of the potential to lapse into old abusive behaviours and to further strengthen the man's resolve and skills to stay safe and respectful: feedback and making amends; sharing the learning/helping others; and it takes time and ongoing commitment.

Feedback and Making Amends

Feedback in general was not only important in maintaining safe and respectful behaviour but right throughout the desistance process. However, the theme has been included here due to its significance to keeping the issue of IPV in the man's awareness and at this stage of the men's desistance process it also offered opportunities to make amends for the damage done. Feedback came in a number of forms, both external to the man and through his own internal processes. People could express compliments for positive behaviour and attitude changes they saw or notify the man when they noticed him acting with old disrespectful behaviours. The men also observed more positive interactions with people due to their changed behaviour and experienced the benefits of their changed behaviour in the form of decreased tension and increased feelings of peace and intimacy. Frank said:

"I remember way, way back someone said to me that, you're so different now. I really enjoy talking with you. And that person had basically told me to go away in a different way than that, quite aggressively because of the way I spoke to them. And to hear that was quite uplifting, yeah."

Receiving this type of feedback is important for Frank, as it affirms his new IPV free identity and motivates him to remain focused on improving his behaviour. He now experiences the benefits as he feels more comfortable in himself and notices people feeling more comfortable around him:

"I actually feel, and this is like a paradox, as I view it, the more I've opened up and been vulnerable, the more powerful I feel inside..... I'm at peace. I'm much more at peace. The tension has gone. I feel healthier, fitter, more at peace with myself. I laugh a hell of a lot more."

Here Frank internally experiences the benefits of working on desisting from IPV, to building a closer relationship with himself and improving the quality of contact that he

has with other people. His narrative speaks of dropping the habitual defensiveness that he carried so that he can be more light-hearted, effectively becoming more flexible and accepting in his thinking rather than the rigid thinking he experienced when he felt the need to be in control of situations and people.

Martin's family became able to report if they experienced him acting in a way that could be intimidating:

"Other times I would use my voice, I have a naturally loud voice um with um my family has given me feedback of something I'm not even aware of myself but I tend to have a loud voice especially when the tension goes up and I would overwhelm my wife in arguments, just go louder and louder yeah."

Martin's wife and children felt safe enough that they could speak to him about this without expecting to get abused. This type of feedback loop was important to him for those times that he used behaviours that were outside of his awareness and/or he didn't catch his tension escalating. Also staying aware of the positive impact of using respectful behaviour has in a relationship and how this increases intimacy and closeness has been an important aspect for Martin's maintenance of IPV desistance. The quality of relationship was especially relevant for him, as the possible loss of joy and satisfaction in his relationship had motivated him to begin the desistance process:

"Benefits. I really, really enjoy our relationship, we're very close, um, feels like we're a real team, ah. We're still real, we still have disagreements and stuff, um, but we enjoy each other's presence and we look forward to seeing each other again and I think that pretty neat for a relationship that's been going 37 years."

By acknowledging these benefits Martin gained an ongoing incentive to continue the respectful, relationship enriching behaviours that he had learnt to put into action. It could be very easy to forget how these positive actions have manifested the values that were important to him and so begin to take this new reality for granted. Ongoing reflection on the relationship, its ups and downs, helped Frank to stay conscious of how he could act to maintain this intimate relationship. Like other men in the study, part of this reflection was acknowledging how his relationship had become a sanctuary from the stresses in his life, as he now had a reciprocal support system built up:

"And I think that the benefit is, there is stress enough in the world, and, and by reducing the stress in the relationship it's so much easier to, ah, to survive the world. So home becomes a bit of a haven from, from the stresses, instead of perhaps in the past I'd rather not come home cause there's bound to be another issue coming up and, more conflicts, so that's different, as well. Yes it's easier to come home now, perhaps, than it was earlier on in the relationship. Yeah."

Building a safe haven in the relationship is important as the intimacy in the relationship with his wife has become a support to help manage the stresses and tensions of life rather than something to avoid or be wary of. Along with this came the very important benefit that their children and their grandchildren have experienced a united family. This had been a very strong motivator for both him and his partner in working together to keep the relationship:

“ever since I stopped using violence I’m ah, we’re so much closer together, we, we, yeah. Ah, um, it’s been great for the children, cause they enjoy us more now too. The stresses are so much less. We just have great times together, we enjoy each other’s company. Yeah and life’s so much more peaceful than it’s been before.”

Martin is experiencing the long-term benefits of intimacy with his family, a value that is very dear to him and which has motivated him consistently through the desistance process. The intergenerational benefits can be seen with his children developing healthy relationships with themselves, their partners and now with their children. Appreciation of this benefit was echoed by John:

“What I realise now, now we’re more close, with two of my kids, you know, they’ll be able to play around. You know to be able to play now, we’re more close now than before, cos every time I think before when I was angry that distanced us on the kids, but now they see the change you know, they are confident to come around dad and talk. The girls, I took them out. So there is a confident in them to approach me, in anything, so that’s something in our relationship, it’s, it’s close.”

John is acknowledging for himself how his actions have brought his children closer to him and him closer to his children. This is replacing the dependence he felt in needing obedience from his children to confirm his expectations as the head of the family. Rather than ruling over his family, he is now experiencing an interdependence and reciprocal intimacy with them. A major benefit of safe and respectful behaviour is gaining intimacy and closeness with the people you love. Before he became re-sensitised and gained emotional awareness he had little understanding of this benefit. Continuing to experience this intimacy with his partner, children and close family and holding a memory of how this was absent when he perpetrated IPV proved to be a powerful motivator to remaining IPV free.

Another form of feedback came through the men being reminded of their past abuse by friends or family, who had been witness to seeing or hearing about it. John’s mother-in-law told him of how she didn’t like the way that he abused her daughter:

“Um, remind me of when I get angry and all that stuff. They still remind me of my past. Like my mother-in-law, you know, of how I abuse to my wife, you know, but now I live with her, so, she look at the change.....when we came back, stay with them. So then she honestly, mentioned that, I think she doesn’t like how I abuse my wife. You know

and I say, you're right, and let's see what's next. So we've been living with her and she sees the change, and you know the relationship, its close now than what it used to be."

Although confirmation has not been obtained from John's mother-in-law, it would appear that the changes he has made means his mother-in-law can feel safe enough to express to him how she didn't like the abuse he perpetrated to her daughter. Gaining feedback from a person who is a witness to both the abuse that was used and the positive changes he has made in desisting from IPV is very important to John:

"I feel proud of myself. Yes I am changed. I don't want to, I prove to myself, so if I say, yes I am changed, other people will see that, my wife and my kids will see that."

Feedback is both an ongoing reminder of the damage done and an affirmation for the positive changes made. Keeping the memory of his past abuse had the benefit of keeping John vigilant about possible relapse and escalation to IPV but also had the potential to hinder his progress and maintenance of IPV free behaviour:

"I think the only thing that got in the way of my mind, in my mind when I always flip back my mind to the past. You know, sometimes thinking about the past and I feel, ah, I feel sorry for that, you know. I mean it's a thinking pattern, you know, and every times it's got in the way of my change because I was thinking, you know the past, oh you still not change. You know it's just like a voice, it's always remind me of my past. (So you would think about the past.) So what has been happening in the past, you know, and sort of, um, sort of slow me or sort of, interfere in my mind, but I continue, to repeat myself, no I'm a different person.(So was that a kind of message like, no you haven't changed?) Yeah it's just like you're hearing the past. But now I realise, what happened yesterday is history. You know, but what I desire today, that determine tomorrow. So of course I have a past, you know abuse and all that. But, I can't go back (inaudible), but that's something in my mind set that gets in the way of my change"

John gives an example of how holding memories of the damage caused by perpetrating IPV helps to motivate ongoing IPV free behaviour but must be kept in check so that it does not undermine his sense of self-worth. He has found a way of keeping the past in perspective whilst affirming the new changed man that he has made himself. In effect he has written a narrative for himself which includes the IPV that he perpetrated with a new identity as a safe, respectful and IPV free man.

Making amends for past behaviour or current lapses were seen as important to maintaining safe and respectful behaviour by a number of the men. Frank said:

"From time to time I raise my voice, or I might do a, some sort of, like a remark, that's a put down, but I think somewhere on that level and I'm a lot more aware, that sometimes I might simply do that out of, I don't think it's bloody mindedness, I think its habit. Some old part of my script that comes through, and I go, oh, and then I come to

my wife and I say, look I'm really sorry about what I've just done there, and my intention is this and that didn't go well, that its, because I have a belief that everyone's abusive at some level in their life, because of what abuse is, it's impossible to avoid it completely. But we are talking some massive subtleties and we're talking things really at a level of what abuse is unacceptable and worked on is a far different extreme, I see it as, but I think that I set myself this very high bar as much as I can, to try to perform to that bar as much as I can, because it's in me to have that as a form of motivation as much as anything else, to try to strive to be as abuse free as I can."

Setting himself a high standard for using respectful behaviour helps him to stay vigilant of the behaviour he is using and when he fails to meet this standard he is able to quickly apologise and make amends. Frank also tells of how he reflects on those lapses so that he can learn from them and aim to behave better in the future. This extract also brings attention to recognising how he and others make mistakes at times by using what can be considered abusive actions. Punishing himself or others for these lapses could well be counter-productive whereas learning from these mistakes and focusing on desisting from increasingly subtle forms of abuse is an aid to not returning to the perpetration of IPV.

David has been reminded of the abuse he perpetrated through feedback in some of his relationships, which keep him mindful of his behaviour and offer some ways for him to acknowledge the harm he has done. One of these is his sister who from time to time speaks to him about how she is affected by the violence he perpetrated on her.

"Cos with my sister, we've both tried to be patient, but when she gets emotional, angry, she always talks about that. And I feel bad."

Whilst he finds hearing what his sister has to say painful, and he would rather have his sister not talk about it, he acknowledges that she was the victim of violence he perpetrated and is justifiably angry about it. Although uncomfortable, this has the benefit of keeping him mindful of his behaviour, as does coming into contact with a number of people on Facebook, both women and men, to whom he was abusive. The feedback he has had from his sister and the people on Facebook has offered an opportunity for David to both feel regret for the damage he caused and to make amends with some. Through Facebook he was brought into contact with a woman who left him when he was violent to her. This was unusual as most of the women he abused didn't leave, but she followed through with what she said she would do. This left a mark on David, a strong feeling of regret for a relationship that could have blossomed, which stays with him till today:

"I was thinking, in spite of doing all that stuff, she wouldn't leave and she did and I really regretted it. So, yep, you know, so I try to make a bigger effort and be nicer to people and especially women I'm in relationships with, because I still regret losing a

good, yeah know it's that whole, there's some really good woman out there that you could really screw up, by not being, by not managing your, not managing yourself."

He now feels the regret for the damage he did and the relationship he lost. Of interest is that the loss of this relationship did not have the same impact at the time, and it did not motivate him to desist from using IPV or engage in respectful behaviour within the year or two following her leaving. Back then he was not able to process the experience in a way that would help him make positive changes in his life. Instead he reacted to her rejection by moving on to the next women and perpetrating more abuse. When he thinks of her now, with the ability to feel the sadness and regret, it reminds him how precious the time is with his present partner, so that he makes more effort in the relationship. Here David shows how keeping in mind the sadness and regret he feels for past actions helps him to stay focused on managing his behaviour in the present, in order to stay safe and respectful with the women in his life.

Some of the people David has made contact with on Facebook have chosen to respond to him, either briefly or in detail, whilst others have not. Most of those he expected to have experienced him as threatening were women, but to his surprise he also heard from men he had known as friends, who also felt threatened by him. He has been told about the effects of the violence and abuse that he perpetrated, which also included nonphysical, threatening and psychological abuse. He has then been able to apologise for his actions and their effects:

"Just a lot of different things but then obviously there were consequences for my actions and behaviour, and now I try to repair some of the damage and be a productive, productive member of society."

Making amends to people he has harmed in the past through his contacts with people on Facebook has had a humanising effect for David as he can acknowledge the hurt he has caused, keep aware of his goal to remain IPV free and to affirm the new IPV free identity he now lives. He focusses on being a respectable, responsible and productive member of society rather than the man who was isolated and uncaring about the effect he had on others.

The process of feedback from other people and the man's ongoing internal feedback came through the men's narratives as being an important factor in maintaining safe and respectful behaviour. As well as helping the man monitor his behaviour, feedback also opened the possibility for making amends for the damage done.

Sharing the Learning/Helping Others

Giving support to men who are struggling with their perpetration of IPV has also been helpful for the men in the study in maintaining desistance. Sharing their learning or giving help to others came in a number of forms including becoming a senior

participant in an LWVP group, a facilitator of an LWVP, or taking up a social service role. These actions were conducive to making a stand to say that perpetrating IPV was not acceptable and at the same time to show empathy to the men who were perpetrating IPV, especially those who were new to the change process and requiring some reassurance of safety and purpose for beginning the process of desistance from IPV. David:

"I find myself drawing from a lot of my personal experiences when I try and connect with some of these guys who come in. Some of them remind me of my attitudes, some of them don't. But, but, yeah, it's a lot of the stuff that I've been through that's, kinda, enabled me to connect and I don't know if empathise is the correct word but just, how do you break down something to get them to understand or to maybe reflect on themselves in a certain way."

Whilst helping other men to desist from IPV, the process of being reconnected with his own past behaviours, thoughts and attitudes regularly, due to being in a social service worker role, helps David stay focussed on maintaining desistance.

Gaining affirmation for his own change process, and that of others, whilst sharing his learning with other men has been important for Martin:

"Benefits outside the relationship, yeah, my work, totally, I'm a real advocate for the programme, I'm ah, wherever I can I will share my learnings with others...Yeah, and by, yeah, by teaching what I've learnt and seeing the effect it has on others, that's constant reinforcement of the values of that type of programme. I can see huge amounts of benefits for people who are willing to take it on board."

Martin speaks here of gaining affirmation for the values he holds and implements by witnessing other men gaining the benefits in their lives from his leadership role in an LWVP. Seeing the positive changes in other men also confirms to him that making changes in his life to use safe and respectful behaviour has been well worth it, and well worth continuing to put the effort into.

Being able to support other men in the journey of desistance from IPV has been important for John and has inspired him to continue working on himself, and working to spread an anti-violence message. To do this he has engaged in training to facilitate LWVP:

"For me every time I do it, I learn, I learn something. So the more I did it, the more I understand about myself and then, and practice what is being, ah teach, so, it's good."

Training as a facilitator engages John in learning more about his processes related to his past perpetration of IPV and increased awareness to stay safe now. His final

comment in the interview indicates the belief he carries about the importance and potential of the work he undertakes:

“Yeah, if it can work for me it can work for anyone. It’s always possible to change.”

How the LWVP has helped Frank to improve his life and how it can help improve the lives of other men, continues to be present in his consciousness:

“I think that, it’s a funny one, but I think that the courses, the program is fantastic at 20 weeks, but I think they need to be longer. From my experience, I think they need to be longer. But I sort of understand what I’m saying by saying that, in the sense that there is only so much you can do and, in situations where, I’d like to see one-to-one stuff prior to coming into a program. My experience and a lot of the men I’ve spoken to have said the same things that a lot of the resistance to coming into a program was around being uncomfortable about those, the fear of the unknown and if they’d spent maybe 2 or 3 one-to-one stuff with the facilitators, it would have changed. That’s what they say, but it’s so overwhelming, that’s the stuff that I’ve heard most, so if I was going to have an opinion about them, the program itself is fantastic, but I’d, I’d get sad when I see a man come in for the first week and then disappear. It’s really sad, because they’re missing out on something, life altering.”

This extract tells how Frank has reflected on the many hours of experience he has with other men in LWVP, where he has seen positive transformations and how men may miss out on this opportunity due to being overwhelmed by the feelings of threat and challenge of seeking help or entering into a group with other men. Like the other men in the study he too has gained support and affirmation for his journey of desistance from IPV through sharing his learning and reaching out to support other men on this journey. He also brings attention to the time and support required to make the transformation of desistance from IPV, starting from when the men make the initial step to seek or accept help, in order to gain long-term benefits.

It Takes Time and Ongoing Commitment

The last theme is that achieving an IPV free identity requires time to integrate the changes and ongoing commitment to maintain it. There are a number of examples in the men’s narratives where they spoke of continuing to engage in personal growth and increased awareness to support using safe and respectful behaviour. A man addressing his perpetration of IPV would often find old historical wounds and/or resentments coming to the surface, which may have had a negative effect on his relationship with women. The men also gave examples of how they relapsed to IPV due to a lack of time focused on integrating the attitudes and skills required. Frank spoke about attending his third LWVP after relapsing to IPV. On looking back, he recognises that he had learnt skills on the programmes, but he hadn’t used them consistently, and in his case he had ignored his body signs. He had thought that everything was fine but:

“when I came back into these programmes I realised that a part of me got it but there were parts of me that I still hadn’t touched on and to integrate it properly I had to be willing to commit to doing it properly”.

Frank had thought that he had done enough to stay IPV free but in retrospect could see that he had only learnt some basic skills for avoiding using IPV but not fully engaged in addressing the underlying attitudes, dependencies and defensiveness he carried in order to sustain IPV desistance. He went on to complete a further 7 programs, lasting 140 weeks, one after the other, and very clearly states how he thinks it takes time to integrate the learnings from a LWVP,

“but I’d say that 20 weeks is a spit in the ocean. It’s actually a, to commit properly its, it should take a good 60 weeks to get some real sound change where you start to get comfortable in your own skin again about the things you’ve done, and you stop beating yourself up.”

Frank is not only speaking about learning skills that he could utilise but that after attending three LWVP he attained sufficient confidence to be able to manage himself emotionally and behaviourally. The time to work on the issues underlying the man’s perpetration of IPV and to integrate this understanding may occur through attending a LWVP, but may also occur through other helping agencies or personal support. What is clear from all the participants is that this process needed to happen over a number of years rather than months or weeks. Frank has also utilised his own personal counselling and couples’ counselling to support his relationship:

“The longest relationship I ever had was 4 years. So, yeah, 4 ½ years, I think. This is 8+ now. And it feels almost like it’s still in the romance period. And we appear and seem because, I’ve engaged in, intermittent couples counselling with my wife also, to strengthen our relationship, to use it as a tool rather than a means to an end.”

It is clear from Frank’s narrative here that he has engaged in couples’ counselling to enhance the relationship he has with his wife, in order to maintain the intimacy that he is experiencing. Rather than potentially lapsing into old abusive behaviours he is being proactive to improve the level of safety and respect. He has learnt not to be complacent as he was before his last episode of IPV, but rather recognises that remaining IPV free requires ongoing self-awareness work, and that this is further supported with therapy as a couple.

James and John also gave examples of how further therapeutic support and/or further time to integrate safe and respectful behaviour was needed to stay IPV free. After making progress at desisting from using IPV, by utilising a number of the tools that he had learnt, James still held on to resentments which kept him blaming his partner:

“It made me feel really really stink and a shit, and it also made me aware of my behaviour. When I’d start to get like that, I’d go, oh fuck it’s not (burning?). And in some ways I think she was overly sensitive about it. I know there’s certain things when I would start to ranting and raving, because I’ve told you three or four times, and I used to say that. Ask you once it will be quiet. Ask you another time and it’s going to get louder and then it’ll get louder and then it’ll get louder. You know. (So it’s normal for you?) And if you ignore me, I’ll get grumpy and a bit more grumpy. So there will be a process before it gets to here. And that sometimes was, oh fuck you, and kind of attitude. By. Yeah. (By who?) By the family unit. There was a bit of, oh who are you. Cos that’s because they weren’t my biological family. I was a fill in.”

From this extract it is evident that James had a number of issues related to his own life or to managing the present family environment with his partner and children that were not resolved whilst attending three LWVP. He speaks of using abusive behaviour in order to overpower his partner. There was significant time between him attending each LWVP, with attendance at the first two causing some resentment for James. Although he felt fully engaged in the last LWVP he attended, it can be seen in his narrative that whilst he may have desisted from physical IPV in the relationship, he did not achieve being safe and respectful, as he continued to use intimidation. It is evident that there was some deficit in the support he received, his level of commitment or the time for which he required IPV desistance related support, as the progress he made was not developed upon or maintained.

In John’s case, he did a few counselling sessions with his wife, which helped for a short time, but wasn’t enough and he re-abused:

“Yes, we notice something change, you know, but we go back, but I still don’t understand what I understand after I do the living without violence, about myself.....Yeah. So it help, but I still can’t control myself.”

In retrospect John recognises that he needed more help to become aware of his emotions and to learn how to regulate his feelings so that he could control any potential escalation to anger and IPV. It took John’s son involving the pastor, who intervened and motivated John to commit to receiving help. Since then John has had ongoing support from his pastor and church mentor:

“Yeah I mean, my mentor, because the one I came, he’s still here, so he is my, anything, I go see him. And I mean, what I go through in....., he knew all that. So he knew that, so I walk along with him, with everything.”

Because his mentor knows all of the history surrounding John’s perpetration of IPV and his journey of desistance, John experiences him as being an ongoing support and a person he can trust and confide in. John’s mentor encouraged him into counselling and

then into LWVP of which he has now completed three group sequences, amounting to 60 weeks, and has also engaged in LWVP training.

David's narrative spoke extensively of how he continued to work on understanding the roots of his perpetration of IPV and how to take up an IPV free identity for himself as a man and a father. Conversations David had with his mother about his childhood were the start of reflecting on how he related to women, what was underlying his use of IPV and how to heal this damage. Gaining perspective on his mother's motivation for using violent discipline towards him as a child helped David to feel some forgiveness towards her, which decreased or alleviated the hate and resentment he felt. Later he noticed that his attitudes towards women changed:

"these conversations that I'd never had with my mum kind of got me over hating women, I think, or else, I still think is that why or really, cos I always hated her and she was the one who beat me up, so maybe I'm just seeking revenge on women".

The idea that he might hate women resonated for David as an ex-girlfriend, who he regained contact with on Facebook, has said this to him. She observed how he would always move from one relationship to the next, when it didn't go his way. At the time he questioned that he could hate women when he liked having sex with them, but recognises now that it is possible:

"she noticed that that I was just, if I can't work with this one I'd move onto the next one and it's the same issues, that I blame them not me, against all women like that. You see you women, you're all like that. So that's the problem, so that's when I first heard about it and then I'd think about it sometimes, even till this day."

Although the process of reflecting on his relationship with women began in the conversations with his mother, soon after arriving in New Zealand, making further connections to his use of IPV took more time and committed reflection. Making contact with ex-girlfriends on Facebook has given him both more information, from the women's perspectives, for him to consider, and has also kept reminding him to learn more about the roots of his use of IPV towards women, in order to remain safe and respectful.

David reflected on his relationship with his father after his girlfriend became pregnant, when he decided to be an active and engaged father rather than abstain from responsibility. He was motivated by the desire to not end up with the regrets he saw his own father carry, since he was disconnected from his children. He also wished to be seen by his daughter as a positive role model of a man relating respectfully towards women, so that his own daughter would seek such a man when she grew up. Having a daughter has motivated him to reflect on his own childhood, how his life could have been like if he hadn't experienced violence and how to be a violence free dad:

“There was a time when I thought violence was good, it toughens you up, it hardens you, so when you go out into the world you can handle people. You know, that kind of stuff. There was a period of time when I kind of thought that was good stuff. So it was kind of like the basics training that soldiers go through so they could deal with the real. It was, like, I went through some hard stuff so when I go out there, I’ll be able to handle stuff, and I thought it was a good thing. And it wasn’t till, obviously till a bit later that I realised, it’s not, you know, it doesn’t do that, it doesn’t really build you up to be, to be able to, to be social, engaging and stuff like that, it actually has an opposite effect.....So you’re constantly trying to create, or you’re conscious about maintaining or creating that world or that environment for your child. Cos, you know how they say, when I was a kid I didn’t have any shoes and I didn’t eat lunch, so that’s what I want to do, it’s almost like it where does that line of thinking come from, that you’ve got to put them through crap just because you went through it, to teach them how to be better people, rather than focus on strengths and encourage them to be nicer, instead of to be mean. You’ve got to be mean to them so they can be mean to others, to protect themselves. I’ve been doing a lot of thinking about that and I don’t subscribe to that anymore.”

This extract shows how David began to question belief systems about parenting that existed for him. He rejected the masculine stereotypical ideas he had learnt to treat your kids mean in order to toughen them up ready to face a hostile world and that, if it was good enough for me then it’s good enough for my child. Because of the personal work he had experienced he took up the challenge to work through a lot of his past issues, to critically reflect on what he experienced and the belief systems he absorbed, in order that he would give his child a better life than he received:

“Yeah, I definitely don’t want my daughter to experience everything that I went through. I want her to, I want her to have the opposite. Happy, healthy, you know free living, not thinking about anything, instead of feeling like a hurt little boy. Because if I was basically going to sum it up, I was walking around like a little boy, lashing out because I’m hurt. So yeah, I guess that’s the, guess that was final comment I wanted to make, that it’s a, I don’t know. I’ve heard the expression, we go through a lot of crap so that our kids don’t have to, sometimes.”

Here David is showing how he is putting together all the skills he has learnt on his journey of desistance from IPV. He was able to acknowledge how he feels and was able to manage those feelings so that he can reflect on his childhood, how this time affected him and how he reacted violently from this place. He has discovered new beliefs with corresponding actions that support safe and respectful relationships with his daughter and in intimate relationships. An example is when he utilised a government social service to support him and his family with parenting issues. Engaging with a government agency is a contrast to a time when he held little respect

for authority or for seeking help. The social service agency helped him to manage a situation that could have been volatile, to learn new skills as a parent, as he attended a parenting course, and supported his call to keep on track with not using violence/physical punishment with his daughter:

“It’s like I’m holding to the stuff that I promised I wasn’t going to do.”

David has worked to build a respectful and functional parenting relationship with his daughter’s mother so that his daughter would not feel caught in the middle of her parents, which David had experienced when his own parents separated. He recognises that maintaining a violence free identity for him means keeping an ongoing focus on both the violence he experienced in his childhood and the violence he has perpetrated. By keeping his eye on the values he holds for himself, his daughter and his partner he is able to face the frustrations, hurts and challenges that confront him.

Three of the men spoke about attending counselling and/or other therapeutic interventions, including couples counselling and counselling training that included therapeutic work. Undertaking other therapeutic work helped these men to increase their awareness of themselves and work through historical wounds. The therapeutic work and training that Martin undertook brought him in touch with mending historical hurts to do with his father. On reflecting on his relationship with his father he spoke about a connection he made from becoming a Christian:

“And the confidence and going back to your question about the religion or the faith, I think it helped with my confidence as well, it gave me a sense of place, of being accepted as well and we can go Freud now, haha, as I’m saying that yeah like so many other guys I think I’ve struggled with a lack of affirmation from my dad and so I guess the Christian faith fills that gap so to speak, the acceptance of a heavenly father, ah, who loves all his children equally and accepts them for who they are because he created them, yeah.”

The awareness that Martin has gained, about feeling a lack of affirmation from his dad and the effect of not feeling accepted and fully loved, has helped him find a way to heal this wound. Without being conscious of it at the time, the act of becoming a Christian filled some of that deficit, which has helped him to accept himself and boosted his confidence. Through the counsellor training that he undertook he gained awareness of the connection to his need for affirmation from his father, in order for him to accept himself fully. He also became aware of how this impacted him in the form of insecurity in his relationship with his wife. He recognises how important it is to stay aware of these historical issues and his other possible triggers to abuse:

“Oh yeah. It doesn’t, there are always issues. I need to stay aware, ah, because I think the temptation to react rather than to respond is always there because it’s easier, but I’m sufficiently self-aware now I think that I can do that really well I, ah, yeah. I

can't see any, um. What it needs, what it continues to need was making an effort I suppose, whereas in the past it took no effort to be violent, but I don't regard it as a cost. I don't regard it as a cost to stay aware and conscious enough. That's more a way of life."

The ongoing nature of IPV desistance is described well by Martin who recognises that he must keep a form of vigilance or ongoing observation of his thoughts, feelings and behaviours. He realises that remaining safe and respectful takes commitment and that it is worth it. He stays watchful in order to not be tempted to slip back into disrespectful behaviour that would undermine his own sense of self as well as be destructive towards those around him.

The recognition that ongoing self-awareness work was important came through the narratives of all the men who had managed to reach this level of remaining safe and respectful. They acknowledged how it took time, effort and ongoing support from friends, family and social service or therapeutic interventions to reach this level of safety and to maintain it and that being safe and respectful is not an end in itself but rather an ongoing process of effortful commitment and attention to themselves and others.

Discussion

Once the men had attained an IPV free identity, where they were behaving in a safe and respectful manner towards their partners, their focus turned to maintaining this identity. Challenges at this time included the possibility of lapsing or relapsing to IPV, which would most likely come from a lack of ongoing integration of the IPV free identity they had developed. Five of the six participants in the present research appear to have attained this level of desistance from IPV, according to their own narratives and the perspectives of the contact agencies that had recommended the men as potential participants. IPV desistance was not certain as verification had not been sought from the men's partners. One man's narrative shows that he did not reach this level of safety. The comparison of those men who attained levels of desistance with a man who has made progress in desisting from IPV, but not to a stage where his partner felt fully safe and trusting in their relationship, is made at times for clarifying the desistance process. In this section I will discuss the relevance of each subordinate theme to desisting from IPV, and the superordinate theme of remaining safe and respectful, with reference to past research and literature.

Feedback has occurred for these men throughout their lives. However, prior to engaging in desisting from IPV they had not utilised this feedback to increase their awareness of their behaviour or their attitudes and subsequently did not make changes. Previous analysis and discussion chapters have explored factors that were barriers to the men taking on this feedback and processing it in a productive manner,

along with processes that helped the men engage with feedback. A brief summary of these factors is as follows. Experiencing increased levels of psychological safety, due to receiving acceptance and support, enabled the men to defend less against behavioural feedback they were offered. Building awareness of their sensations and emotions, and learning to regulate them, along with critically reflecting on their attitudes, beliefs and values increased the men's ability to open themselves to engaging with other peoples' opinions and views and to reflect on their ongoing experience. Openness to considering alternatives paved the way to learning safe and respectful behaviours and implementing these led to experiencing positive benefits with their partners, family and others. A positive feedback loop was produced which enabled the men to live the safe and respectful identity to which they aspired.

The task now was to integrate the safe and respectful identity and to manage the challenges that could tempt them back to perpetrating IPV. The men's narratives identified a number of ways in which feedback was important to reinforcing their new identity. People, who had experienced the man acting with abuse and disrespect, could now feel safe to tell him if they observed signs that his tension was escalating, without fear of retaliation. Alternatively they might compliment him on the positive experience they had with him. Such feedback reminded the man of how he had previously behaved and affirmed the work he had undertaken to make changes.

The men spoke of experiencing the benefits of improved quality of contact with a range of people, most significantly in the form of increased intimacy and closeness with their partners and family. This is an important benefit yet one that was not apparent to most of the men prior to the desistance process beginning, when intimacy was most often seen as only sexual. At that time the men were more aware of the frustrations and stresses they experienced in relationships, which often justified the perpetration of IPV for them. Most of the men were not aware of how working to implement safe and respectful behaviours would open up a new experience of closeness and intimacy with their partners, family and friends. Experiencing intimacy and closeness in a relationship requires allowing oneself to be emotionally vulnerable, as it entails sharing an emotional world and risking possible hurt and rejection, in order to gain love. Initially, for most of the men experiencing emotional vulnerability produced significant confusion, fear and threat, which has the potential to produce defensiveness and lead to abuse (Brown, et al., 2010). A possible reason for this includes disruptions to attachment during childhood (Greenberg & Safran, 1987; Johnson, 2009), which was identified in the research by Bonham and Vetere (2012). In their study, many of the men participating experienced feelings of abandonment being replaced by feelings of belonging, with their partners, as their desistance from IPV progressed. They subsequently related their feelings of abandonment and lack of emotional closeness to unsatisfactory nurturing from their parents.

The processes the men in the current study went through in gaining awareness emotionally and cognitively, prepared them to be able to manage the experience of vulnerability better and subsequently to experience the intimacy, safety and security that eventuated. The relationship with their partner was now experienced as a place to find support in times of stress and to give support willingly. Becoming a place of sanctuary speaks of how the relationship could now be a vessel for aiding the repair of attachment issues or past emotional hurts. Acknowledging how important intimacy was to the man and remembering how IPV destroys intimacy were both powerful motivators for ongoing desistance. Receiving positive feedback from interactions with people, especially those who had experienced abuse from the man, constructed a positive feedback loop, which supported the non-violent identity through making nonviolent choices, as was also found by Stefanakis (1998).

The men who had children recognised how much the perpetration of IPV affected their children and had damaged their relationships with them. Experiencing increased closeness with their children following desistance from IPV reinforced the desire to be positive role models for them, and was motivation to spend more time with their children.

Remembering or being told about the effect that men's perpetration of IPV caused, proved to be challenging and beneficial to the men's desistance process. The work that the men had done on increasing their emotional awareness meant that they felt empathy for the people they had harmed. Feelings of guilt, regret and shame were also experienced, which were useful for acknowledging the harm they had caused and needed to be balanced with acknowledging the positive changes the men had made. It is significant that the men in this study had attained sufficient emotional regulation skills to be able to empathise with the victim and fully acknowledge their part in causing harm; as well as be empathetic to themselves as having made mistakes from which they learnt. They were thus able to resist entering into self-blame and punishing themselves and instead use the experience to assist remaining IPV free. Balancing the two sides of this experience enabled the men to see themselves as redeemable and to reinforce their IPV free identity.

Redemption often came in the form of acknowledging past abuse or lapses into abuse and making amends to the victims through confirming to them the harmful effects of the abuse. Confirmation was undertaken face to face and in writing, aided at times through social media, such as Facebook. Acknowledging the harm caused by IPV has parallels with Restorative Justice "a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offence and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible" (Zehr, 2002, p.5). In Restorative Justice processes, the opportunity is made for the victims to express the effects that the abuse had on them and to hear confirmation that the

offender understands the harm they caused and feels remorse for this. For the perpetrator of IPV the process enables them to understand that although they are responsible for their actions, they are not their actions, which has a humanising effect for them. Rather than being punitive, all the people involved in a Restorative Justice process do so voluntarily, and the IPV is seen as a violation of people and relationships rather than a violation against the State.

Restorative Justice processes have a strong alignment with Māori values such as reconciliation, reciprocity and whānau involvement. The study by Ruwhiu, et al (2009) of Tane Maori (men) echoes the process of making amends, where they identified the significance of 'healing in service', with the men giving back to those they had abused, the whanau (family) and wider communities. The men could find redemption through making amends, a process referred to by Māori as restoring Mana (authority, control, influence, prestige, power or honour), for the man, women that he abused, whanau and associated community.

Another parallel can be found in Steps 8 to 10 of the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (12steps.co.nz, n.d.), where an inventory is first taken of those people the person has harmed and where possible direct amends are made to those people, except where doing so may cause harm. Subsequently the person will continue to take personal inventory and when wrong to promptly admit it. Similarly to the recovering alcoholic, here being reminded of the IPV that the men had perpetrated had a positive effect in keeping the men vigilant to potential lapses into abuse and motivated to set higher standards of peaceful and respectful behaviours, not only with intimate partners but with people in general.

Sharing what the man had learnt, offering support to other men and assisting with activities advocating freedom from violence helped the men to stay focused on nonviolent behaviour and affirmed their IPV free identity. Taking up a role as an advocate for nonviolence in relationships and for LWVP through becoming a facilitator of LWVP, a mentor to the men as a participant or taking up a role as a counsellor or social service worker who works with men who have perpetrated IPV, were different ways that the participants in this research shared their IPV free learning.

Being around other men who spoke about their perpetration of IPV and how to reduce this for themselves and for society provided ongoing reminders to reflect on their own behaviour. They also remembered and spoke about their experiences of both perpetrating IPV and desisting from perpetration when talking to other men. Sharing their experiences helped the men in this study to connect and empathise with other men, which had mutual benefits by building an environment of safety and acceptance for the new men to disclose their perpetration of IPV and self-acceptance for the study participants who, whilst not condoning their past behaviour, could find self-forgiveness for past mistakes. Those men who offered help to others, and in so doing became

more public about their own use of IPV, were able to transcend the shame associated with their past perpetration, an observation also identified in the study by Fenlason (2009).

The act of giving had a redemptive effect for the men. Taking the position of supportive role models for IPV desistance reinforced a nonviolent identity. The men could take pride now in the changes they had made and experienced increased confidence and satisfaction as they manifested the nonviolent man they considered themselves to be, which was also noted in the studies by Stefanakis (1998) and Southers (1999). Seeing the men they assisted make progress in desistance and speak of the benefits they were experiencing was further affirmation for the study participants of their choice to engage in an IPV free lifestyle.

It is significant that in the present research five out of the six men who participated had taken on roles (paid or voluntary) that come under the heading of social service worker, with previous studies also showing this (Stefanakis, 1998; Edmiston, 2005). The one man who didn't take up a social service worker role, also didn't report experiences that appear under 'remaining safe and respectful'. However he did make it clear prior to the interview that his motivation for participation in the research was to help other men to desist from IPV and as a way of giving back the support he had received. Like the other men in the study, he experienced helping others as a form of relapse prevention by situating himself as part of the solution rather than the problem, an observation that Stefanakis (1998) also noted. He also kept intermittent contact with the LWVP by sending the occasional text, and receiving a reply which he clearly appreciated. Giving help is a way to legitimise ongoing connection with other men, in the pursuit of supporting a healthier, and in this case IPV free, lifestyle. Even though positive benefits from participating in an LWVP were gained by many of the men in the study, it is still not a "normal" or common occurrence in our present society for men to come together in order to support each other emotionally and relationally (Murphy, 2009; Campbell, et al., 2010). Most of the men in the study continued contact with other men, who understand the importance of emotional and psychological awareness and ongoing critical reflection. The example of Frank completing nine cycles of LWVP, with the final seven of these being completed consecutively, and later completing counselling training along with attending other therapeutic process groups, is the most significant example of how important it was to stay connected to other men, for the purposes of sustaining a safe and respectful identity.

The participants in the present study spoke of their desire to give something back, through actions such as supporting men new to the programme, training to be facilitators of LWVP or offer counselling, or through being role models for nonviolent behaviour and advocates of LWVP. Similarities can be found in 12 step programmes where "sponsors" act as mentors to people who are new to the programme, offering

support by meeting up or being available to speak on the phone, in particular at times when the temptation is experienced to relapse to unhealthy behaviours (12steps.co.nz, n.d.). The significance of helping others to assist desistance for both the helper and the helped would suggest the usefulness of mentoring/sponsorship approach for aiding men cease IPV (Reichert, 2001). Becoming involved in social action or other treatment was identified as important by Scott and Wolfe (2000) and Stefanakis (1998), with Moran (2013) identifying the importance of the availability of opportunities for engagement in generativity and alternative networks in aiding desistance from IPV.

All of the men spoke of how it takes time and ongoing commitment to remain safe and respectful. Their narratives speak of an ongoing journey requiring commitment to an IPV free identity rather than being a final destination where they were 100% sure of never relapsing to IPV perpetration. This did not mean that they were not confident of staying violence free but that they needed to commit to staying aware of the potential to lapse into abusive behaviours and for some to engage in interventions to support ongoing desistance.

Three of the men gave examples of engaging in counselling or LWVP to address their perpetration of IPV, desisting from IPV for a period of time, but then relapsing back to perpetration. All of these men acknowledged how the time they were engaged in the intervention or received support was too short, in order to fully integrate what they learnt, into habitual behaviour or a new IPV free identity. Frank was very specific in describing how he needed to attend 60 weeks of an LWVP in order to attain “real sound change”, which he measured by his own internal experience of feeling comfortable with himself and to “stop beating yourself up”. This was his way of saying that he had integrated learning about his feelings and cognitions sufficiently that he could regulate his emotions and be aware of his intentions enough, to be confident that he could control his behaviour. He could then identify as having engaged an IPV free identity, where his feelings of satisfaction and pride at the positive changes he had made, would at least balance the shame and guilt that he carried, a process also identified by Stefanakis (1998). From his account, obtaining a balance between these factors appears important in order to feel that he is a better person, so that he does not chastise himself up for the IPV he perpetrated, whilst holding regret for these actions. Staying aware of his feelings of regret helps him not become complacent and cease holding some level of vigilance for possible relapse, a point also noted by Southers (1999). Maruna (2001) states that integrating a new narrative identity, where past offending is seen as part of the man’s identity along with lessons learned from this, was an important aspect of ex-convicts reform and rebuilding of their lives. Most of the men in the study by Anderson (1996) spoke of valuing long-term involvement in the LWVP, as they still considered themselves to be at risk even though they had achieved significant or total elimination of their abusive behaviour.

John's experience of short term counselling was followed by relapse to IPV perpetration. It wasn't until he received ongoing mentoring, which supported him attending three LWVP and other therapeutic groups that he managed to remain IPV free. Receiving the support of a person who knows his history, who remains as someone he can return to in times of potential lapsing, provides an important component for him in remaining safe and respectful.

James, however, did not receive ongoing support and did not progress to becoming safe and respectful. James's experience is an example of the need for some men to receive longer-term support and therapeutic interventions, such as further group, individual or couples counselling, in order to address historical, attachment and relationship issues. Although attending an LWVP can be sufficient for some men to remain safe and respectful, the format and time constraints will mean that the needs of other men cannot be sufficiently attended to. As Southers (1999) points out "adding individual sessions to the end of a 24 week violence intervention programme would allow subjects to continue the process of internal exploration and growth" (p. 150). The need for ongoing support to maintain change is acknowledged in the Alcoholics Anonymous networks (12steps.co.nz, n.d.) and it would appear that a similar support system could be appropriate for IPV. Regular meetings that men could attend would enable them to gain support from other men addressing these issues and a place to express their ongoing struggles.

Attending LWVP or other therapeutic interventions provided some ways of attending to historical, attachment and relationship issues, and some men managed without these. Over the last 10 years David has continued to reflect on his perpetration of IPV and the motivation for his behaviour. Conversations with his mother about her treatment of him as a child and hearing the experiences and observations of past partners, who have given feedback about his behaviour via Facebook has helped him uncover some of the roots of his violence. Becoming a father led David to reflect on his relationship with his father, his parenting, and feeling isolated from both parents due to the animosity expressed between them, after they separated. He was motivated to be an active parent for his child and to build a functional and respectful working relationship with his daughter's mother, after they separated. Stanley, Graham-Kevan, and Borthwick (2012) found in their study of the relationship between fathers and domestic violence that "children could also function as a form of intrinsic motivation with men developing their awareness of the impact of abusive behaviour on children and viewing their participation in the programme as a means of becoming a 'better father'" (p. 264).

Although David hasn't participated in therapeutic interventions he has been involved as a social service worker. Working with men who are attending to IPV perpetration has kept him engaged in his own self-reflection. Similarly Barry continues to reflect on

his own behaviour due to being a social service worker. He also spoke of how significant his present partner was, for him to talk to and gain understanding for the past abuse he perpetrated, to be a witness to his commitment to remain safe and respectful, and as someone he continues to grow with.

Martin spoke about how his ongoing reflection on his behaviour has led to recognising how a lack of affirmation from his dad produced a lack of confidence in him, which was played out as defensiveness, with subsequent aggression, towards his partner. He found healing in the form of the acceptance of a heavenly father, when he became a Christian. On reflection he recognises how this led to feeling more accepting and less defensive with his partner. An increase in spirituality from attending an LWVP or engaging in religious faith have been identified as ongoing supports for desistance by Southers (1999), Edmiston (2004) and Fenlason (2009). Having undertaken a process of counselling and ongoing personal growth work means that Martin recognises how his childhood history affected his behaviour with his partner and how addressing these issues has supported safe and respectful behaviour.

Previous quantitative research has shown how longer length of relationships, where the couple mature together produces a decrease or desistance from IPV, with or without therapeutic interventions (Maruna, 2001; Johnson, 2003; Caetano, et al, 2005). The present research would support this in the case of Martin, who achieved some level of desistance in collaboration with his partner, prior to LWVP attendance. However it was not the case for John, who had been married for 26 years, but only desisted from IPV 3 ½ years before participating in this study and after his pastor intervened. All indications were that he would have continued perpetrating IPV without this intervention and subsequent longer term therapeutic assistance. The importance of utilising ongoing therapeutic work and receiving the support of significant others in remaining safe and respectful is indicated by both of these men, with Martin engaging in personal growth work in collaboration with his partner and John receiving encouragement from his church through his pastor and mentor. Frank, who spoke of now being in his longest relationship of over 8 years, has utilised couples and individual counselling to support maintaining safe and respectful behaviour. The men in the study by Moran (2013) also indicated how LWVP and other therapeutic interventions, along with personal support were significant in helping them to mature. Maturity meant to be able to critically reflect on belief systems related to being a 'real' man, gender roles and parenting methods, and construct a new identity, that rejected the beliefs that supported IPV and integrated safe and respectful behaviours.

The need for further therapeutic work or reflection, to address the underlying roots for men's perpetration of IPV, in supporting desistance from IPV, is also evident in the study by Bonham and Vetere (2012). The study participants spoke of how the LWVP they attended helped them manage the intensity of feelings that provoked the

violence but did little to help them understand the roots of the violence, which both men and partners considered to be imperative to prevent further violence erupting. The men became motivated to explore their feelings further, as they experienced how their feelings of abandonment were replaced by feelings of belonging in their intimate relationships, due to desisting from IPV. The improved attachment with their partners highlighted for the men how they had experienced unsatisfactory nurturing from their parents. In the present study, Martin's narrative shows how addressing difficulties caused in relationship communication, due to the different attachment styles that he and his partner had developed from their childhood experiences, improved their joint ability to manage the increased emotional affect, and find ways to feel safer to enter communication. The groundwork had been laid to make this possible in their history of working through times of disagreement with the help of the communication skills that they learnt together.

As Pandya (2009) points out "'Interaction,'" "communication," and "responses" are key targets of change in domestically violent situations" (p. 144), and are therefore important to address in order to prevent future IPV, whether the couple stays together or the man moves to a new relationship. Whittaker, et al (2010) in their study of IPV persistence across relationships also supported the usefulness of engaging in relationship interventions under some circumstances, to assist long-term desistance. Fenlason (2009) gives some clarification for what circumstances would enable couples, where IPV has been present, to engage in a relationship interventions. He found that for the couples in his study, where safety and trust issues did not need to be continually addressed, the couples were ready to do the couples' work more commonly addressed in couples therapy, that of communication and conflict regulation. In the present study Frank gave the example of using couples therapy as a proactive means to enhance the relationship.

When comparing the superordinate theme of Remaining Safe and Respectful with previous desistance research there appears to be fewer studies that report themes related to sustaining IPV free behaviour. Due to many of the previous research studies focusing on helpful and unhelpful aspects of the group treatment, or interviewing the participants shortly after they had finished the LWVP (within 3 months), far less evidence is given for factors that help the man to remain safe and respectful over time.

There is consistency between the present research and previous studies in viewing desistance as a process, which is non-linear and goes through periods of progress and setback, rather than as an outcome (Stefanakis, 1998, Southers, 1999; Edmiston, 2004, Fenlason, 2009 and Moran, 2013). They also concur with the present findings that the men may require ongoing guidance and support over an extended period, possibly several years and that maintaining change is a dynamic process, rather than an endpoint, especially as IPV involves more than one person. Whilst the process of

desisting from IPV is focused on the perpetrator, safe and respectful relationships involve interaction with an intimate partner and therefore are not only about abstinence from IPV but also engaging in behaviours that produce a feeling of safety and trust to communicate fully within the relationship (Fenlason, 2009). An expectation of permanent change within the individual in the form of the abstinence of abuse does not take into account adapting to changes in the environment, specifically with an intimate partner. It is therefore more appropriate to focus on how to prevent relapse to IPV rather than stopping it (Jennings, 1990).

Stefanakis (1998) compared his research against the TTM and whilst identifying some similarities to the maintenance stage he also describes a sustaining change stage where the man is reinvesting in a new identity. At this stage challenges are identified that have the potential for relapse and also for becoming part of the solution to IPV. There are similarities in the present research where the focus of this stage is on both staying aware of potential triggers to relapse and taking proactive steps to be part of the solution by helping others, making amends, and engaging with ongoing personal growth work.

The CMIPV (Fenlason, 2009) identified the 5th stage as 'communication/conflict resolution'. The two couples that attained this stage had shown that the relationship was safe to confront, be vulnerable, be different, be disappointed or cause disappointment, without either of them feeling threatened or running away. The present research does not allow for direct comparison with these criteria, as the partners were not interviewed, but does concur with a number of his interpretations. Fenlason's study highlights how interviewing both the man and woman has enabled him to explore how the dynamic in the relationship needs to be taken into account to fully understand maintaining desistance from IPV. He reports that the men in these two couples spoke more about appreciating their partners, even when they had conflicts, than the men in the other couples. Most of the participants in the present study reported appreciating their partners when relating how long they had been together, how the relationship was special and how they, as a couple, dealt with conflict. I did not identify this however as a separate theme of the desistance process, probably due to my focus on the individual man, rather than the couple. The focus on the individual man in the present study, rather than the couple, whilst bringing attention to processes the men engaged in, only gives glimpses of the processes that the couple, who have committed to staying together, can engage in to sustain a safe and respectful relationship. Although interviewing partners of men who have perpetrated IPV has a number of ethical and safety concerns, Fenlason shows how doing this can help expand our understanding of IPV desistance, especially at the point where safe and respectful behaviours are implemented and maintained.

The narratives of the men who remained safe and respectful in the present study indicated that the ongoing process of reinforcing a nonviolent identity required affirming themselves as men who are not flawed of character. Rather, they have perpetrated IPV that they take responsibility for and acknowledge as unacceptable, and continue to construct safe and respectful relationships despite the potential for relapse. Integration of a nonviolent identity means attending to both sides of the dilemma involving owning their perpetration of IPV and separating themselves from this problem. By positioning themselves as part of the solution they could reinforce the strengths they had developed for IPV free behaviour.

Chapter Nine: Culmination

Introduction

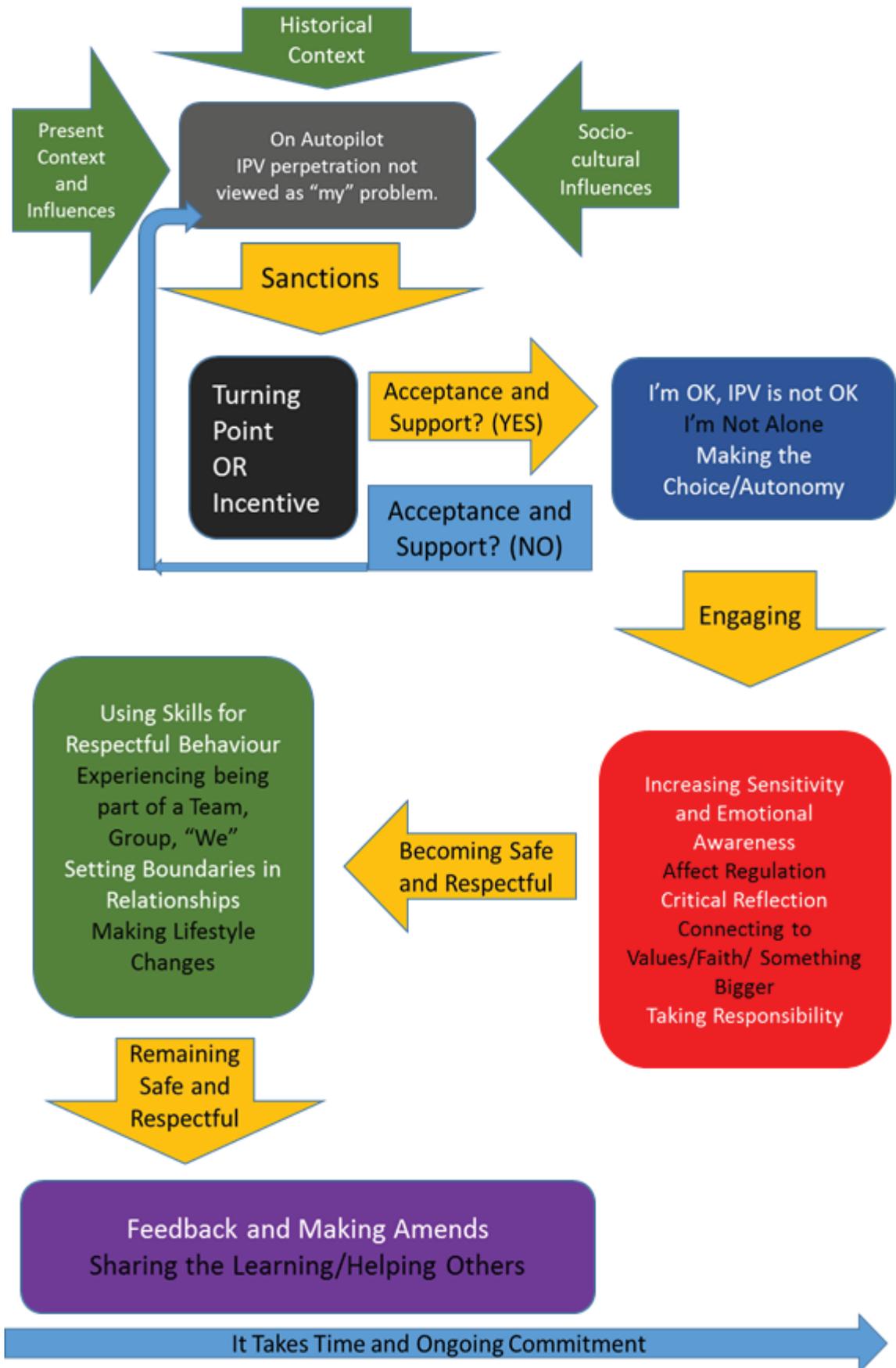
Through speaking to men in New Zealand, who testify to having ceased using intimate partner violence (IPV), the present study aimed to analyse how men describe the change process they have gone through, to identify what men found helped and hindered their change process and what they describe as the benefits and costs of ceasing IPV. A summary of the thematic findings produced from the analysis and discussion of the in-depth interviews is given in Appendix 9. This chapter begins with a summary of the process of IPV desistance, with a corresponding IPV Desistance Process Map (Figure 1, page 144). The implications for practice are then outlined, followed by the limitations of the present study and future considerations for research.

The Process of IPV Desistance

IPV desistance is best viewed as an ongoing process, with advances and setbacks, rather than having a final destination or endpoint. The present research indicates that although an event or situation (sanction) may initiate the desistance process, an atmosphere of safety and acceptance is required by most men in order to overcome the initial hindrances, that is the survival and emotional regulation systems they have used to maintain the world view they carry. Otherwise, any behavioural change tends to be temporary and lacking any affective change that is required for initiating attitudinal change. This is confirmed by previous studies and can be seen to relate to the process of moving from pre-contemplative to contemplative stages, as outlined by the Transtheoretical model of change (TTM), and also observed by Stefanakis (1998) and Pandya (2009). Fenlason (2009) called this stage, 'wake up and listening' according to his Change Model of IPV (CMIPV) and Southers (1999) refers to moving from 'being on automatic pilot' to 'gaining self-knowledge'.

The Affective Change Process Model (ACPM) analysis of IPV desistance (Pandya, 2009) also supports the present study's findings, that an environment of safety and acceptance enables the men to experience primary emotions and sensations, which give the potential for emotional insight, emotional regulation and relational dynamic understanding. Providing an environment of 'acceptance and support' enables the processes covered in the sub-themes 'I'm okay, IPV is not okay; I'm not alone and making the choice/autonomy' to occur. The man feeling that he makes the choice to 'engage' in the behavioural change process, by his own volition, was seen to be important, if not essential, for the man to progress beyond not only stopping the use of physical violence but also to learn alternatives to IPV. This stage of change has parallels with moving from contemplative to planning stages in the TTM, gaining

Figure 1 IPV Desistance Process Map



awareness (Stefanakis, 1998) and gaining awareness and understanding (Fenlason, 2009).

'Engaging' includes the processes of Increasing Sensitivity and Emotional Awareness; Affect regulation; Critical Reflection; Connecting to Values/Faith/Something Bigger; and Taking responsibility. These are internal processes required for the man to identify his triggers to IPV perpetration and his build-up of tension, and increases his motivation to resist the temptation to use IPV but instead, manage the situation non-violently by using affect regulation, for example time out, where he leaves the situation. Stopping the use of physical IPV paves the way to learning proactive alternatives to violence as a means of managing proximity and interaction in a relationship. This has parallels to the planning stage of TTM, self-re-evaluation of ACPM, honestly assessing the self-knowledge (Southers, 1999) and the caring and responding stage (CMIPV).

Up to this point the man's learning involved internal processes. Progressing to safe and respectful behaviour requires putting new skills into action in a relationship and engaging in reciprocal processes of communication. Here the man is required to not only process his own experience but also take into account his woman partner. Attending to issues related to attachment and gendered beliefs were seen to become pertinent at this point, to enable assertive communication skills to be effective.

Taking action to provide an environment conducive to acting with safe and respectful behaviour was also important and included setting boundaries in relationships and making lifestyle changes. Learning to give and receive help and support and understand that the relationship is a reciprocal partnership, 'We', was important at this time, as it helped men to recognise that using any form of abuse towards their partner would undermine the relationship between the two of them and effectively also harm themselves. Parallels from previous research include the action stage from TTM, and 'Making the Behavioural Change' (Southers, 1999), with better comparisons being found with those studies that incorporated the effect of relationship interaction. These studies are Fenlason (2009), who identified the CMIPV stage as 'becoming safe in relationship', where the four categories of safety identified by the couples in his study are met and Pandya (2009), who made a comparison with the ACPM, which linked closely to attachment theory and stages of change.

Once men were behaving in a safe and respectful manner the focus turned to staying aware of any potential lapses to IPV. Remaining safe and respectful includes processes of using feedback to affirm progress made and to assist awareness of own behaviour plus the effects of abusive behaviour. Gaining feedback on effects gave the opportunity to make amends. Similarly sharing the learning and helping others kept men in touch with a balance between vigilance of relapse and affirming an IPV free identity. The acknowledgement that it takes time and ongoing commitment to become

and remain safe and respectful highlights the awareness of the men, that the potential for relapse and ongoing improvement in relationship interactions will always be present. It would appear that a significant prevention for relapse is the availability of ongoing guidance and support, undertaken with other men and/or their partner. The corresponding TTM stage is that of maintenance, but this fails to take into account the interpersonal aspects of IPV desistance. A better comparison comes from Fenlason (2009) who included couples in his study and identified the stage of 'communication/conflict resolution' in his CMIPV, where sufficient safety meant that couples counselling could be utilised to strengthen the relationship.

In summary, these findings add new knowledge and support for previous research focused on heterosexual men's desistance from IPV. A map (see Figure 1) can be drawn showing themes and the progression towards an IPV free identity, which could be used as a guide to assist identifying interventions that are most relevant to the man's change process, at any particular time. It must be remembered though that each man's desistance process will be individual to that man, due to the variations in their history and related needs. Whilst some type of sanction is needed to acknowledge that IPV is unacceptable and to initiate the desistance process, the study emphasises the importance of showing acceptance and support for the man to enable him to implement an IPV free identity. The study also stresses that IPV desistance requires growing emotional and cognitive awareness, developing relational skills and can take many years to implement, therefore requiring access to ongoing interventions and support.

Implications for Practice

The results from this study have implications for those people and agencies that work to eliminate IPV from our society. Assisting a man to initiate the desistance process requires adequate support to be available, accessible and affordable at the time when a sanction occurs for him, in order for it to become a turning point in the man's behaviour. An atmosphere of acceptance for the man and his predicament is essential to assist him in coming to the realisation that his present behaviour is a problem and that the choice lies with him to make changes. Whilst a number of sanctions exist that rightly acknowledge the unacceptability of IPV, they can lack the power to motivate and will at times demotivate men to begin their journey of desistance, if experienced exclusively as punishment.

The support that accepts the man as human, as attempting to live life as best he knows how, and as relating to those he would be close to as best he knows how, whilst staying clear that IPV is harmful and unacceptable, offers a fertile environment for the growth of an IPV free identity. Such support can come from the general public as well as professionals. Overcoming the societal stigmatisation of men who perpetrate IPV is

needed in a similar way to the campaigns addressing the stigmatisation of mental illness.

Providing an environment, away from the man's partner, where he can have some time to find perspective on his predicament, is needed, so that men can take advantage of the motivation provided when sanctions arise. For example providing temporary accommodation for men who are served with Police Safety Orders (PSO). PSO require a man, deemed at risk of perpetrating IPV, to leave and remain away from their intimate partner for up to 5 days. Providing temporary accommodation could make the difference between a man feeling punished and resentful, to one who was ready to take up support and help services, especially when these services are connected to the accommodation. Another example would be having support groups available, in a similar manner to the Alcoholics Anonymous programmes, which would provide an affordable, accessible, and anonymous support. Such programs would also be ongoing support for men at varying stages of desistance.

Individual, group and couples' interventions need to be available through living without violence intervention services to provide relevant support that fits the individual's desistance process. Initial assessment and intervention for men must attend to providing an environment where the man feels accepted for who he is, can find support and remove feelings of isolation, in order to feel autonomous in any decision to pursue an IPV desistance journey. This would best occur with one significant person initially, before any progression to group work. Ideally a mixture of group and individual work would be available, and provided to meet each individual's assessed learning needs. Individual sessions would also take into consideration the individual's attachment, trauma, alcohol and drug issues, as well as providing a platform to make the best use of the group sessions.

Although it is possible to draw a map of the desistance process, this is not a linear progression, it is better considered as cycles of change. The group process benefits from containing men at different stages of desistance development, as the senior men can act as mentors/role models for those new to the process and in so doing affirm the changes they are making and gain motivation for further change. Being exposed to the same area of learning several times, helps men to integrate this learning and to grow their emotional and cognitive awareness, emotional regulation skills and ability to critically reflect on their behaviour and attitudes, both through expression and observation of other men. Having variable length interventions available to enable men to integrate an IPV free identity, which incorporates sufficient personal awareness, communication skills, and a willingness to seek and utilise help, is necessary.

Because desisting from IPV involves the perpetrator not only ceasing the use of IPV but also engaging in new safe and respectful behaviours with an intimate partner, it is

crucial that there are interventions to address both the intrapsychic and interpersonal factors. When teaching communication skills attachment triggers that arise need to be addressed in individual and/or group process. If the man is in an ongoing relationship then addressing communication skills and attachment issues in couples counselling or couples group work should be considered, if assessment identifies both partners are experiencing safety to undertake this work.

Opportunities for making amends for past harm should be made available. Similarly opportunities for men to stay connected to other men who are maintaining IPV free identities and engaged in ongoing personal and relationship growth, possibly following the AA format, need to be provided. These could also give men who have attained an IPV free identity an opportunity to act as mentors/sponsors to men who are earlier in the desistance process.

Limitations and Future Research Considerations

This research study was a qualitative inquiry into the lived experiences of six heterosexual men, living in Auckland, New Zealand, who have experienced desisting from perpetrating intimate partner violence. The knowledge added to this under researched area must be viewed within the limitations of this study. Firstly any findings cannot be considered generalizable because the participants in the study are not a statistically representative sample, and the underlying epistemology of the project does not lend itself to generalisation. The themes and the description of the change process that are articulated are not suggested as a comprehensive or definitive statement about how men cease perpetrating IPV. Through hearing men tell their stories, the present study makes visible a number of dilemmas that they and other men face in the process of desisting from IPV. Taken alongside previous research into IPV desistance this produces an increasingly detailed picture to assist interventions aimed at eliminating IPV and identifying future areas for research.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) identifies having an insider perspective, with an intimate knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation and an outsider, expert perspective, with an ability to conceptualise and interpret, as desirable for the role of researcher. As outlined in the methodology section I carry both these perspectives. I have positioned myself as being aligned with men who have perpetrated IPV and those engaged in developing an IPV free identity. Whilst not condoning IPV or ever intending to undervalue the harm experienced by the victims of IPV, my desire was to make visible the often unseen or misunderstood dilemmas that men face in changing behaviour and beliefs, that they have learnt but never initiated independently of their social and personal contexts, and by doing so humanise their experience.

Every effort was made to keep the study focused on the story and meanings expressed by the participants. Having such a close connection to IPV, observed in childhood, perpetrated as an adult, experienced as an ongoing challenge in retaining an IPV free identity and as a professional working in the field, hearing the men's narratives produced some times of emotional and philosophical distress for myself. Utilising my own experience of over 20 years professional and self-awareness work, the aid of supervisors, friends and colleagues who are associated in counselling and intervention work for eliminating violence, I have attempted to maintain integrity with the men's narratives. The study could however have benefited from a further interview focused on the men's reflections on the results, to obtain confirmation of meaning and further observations that came to awareness, post interview. Any future research using qualitative methodology should consider this possibility.

Several areas for future research become apparent from the study. Producing an environment that is hostile enough to trigger a man's desire to change needs to be balanced with being fertile enough for the motivation and action to grow. Most sanctions for change occur in social settings rather than intervention agencies. Ongoing research into the effectiveness of engaging men to enter the desistance process through the policing and court systems related to IPV is required. Social media and community projects focusing on IPV as a health or social issue, and the IPV perpetrator requiring support and acceptance as a person, in a similar manner to addressing smoking, gambling or mental health issues, need to be trialled and researched to assess any increase in perpetrator help seeking, and any increase in public helping attitudes and action. Likewise a trial focused on making visible the dilemma men experience between the familiarity of IPV perpetration and guilt/shame experienced from perpetrating, using social media and community projects, could be useful.

Trialling ongoing support groups for men who perpetrate IPV, perhaps along the AA model and even linked to this organisation, would be useful. Researching a mentor/sponsor programme, where men who have attained an IPV free identity would support men on a journey of desistance, could ascertain whether there are benefits for one or both men.

Further interviewing of men who have ceased IPV should be undertaken. A larger research project could aim to study a representative cross-section of the population. There could also be a focus specifically aimed at cultural groups to ascertain helpful interventions that are most relevant.

Undertaking research that involves interviews with couples who have experienced the IPV desistance process in their relationship could shed further light on what interventions are required for men in the different stages of their desistance process. It may also add to our knowledge of how to support the women and couples who

decide to remain together through the IPV desistance process; and how to assess when sufficient safety exists in the relationship to pursue interventions involving the couple together.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to add to the knowledge of what helps and hinders the IPV desistance process through hearing the lived experience of men who testified to having ceased IPV. Six men gave generously of their time and experience. Using an IPA perspective and methodology enabled for insights to be gained into the meanings and impacts of particular desistance factors, which would have otherwise remained invisible with the use of more traditional, quantitative approaches. Through hearing the experiences of men, the dilemmas they feel caught in, between the familiarity of using IPV to manage their emotional proximity in a relationship and the guilt and shame they experience from using IPV, have been made visible. The struggle to be accountable for their use of violence and to be seen for repairing their IPV free identity became evident. How men are engaged to explore these dilemmas have direct implications on whether they experience motivation or resistance to progress in the desistance process.

The importance of a sanction requiring personal relevance to become a motivator for change and for support and acceptance to be available at this time, for the men to view change as possible and worthwhile, have been described. Gaining awareness of emotions and cognitions has been linked to the ability to regulate emotions and critically reflect on beliefs and behaviours to transform these from affirming IPV to affirming safe and respectful behaviours. The complexities involved in developing from resisting the use of IPV to proactively engaging in safe and respectful behaviours have been outlined along with the need to view desistance as an ongoing process, involving advances and setbacks, and not as a final destination.

Although the men who perpetrate IPV need to be held accountable for their actions, this study draws attention to their humanity embedded in specific social and personal contexts. They are men who are behaving according to what they have learnt through their life experience and what society has offered them. The men are handed the task to change their behaviour and beliefs, but the responsibility for eliminating IPV rests with our society as a whole, and requires a change in society's attitude from blaming the individual to becoming involved as part of the solution. If there is a prominent statement that comes out of this research it is that our best hope for eliminating IPV comes not from identifying men as perpetrators but rather in highlighting their strengths to be IPV free and providing support and acceptance over sufficient time for men to integrate these changes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Letters of Permission



Man Alive
11 Edmonton Rd,
Henderson
Waitakere City 0612
3.4.13

To Whom it May Concern,

I have read and understand the proposed project "What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner?" I grant permission for Tom Cooper, principal researcher, to conduct the research. I understand that the authorised personnel of the agency shall take the oversight and on-site responsibilities during processing of identifying and contacting of potential participants, data collection and shall help the student researcher in taking every precaution on-site for the protection of the human participants involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Heays". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jim Heays,
Clinical Manager
Man Alive



Friendship House
He Whare Tangata

19th July 2013

To whom it may concern

I have read and understand the proposed project "What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner?"

I grant permission for Tom Cooper, student researcher, to conduct the research.

I understand that the authorised personnel of the agency shall take the oversight and on-site responsibilities during processing of identifying and contacting of potential participants, data collection and shall help the student researcher in taking every precaution on-site for the protection of the human participants involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Ison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lesley Ison
Business & Operations Manager

on behalf of:
Alistair Sherlock
Client Services Manager
Friendship House
20 Putney Way
Manukau
Tel: 262 2322
www.friendshiphouse.org.nz

Appendix 2 Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Key Informants)

Project title:

“What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner?”

Dear.....,

My name is Tom Cooper and I am an enrolled student for a Master of Philosophy at the School of Health and Social Services, Massey University. As partial fulfilment of my degree, I am undertaking a research project in regard to men’s experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner. As you have indicated your interest to take part, I would like to invite you to participate in this research project.

Project Description

The aim of this project is to find better ways of decreasing intimate partner violence through hearing how men describe the change process they have gone through. This includes what men found helped and hindered their change and what they describe as the benefits and costs of ceasing partner violence. At present there has been very little research given to hearing men’s experience of this change. This research project is aimed at recording these experiences in order to better meet the needs of men and their whanau.

You are invited to take part in this study about your experience of stopping the use of violence towards your partner as a man who has attended a Living Without Violence (LWV) Group. You have been selected from the data base at this LWV programme, which has addressed the letter of invitation to you. These details have not been passed on to me. To be eligible to participate in the study you also need to be currently in a relationship and to have been violence free in that relationship for at least 6 months. To compensate for your time and travel expenses you will be given a \$20 petrol voucher.

Project Procedures

Your participation is voluntary, and involves a single interview which will take from 60 to 90 minutes. The interview will take place in person at the place we’ve agreed. You may be forwarded a summary of findings during the data analysis stage and invited to give feedback about these findings. You will also be forwarded a copy of the final summary of findings.

Some of the material we are covering may bring up uncomfortable memories and feelings. If this does happen resources will be offered to help, including time with me during or after the interview to manage any distress and referral to the agency's counselling team if further support is required or desired. The interview can be paused or stopped at any time, if you wish. If you should feel upset or distressed please do not hesitate to inform me or my supervisor. Please be also aware that Lifeline offers free and confidential 24/7 telephone counselling (within Auckland: 09 5222 999, outside Auckland: 0800 543 354).

Data Storage/Retention/Destruction/Future Use

The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. Additional hand written notes may be taken during the interview. If you should agree to being recorded, you may choose to have the audiotape recorder turned off at any time. After transcription the audiotape will be deleted. The transcription will be offered to you to read and edit for inaccuracies. This will be discussed at the end of the interview and the safest and most convenient arrangement made. Data will be securely stored in password protected memory sticks as well as in lockers in remote sites (which would be temporarily outside the university until the research project is finished). Audiotaped data will be separately stored from transcriptions and any other identifying material. Transcribed data will be held for a period of five years and will be deleted or disposed via a secure shredding machine at Massey University.

Only the student researcher and his supervisor will have access to any data collected in the process of this research project. Should it be necessary to involve a transcriber they will sign a confidentiality agreement. The student researcher will use the data for analysis and then for writing up the findings for his research portfolio. The data may also be utilized for presentation(s) and/or journal article(s).

Right to Withdraw from Participation

You have the right to withdraw from your participation at any time and without naming any reasons. Further, you are able to withdraw any data you have contributed, up until two months after your interview. You will face no disadvantages whatsoever if withdrawing your participation.

Confidentiality

All identifying information you give will be kept confidential by the student researcher and his supervisor. The only reason this would be broken is if you indicate that you intend doing harm to yourself or another. Please be mindful that there are potential limitations in regard to the guarantee of confidentiality when participating in this research project, as there will be a small number of participants recruited from two

LWV programmes. All necessary steps are undertaken to ensure your privacy is protected.

Please also be aware that if the information you provide is reported or published, this will be done in a way that does not identify you. You will be given or can choose a pseudonym in order to protect your identity in publications. Care will also be taken to prevent any identification of organizations. Therefore, this matter will be discussed with you in more detail before the interview.

Contact Details and Approval

Thank you very much for your participation. Please do not hesitate to phone or email me if you have any questions or wish to share any concerns with me on 021 02973126 or at tom.cooper.1@uni.massey.ac.nz Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor: Associate Professor. Mandy Morgan at C.A.Morgan@massey.ac.nz .

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 13/41. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 80877, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 3 Consultation with Maori

From the Staff at Manukau Institute of Technology, MIT
Otara, Auckland.

To whom it may concern,

During May this year Tom Cooper consulted with us concerning the proposed research "What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner". In support of this research we have given our agreement to be available to provide cultural advice and support should Māori participants be recruited for the project.

Kūkupa Tirikatene (Kaiākau at Manukau Institute of Technology, MIT)

 1 - 7 - 2013

Dr Peter Boyd (Kaiwhiriwhiri at MIT)

 11.7.2013

Alexander Stevens (Lecturer in Social Work at MIT).

 11 - 7 - 2015

8 Regents Park Drive
Westgate, Massey
Auckland 0614

28/6/13

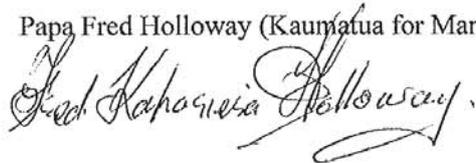
To whom it may concern,

On April 15th this year Tom Cooper consulted with me concerning the proposed research "What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner" to be undertaken with Man Alive. In support of this research I gave my agreement to be available to provide cultural advice and support should Māori participants be recruited for the project.

My regards for the delay.

Yours faithfully,

Papa Fred Holloway (Kaumatua for Man Alive)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Holloway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'F'.

From the Facilitators of the Te Ara Taumata Ora Programmes.

To whom it may concern,

During May this year Tom Cooper consulted with us concerning the proposed research “What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner” to be undertaken with Man Alive. In support of this research we have given our agreement to be available to provide cultural advice and support should Māori participants be recruited for the project.



Stan Rapatini		28/6/13
George Manukau		27/6/2013
Togia Lanefale		28/6/2013

Appendix4 Authority for the Release of Transcripts

Project title:

“What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner?”

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

Appendix 5 Letter of Invitation to Participate

Letter of Invitation to Participate

Project title:

“What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner?”

Student Researcher: Tom Cooper

Hello,

My name is Tom Cooper and I am an enrolled student for a Master of Philosophy at the School of Health and Social Services, Massey University. As partial fulfilment of my degree, I am undertaking a research project in regard to men’s experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner. I have been working with men for the past 20 years. Over that time I have met many men who have participated in Living Without Violence (LWV) Programmes and who have made changes to stop using violence in their relationships. Men like yourself who have attended a LWV group have a wealth of knowledge to offer about your experience of making these changes. At present there has been very little research given to hearing men’s experience of change. This research project is aimed at recording these experiences in order to better meet the needs of other men and their whanau.

I want to invite you to take part in an interview with me where you would speak about your experience of using and stopping violence in your relationship. I would ask some questions to help prompt you when needed, but mostly the aim is for you to describe these changes in your own words. The interview will take between one to one and a half hours and will be audio-taped if you agree. This will be written out (transcribed) later with all names and identifying information changed to keep your privacy. You will then be given this to read and if you wish to make changes we will arrange to meet again.

You have been selected from the data base at the LWV programme, which has addressed the letter of invitation to you. These details have not been passed on to me. To be eligible to participate in the study you also need to be currently in a relationship and to have not used violence towards this partner for at least six months. To compensate for your time and travel expenses you will be given a \$20 petrol voucher.

What are the risks or discomforts? Some of the material we are covering may bring up uncomfortable feelings. If this does happen resources will be offered to help.

What are the benefits? This exploration may help you understand your own experience of change from abusive behaviour better. It may be useful to people

working in the area of stopping violence to improve the way we work with men and to decrease violence in our society.

How is your privacy protected? There is a confidentiality agreement which I would discuss with you if you consider participating. The audio recording and the transcription would only be available to my supervisor and myself and kept in locked, safe places.

If you would like to take part and/or have questions you would like to ask, then you can contact me on my phone: 021 02973126 or by email at tom.cooper.1@uni.massey.ac.nz If you text me with a number I will call you back.

Thanks for considering this and I hope to see you in the near future.

Regards,

Tom Cooper

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 13/41. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 80877, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 6 Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

(Key Informants)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 5 YEARS

Project title:

“What do men say about their experience of stopping the use of violence towards their partner?”

I have read the Participant Information Sheet; have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research under the conditions set out in the Participant information

Sheet

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 7 Interview Guidelines

Interview Guidelines

The first few minutes of each interview will be for undertaking karakia and other protocols which may be culturally appropriate, revisiting the study purpose, reviewing confidentiality procedures, and engaging in small talk to establish rapport.

The first questions of the interview will give the participant time to warm up to the interview process and to say a little about themselves – tell me about yourself (Prompts: interests, family, relationship, children, how would you describe yourself? What are one or values that are important to you?)

The central part of the interview will focus on the change process for the man –

- What is your experience of using violence towards your partner(s) and stopping this? (Prompts: What violence were you using? What is an example of a time you used violence towards your partner? When and how did you realise the violence was a problem? What made you change? What prompted your decision to stop being abusive toward your partner? What caused you to change your behaviour?)
- What and who helped you make this change? What and who didn't help or got in the way of you making these changes?
- What were the signs for you that you had changed? (Prompts: How did you act differently? What are examples of how you act differently that are non-violent which are different to how you would have acted in these situations previously? How did you feel differently? How do you think differently? What did others notice? What did you notice about how others were when with you?)
- What would you say are the benefits you have noticed from ceasing using partner violence? (Prompts: Gains? In relationships? Financially? How you feel about yourself?) What have been the costs of ceasing partner violence? (Prompts: What have you lost? What do you miss?)
- Do you still have times when you think about being abusive toward your partner? How do you handle those feelings?
- If you were to come across a man who is using violence towards his partner, how would you tell him about how you changed and what the benefits have been of change?

- And finally: Is there anything else you would like to add to our overall conversation? And a final review of how the participant has experienced the interview and that they are happy to finish.

Appendix 8 Introduction to the Participants' IPV Histories

In this project a group of men were interviewed, most of whom would not have considered themselves to be violent or abusive, prior to experiencing one of the sanctions covered in the themes. When they chose to speak of their childhoods the men spoke of learning that violence was normal, and some experiencing ongoing violence, justified as disciplining, towards them as children. Most of the men spoke about witnessing various forms of abuse or controlling behaviour being used towards their mothers or other women by their fathers or other men in their families (Bandura 1977; Woodin & O'Leary, 2009), as a way of managing emotions (Dutton, 1998) and maintaining power and control (Pence & Paymar, 1993). They were also witness to men being seen as dominant and women as submissive, problematic or inferior (Bowen, 2011). These images came from a variety of relationships and settings, including extended family, peer group, religious doctrine, societal messages as well as direct family. They were images that informed their experiences and provided a template of what would be considered as normal.

Most of the men spoke about entering into intimate relationships, with a lack of maturity, positive role modelling or preparation for managing working together as a couple in a partnership. The violence or abuse that they perpetrated ranged from violence severe enough to require medical attention through to psychological and emotional manipulation. Four of the men disclosed engaging only in IPV, and would probably fall into the Family Only typology of Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994). The other two men also disclosed violence towards men outside their family and would probably fit the Low Level Antisocial typology outlined by (Holtzworth-Munroe, et al., 2000). The time duration that this violence continued over ranged from an extended period of 20 years to approximately 2 years.

Appendix 9 Summary of Thematic Findings

Sanctions: Turning points and incentives

Initiating the change process requires the men to experience some form of sanction that motivates them to turn towards desistance. A number of sanctions were identified, including legal, parental, social, values and situational. Sanctions acted as Turning Points when they caused the men to feel sufficient loss, that the pain of continuing to perpetrate IPV was great enough for them to acknowledge there was a problem and that some change in behaviour was needed. Sanctions that acted as incentives did not have as strong an impact, to cause the men to feel an immediate change of behaviour was required, but were important enough, in order to support change. Whether these sanctions had sufficient impact on the men to initiate the change process was dependent on their character, history and present context and whilst a particular sanction could be a strong motivator for one man, it could have no impact or even a hindering effect for another.

Acceptance and Support: I'm OK, IPV is not OK; I'm not alone and Making the choice/autonomy

Supporting factors were required for the men to develop towards sustained abstinence from IPV. They were negotiating moving from survival patterns that were outside of their awareness that had developed from their history and included sociocultural factors, such as gender roles and related belief systems, behavioural learning through conditioning and role models, attachment and childhood development, psychological or personality disorders and the influence of drug and alcohol issues. Moving away from the familiar controlling patterns for maintaining proximity in their relationships required an increase in emotional and cognitive awareness and initially produced feelings of threat to the men's perception of themselves, along with confusion, anxiety and vulnerability.

A balance needed to be found including acknowledging that the IPV behaviour was unacceptable and that the men were not the violence that they perpetrated, so that they could be considered acceptable and redeemable. An accepting and supportive environment was required to help transform the men's perception that they needed to defend their sense of self, which felt under attack, to one where they felt acknowledged and hopeful that pursuing change would be positive for them. Support and acceptance came through a significant person or people, for example, a counsellor or facilitator of an LWVP, a pastor or mentor, a friend, relation and/or the men's partners who helped the men feel that they were not alone with this problem. Separating from a relationship and/or receiving help in the form of counselling or an LWVP helped the men gain some perspective and move from blaming their partners or others for their predicament and taking some autonomous responsibility for the

choices they made. An important factor in the man's decision to change was that they felt it was made by them and was not forced upon them by being stigmatised, shamed or coerced, otherwise any desistance from IPV would be short lived and/or not develop towards safe and respectful behaviour.

Engaging: Increasing sensitivity and emotional awareness; Affect regulation; Critical reflection; Connecting to values/faith/something bigger; Taking responsibility

Once the men made a full commitment to change they became willing to engage in gaining insight into social, emotional and experiential phenomena. A safe, accepting and supportive, whilst challenging environment, was important to help the men develop their awareness of sensations and emotions, to learn to regulate their emotions and to critically reflect on their feelings, thoughts and behaviours in order to take responsibility for their own experience and actions. Attending an LWVP provided such an environment for most men in the present study. Once the men had moved from their initial defensiveness towards the facilitators and other men in the group, they were able to utilise the support and challenge that was offered, in particular by the facilitators, to explore their intrapsychic experience.

The importance of gaining sensitivity and emotional awareness for progressing in desistance from IPV proved significant to all the men for a number of reasons. It enabled them to be aware of the discomfort that came with increased tension and anger, which aided recognising the potential build-up towards IPV and provided the foundation for regulating this build-up. Men became sensitised to the damage that perpetrating IPV did to their partner, themselves and others, with a corresponding increase in empathy. Noticing how distasteful it was to see other men use aggressive and disrespectful behaviour produced a deterrent effect on the men. They regained the ability to experience other feelings such as hurt, sadness and powerlessness, which lay beneath the anger, as well as love and belonging.

Gaining sensitivity and emotional awareness was often difficult initially for the men but became more familiar with practice and for those who attended LWVP seeing others express their emotions and/or gaining affirmation when they acknowledged their own feelings helped. The men found the models and tools that were used in the LWVP to assist them to gain emotional awareness and to regulate these emotions to be extremely helpful for identifying trigger situations and providing the basis for utilising tools to keep themselves safe from perpetrating IPV.

Gaining awareness of their reactions to situations enabled the men to compare the effects of these actions with the values and beliefs that they carry, to take responsibility for their part in these situations, to explore how they could respond non-violently and to leave other people to take responsibility for their own actions. Being

able to undertake self-evaluation led to increased acceptance by the man of himself and others, including his partner. With this came a decrease in the desire to control others and an increased confidence in self-control. Those men who attended LWVP reported how the supportive challenging by facilitators encouraged them to critically reflect on whether their actions were supporting or undermining what they valued in life and what alternative actions they could take. They also found it helpful to be encouraged to critically reflect on the belief systems they carried that supported IPV perpetration, including those that had affected their expectations of women and of themselves as men. The increase in emotional awareness and reflecting on their own values and beliefs led to the men feeling more connected to others and that they were part of something bigger than just themselves.

Becoming Safe and Respectful: Using skills for respectful behaviour; Experiencing being part of a team, group, “We”; Setting boundaries in relationships; Making lifestyle changes

In order to develop a safe and respectful identity the men needed to become proactive to produce an environment that supported respectful safety and to repair and improve their intimate relationships. All of the men spoke of using new communication and assertion skills to build safety and respect in their relationships, including listening, expressing their feelings and thoughts safely, speaking up about uncomfortable situations that might risk displeasing their partner, recognising what their partners body language is telling them in relation to the level of safety they are experiencing, learning to modify their own tone and body language to present themselves safely, and entering into open and honest discussions. All of these actions required making a conscious effort, which the men reported as producing positive benefits that outweighed any initial anxiety or discomfort. They became proactive in building caring and respectful relationships rather than simply leaving this process to their partners or to chance.

Although all of the men benefited from learning new communication and assertion skills to develop nonviolent identities, a number of barriers to their use needed to be addressed by some men before they were habitually utilised. The first of these barriers was the male stereotype which required a man to be silent, staunch and not express his feelings or seek help in order to be seen as masculine. The second involved gendered expectations that women should give in to the man’s “superior” rationale and/or should know what he wants and go along with him. These two barriers were addressed by most of the men in the study through critically reflecting on these belief systems, with four of the men being aided in this process through the challenges provided by LWVP facilitators.

The third barrier involved attachment triggers that could arise when attempting assertive communication. Either partner feeling threatened during the interaction could provoke either of them towards anger with subsequent withdrawing or pursuing/demanding behaviour, to alleviate the stress experienced. If unresolved, these triggers led to escalating the situation and risking a lapse to IPV perpetration for the man. The strength of the reaction would vary from man-to-man depending on the level of any attachment disruption that they have experienced in their history. Addressing the attachment related disruptions to communication between partners proved important in supporting safe and respectful behaviour.

Experiencing being part of a team, group, “We”, was an important development in the man’s IPV free identity. The men experienced themselves maturing by moving from holding an individualistic perspective, where they focused on fulfilling their own needs and seeing their partner’s needs as less important, to one where they acknowledged that both of their needs were equally important and needing attention in order to support a healthy relationship. Seeing their relationship as a reciprocal partnership, involving giving and receiving help and support, with the aim of obtaining win/win solutions rather than the win/lose perspective they previously carried, were changes in attitude that occurred at this time. Those men who attended an LWVP noted how they learnt to make these attitude and behavioural changes in the group and then to transfer them into the relationship.

Learning to identify which relationships supported or undermined the man’s developing IPV free identity and then setting boundaries within these relationships was an important factor in building an environment that would give them the best chance to develop safe and respectful behaviour. This involved utilising assertion skills to engage with supportive people and to disengage with those who were undermining.

Other areas the men engaged in to produce an IPV free supportive environment included lifestyle changes such as decreasing or abstaining from alcohol and/or drug use, making career changes, and connecting with religion or spirituality. Making lifestyle changes increased the man’s sense of self-esteem and confidence as they felt more in charge of their own lives and the direction they wished to move in.

Remaining Safe and Respectful: Feedback and making amends; Sharing the learning/helping others; It takes time and ongoing commitment

The ability to utilise feedback, both from other people and through awareness of emotions and cognitions, increased as the man’s IPV free identity developed. External feedback came in the form of people, who had previously experienced the man as abusive, feeling safe to tell him if they saw signs indicating he could be at risk of escalating to IPV or giving him appreciations for his new behaviour and disclosures from past victims outlining the effect the IPV had on them. These types of feedback

were ongoing reminders to maintain awareness for potential lapses and affirmation for the changes the man had made. Hearing the experiences from past victims and acknowledging to them how they were affected was one way in which men could make amends, and has parallels with Restorative Justice and the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Experiencing for themselves the benefit of increased intimacy and feelings of security with a partner, family and friends was a major benefit and produced a positive reinforcement loop associated with safe and respectful behaviour.

Advocating for nonviolent behaviour by being active role models/mentors in LWVP groups and/or taking up a social service role such as LWVP facilitators or counsellors provided support for the men's desistance process. Such strategies kept them engaged in reflecting on their behaviour with other men and providing ongoing affirmation for the behaviour choices they made, by seeing the positive benefits experienced by the men they helped. The benefits mirror those seen in the Sponsor system used in 12 step programmes.

Having access to and commitment to use ongoing resources in the form of interventions such as LWVP or counselling, a mentor/sponsor and/or involvement with other men who are engaged in ongoing personal growth and self-reflection was seen as an important support for helping men remain IPV free. The amount of time and interventions required by the men to integrate safe and respectful behaviour differed and it was important to have access to support and interventions when required. Again a similarity can be drawn from the 12 step programmes. Couples counselling was used proactively by one of the men to continually improve his relationship with his partner.