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**Women's Experiences of their Partner's Attendance  
at a  
Men For Non Violence Programme:  
  
Their Stories  
and a  
Discourse Analysis**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **Abstract**

This study aims to report and analyse the texts of interviews with eleven women participants as they talk about their experience of their relationships during and after their partners' attendance at a Men For Non Violence (MFNV) programme. The women's partners, from whom they subsequently separated, had attended a MFNV programme while they were living together. Firstly, the women's stories of their private experience are summarised to provide new knowledges of the problem and in turn to be constitutive of a developing public understanding. Secondly, the commonalities in the women's experience, particularly in relation to the MFNV programme, are presented. Finally, a discourse analysis of the transcribed interviews illuminates the socially available linguistic resources used in common by the women in constituting their experiences and selves, with the effects and implications of these being discussed.

The majority of the women reported temporary reductions in physical violence with associated increased levels of psychological violence from the time their partners attended a MFNV programme, which supports existing findings. The discourses available to and drawn on by the women reproduce and perpetuate men's non responsibility for their violence and maintain responsibility for women to end the violence, thereby reinforcing an ideology of male dominance.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### Background

My interest in the focus of this study derived from a variety of sources.

Firstly, my own experience of male violence in some of my early relationships had made me aware of the fear, the humiliation, the unpredictability and the incomprehension experienced by women who are the victims of men's violence within their relationship.

Secondly, my own observation of such violence occurring within the relationships of others, the associated difficulties of knowing how to respond usefully and noting the varied responses of others, further contributed to my interest.

Thirdly, working as a counsellor for Relationship Services (formerly Marriage Guidance) and the Family Court I continually encountered women and men whose relationships were distressed or ending because of the man's violence towards his woman partner. Because joint counselling is not indicated for such couples (O'Leary & Murphy, 1992), particularly those referred by the Family Court and/or where there is an application for a protection order (Busch, Robertson & Lapsley, 1992) and because the MFNV organisation offered the only available intervention for men who are violent towards their partners, I referred and encouraged men to attend a Men For Non Violence (MFNV) programme. Some did. I also heard in counselling the incidental reports by many women of their experience of their partners' participation in a programme. I read the New Zealand evaluation research on MFNV programmes (e.g. Furness, Glover, Schuitemaker, Robertson & Busch, 1992; Lloyd-Pask & McMaster, 1991; Robertson & Busch, 1992; Robertson, Busch, Glover & Furness, 1992). Given the many difficulties associated with research in this area, it is remarkable that studies such as these have managed to collect the information they have. I noted an absence of the women's voices that I was hearing. I wanted these to be my focus.

Finally, 'family violence' and 'domestic violence' are receiving increased attention in the community in general and in the media and by Government in particular. In a 1996 policy statement on family violence (Department of Social Welfare, 1996) the Government outlines six broad strategies aimed at addressing this problem. One of these concerns perpetrator

interventions. It stresses the need to:

*"ensure that programmes for perpetrators of family violence are effective, accessible and hold victim safety as the paramount concern" (p9)*

Since the safety of the women partners of the perpetrators of 'family violence' is the central purpose of these programmes, clearly it is the women who rank as the programmes' primary clients rather than the men (Hart, 1992; Toone, 1992). It is these women, then, who must be the primary target of attempts *"to establish how effective offender programmes are in reducing violence and increasing the safety of victims"* (Department of Social Welfare, 1996, p9). Furthermore, the perpetrators' tendency to deny or minimise their violence (e.g. Ptacek, 1988) particularly regarding its frequency, severity and effects on the woman (Dutton, 1986) raises doubts about the reliability, validity and usefulness of these men's reports for the women. Although women also tend to deny or minimise their partners' violence (Ferraro, 1983), the women's accounts are more useful in understanding the needs of the women (Riggs, Murphy & O'Leary, 1989).

My aim with this research is to hear, report and analyse these women's voices as they talk about their experience of their relationships during and after their partners' attendance at a MFNV programme.

## **Introduction**

The growing concern about the level of violence in our society has lately focused on violence that occurs within that most private of places - the home. McMaster and Swain (1989) state that "90%+" of violence within the household is by men towards women. A recent major New Zealand study (Leibrich, Paulin, & Ransom, 1995) investigating what men say about abuse of women partners refers to 'domestic abuse' as *"the abuse of women by male partners"* (p31). The New Zealand Government policy statement on 'family violence' (Department of Social Welfare, 1996) states:

*"Violence between partners is predominantly perpetrated by men against women."* (p5)

Curiously, despite this widespread acknowledgement that the majority of violence that takes place within the home is men's violence towards their women partners, this violence has

variously attracted the terms 'domestic violence', 'family violence' and 'spouse abuse'. The words 'domestic' and 'family' evoke positive warm images of place and group. 'Domestic' connotes fulfilment of need, sanctuary and safety, while 'family' connotes love, intimacy and collective security. The fact that it is overwhelmingly men who harm women physically and psychologically, and even murder, is lost when men's violence towards women is labelled in relation to its location and by using the term 'family' which suggests that the violence is interactive (O'Leary & Murphy, 1992). The term 'spouse abuse' is also a gender neutral term which obscures the gendered nature of violence within intimate relationships.

This blurring of the agent of the violence is common and also prevails within the domain of research into men who are violent towards women (Lamb, 1991). Lamb noted that academic writing avoids representing men as responsible for their violent acts against women, with the majority of sentences about the abuse not specifying the men as agents of the violence. Furthermore, the frequent use of passive voice in news media reports of male violence against women leads to a greater acceptance of such violence and diffuses men's attributions of responsibility and of the degree of harm to the women (Henley, Miller & Beazley, 1995).

While there have been major advances since the 1970's in the understanding of and response to men's violence towards women within the home (Dobash & Dobash, 1992), it is notable that the language used currently to describe such violence serves to obscure the gender identity of the violator and the violated as well as to soften the impact of the violence itself. Rather than using terms like 'domestic violence' or 'family violence', McMaster and Swain (1989) use the term 'men's violence to women' to accurately represent the violence committed by men against their women partners in the privacy of the home. I shall follow their lead.

## **Definition**

Definitions of what constitutes men's violence to women have changed over the years. The issue of definition is important as it specifies what is measured and how, thus affecting prevalence rates, for example, and how the problem is viewed. Initially, in the 1970's, the focus was on quantifying physical acts of aggression where the intention was to hurt or injure the other person (Smith, 1987; Straus & Gelles, 1986). Straus and Gelles (1986) use the term 'family violence' and define violence as:

*"an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person" (p467)*

The much used Conflict Tactics Scale developed by Straus (1979) embodies this standpoint. This approach has been criticised for simplistically reducing men's violence against women to discrete, gender neutral, acts of physical aggression and for failure to take account of the social context within which the violence occurs (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Hatty, 1988 in Gray, 1994).

More recently there has been a recognition of the wide ranging behaviours which constitute men's violence to women, as well as the function of these behaviours and the meaning accorded to them within their context of occurrence (Dutton, 1992; Pence & Paymar, 1985). This has necessitated a broader definition. In the United States, working from a profeminist perspective, Adams (1988) defines violence as:

*"any act that causes the victim to do something she doesn't want to do, prevents her from doing something she wants to do, or causes her to be afraid"*  
(p191)

The New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Co-ordinating Committee (FVPCC) (1991) define 'family violence' thus:

*" - it includes conduct that damages physically, emotionally, socially and/or mentally and can be of a physical, sexual and/or mental nature.  
- It involves fear, intimidation and emotional deprivation, assault with or without weapons and sexual violation." (p42)*

This definition is used as the basis for much work in New Zealand (e.g. Department of Social Welfare, 1996; Leibrich et al., 1995; McMaster & Swain, 1989) and overseas (Lloyd-Pask & McMaster, 1991). This is the way in which 'violence' is used in this study - to cover psychological violence as well as physical assault.

## **Incidence and prevalence**

Rates of male violence against female partners have been based largely on American surveys in the 1980's as reported by women who have been abused. The rates cited in Lapsley (1993) for incidence of physical abuse in the past year range from 10% to 24.5%, while prevalence rates range from 18.1% to 36.4%. Various localised studies in New Zealand have yielded similar figures. In a study of Hamilton women Ritchie (1981) found that 25% reported having been hit by a male partner during their lifetime. The Christchurch Child Development Study (Fergusson, Horwood, Kershaw & Frederick, 1986) found 8.5% of the mothers reported



one or more assaults by their male partner over a five year period and 2-3% over a one year period. In a study of Otago women, Mullen, Romans-Clarkson, Walton and Herbison (1988) found that 16% reported physical abuse by a male partner during their lifetime.

More recently, using the broader FVPCC definition of violence and asking 2000 New Zealand men about their own behaviour, Leibrich et al. (1995) found 21% of men reported at least one act of physical violence in the past year and 35% at least one such act during their lifetime. Of particular interest was the men's reported rates of psychological violence - 53% had committed at least one act in the past year and 62% at least one such act during their lifetime.

There are other indications that the problem of men's violence to women is sizeable, serious, and expensive. For the year from July 1994 to June 1995 in New Zealand, 8,763 women and their 12,130 children sought assistance from Women's Refuges and 9,959 reports were made to the police of male assault against females (Department of Social Welfare, 1996). Considering the low reporting rates to police of men's assaults against females, these figures do not convey the full picture. Overseas estimates of the rate of reporting of men's assaults against women partners range from 2% (Dobash & Dobash, 1979) to 10% (Department of Social Welfare, 1996). In New Zealand, since the introduction of a new arrest policy by police, arrest rates of 15% - 20% have been reported (Carbonatto, 1995). New Zealand police statistics show an average of eleven women have been killed by their ex/partners annually up to the end of 1994. Furthermore, for the 1993 / 1994 year in New Zealand the economic cost of 'family violence' has been estimated at between \$1.187 billion and \$5.302 billion (Department of Social Welfare, 1996; Snively, 1994).

### **Theoretical approach**

Responses to this problem have varied according to the theoretical and political perspective taken in conceptualising men's violence to women. These approaches can be broadly classified into four categories: the individual, the interactional, the developmental and the socio-cultural (Jenkins, 1990).

#### **Individual**

Theories which focus on the individual explain the violence in terms of some internal defect within the individual - some form of psychopathology, for example a psychiatric illness, a personality or character defect. Examples of common explanations which locate the cause of violence within the violent individual include alcohol abuse, poor impulse control (Kaplan, Sadock & Grebb, 1994), emotional inexpressiveness (Gondolf, 1985) and skill deficits, such as

poor problem-solving skills (Sonkin, Martin & Walker, 1985). The symptoms of the DSM-IV diagnosis "Intermittent Explosive Disorder" (Kaplan et al., 1994, p718) closely resemble the behaviours associated with the cycle of violence (McMaster & Swain, 1989, p64).

Attempts have been made to establish a profile of the characteristics of men who are violent to their partners (e.g. Gondolf, 1985). While these profiles of characteristics, for example low self esteem, jealousy and emotional dependency, are descriptive of men who are violent to women, they are not explanatory and have not been successful in prediction (Jenkins, 1990). It has also been suggested that women who are involved with violent men have personality defects which attract violence (Russell, 1988). These women are deemed to be dependent and addicted to violence (McIntyre, 1984; Pizzey & Shapiro, 1982), a notion that has been popularised by books such as *"Women Who Love Too Much"* (Norwood, 1985).

Women themselves frequently explain their partners' violence towards them in terms of characteristics of their abusers' personality (Queensland Domestic Violence Taskforce Report, 1988). For example, explanations like *"that's the way he is"*, *"he's got a short fuse"* and *"he can't control his anger"* are common (see Chapter Six, p132).

Viewing the cause of men's violence to women as residing within the individual perpetrator and/or victim has led to seeking solutions which treat these individuals' deficits. Treatments for violent men have emphasised skill training to restore perceived deficits in, for example, anger management, assertiveness or problem solving (O'Leary & Murphy, 1992). Treatment for women often involves individual therapy aimed at severing dependency and increasing assertiveness (Douglas, 1987).

There are difficulties with conceptualising the problem in terms of individual psychopathology. Firstly, there is no evidence that there is anything to distinguish men who are violent *"from the normal 'good guy' - in fact, many of them may be 'good guys' on all other counts"* (Gondolf, 1993). Nor is there evidence that the personalities of women who they violate are any different from other women (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Secondly, this approach fails to take into account that the men's violence is specifically targeted towards women and rarely towards others in their lives, for example, their boss or their male friends (Dutton, 1988, in Saunders, 1992). This level of control suggests that forces other than individual personality factors are at work. Further, the historical, social and cultural context in which the violence occurs is ignored.

### **Interactional**

Interactional theories emphasise the role of the family system in explaining men's violence to their partners, considering it to be a symptom of family and/or relationship dysfunction. The dysfunctional interactive patterns and dynamics operating in the relationship

perpetuate the resulting violence (Neidig & Friedman, 1984). This systemic view focuses on the 'violent couple' as the unit of analysis and treatment, and it assumes both partners are responsible for controlling the conflict and violence (O'Leary & Murphy, 1992). Interventions following from this analysis aim at correcting the relational miscommunication and changing each partner's role in escalating the conflict. This usually takes the form of couple counselling.

Women themselves frequently attribute the cause of their partners' abuse of them to something they did or did not do (Jenkins, 1990).

Dobash and Dobash (1992) note "*the approach is deeply conservative*" (p239). Dissatisfaction with the systems approach to men's violence to women centres on its lack of a socio-cultural analysis (Jenkins, 1990). The approach assumes gender neutrality and ignores power as it operates within the relationship and in the broader context. It exposes the women to additional risk for several reasons. Firstly, by framing the problem as interpersonal, the idea that both partners are equally responsible is unintentionally conveyed and the men avoid being confronted about their violence. Secondly, joint counselling, often used within this approach, works towards re/conciliation with the implication that the relationship should continue without recognising the risk to the women of being exposed to further violence. Thirdly, if a woman discloses her partner's violence or her own feelings in a joint counselling session this can increase the possibility of violent and coercive behaviour from the male partner (Dobash & Dobash, 1992).

The systems approach uses abstract language which further obscures agency and diffuses responsibility - for example, terms such as 'violent couples', 'enmeshed', 'closed systems'. Most importantly, it fails to take note of research on women which recommends that joint counselling is not appropriate, or wanted, where there has been a history of violence (e.g. Busch, Robertson & Lapsley, 1992; Ganley, 1981).

### **Developmental**

Theories which focus on the developmental background of the perpetrator identify his past experiences within his family as shaping his subsequent violent behaviour. This approach is based on social learning theory which contends that violent behaviours are learned by observing others (modelling) and by direct experience (Bandura, 1973). There is evidence to support this view. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) found a positive correlation between the amount of physical punishment a male child experienced and his subsequent rate of violence to his partner. Further, men who are physically violent to their partners have witnessed or experienced a greater incidence of violence as children than have men who are not physically violent (Browne, 1987). Similarly, women who witnessed violence between their parents during childhood and adolescence are at greater risk of being the victim of their partner's violence towards them (Saunders, 1992).

The view that violent behaviour develops out of a violent upbringing is common and it gives rise to the view that violence is perpetuated by its transgenerational or intergenerational transmission. This has recently been popularised in New Zealand in television advertisements aimed at reducing violence by stopping this transmission. Men who are violent and their women partners often explain his violent behaviour by referring to his past experiences (Jenkins, 1990).

Treatment from this perspective examines the individual's developmental history, with therapy aimed at healing the wounds of childhood (psychodynamic) and at learning new behaviours and acquiring new beliefs (cognitive - behavioural). The focus is not only on the violent individual, but also on his family of origin and on his female partner's developmental history. This leads to a diffusion of responsibility similar to the interactional approach.

While the developmental approach is helpful in understanding in part the mechanisms for acquisition of violent behaviour, it cannot account for the fact that it is estimated only 30% of those who come from violent backgrounds actually become abusive adults (Straus, 1979). This also undermines the theory that such violence is perpetuated largely through intergenerational transmission. It would seem other factors must also be operating.

### **Socio-cultural**

*"Socio-cultural explanations locate the causes of abuse within the social structures, traditions, norms and ideologies of the culture." (Jenkins, 1990, p29)*

This position was advanced initially by feminist critics of the traditional approach to men's violence to women from within psychology and the social sciences (e.g. Bograd, 1984; Dobash & Dobash, 1979). It stresses that a man's violence to his woman partner is not merely an instance of that individual's bad behaviour. Rather it is an expression and constructive part of a society wherein historical inequalities of power for men and women underpin its structures, including the structure of marriage and the family. It is an enactment of the ideology of male dominance in society (Yllo & Bograd, 1988). The failure of institutions such as police, medicine, justice and psychology to respond to this evident problem has served to support and sanction men's violence to women, highlighting the need for change at all levels in society.

While gender analysis is now integral to most academic analyses of men's violence to women (Saunders, 1992), the understanding of the wider community lags behind. Legislation, such as New Zealand's Domestic Violence Act (DVA) (1995), is considered the most effective way to advance the changes required to address the inequalities in society (Radford, Kelly & Hester, 1996; Thyfault, 1992). However, it is also recognised that those who operate the legal system, the police, government and social service agencies continue to de-emphasise the gendered distribution of violence (Kelly & Radford, 1996). Naming men's violence against

women as 'domestic violence' or 'family violence' are current examples of making a male practice gender neutral.

This approach acknowledges the different power dynamics and gender positions that operate for men and women, both in their relationship and in the wider social sphere (Murphy & Meyer, 1991). Treatment, therefore, occurs in gender-specific groups. The groups for men focus on challenging men's assumptions of entitlement to power and control, holding them responsible for stopping their violence and learning new ways of behaving based on respect and equality of women (Saunders, 1992). For women the groups offer safety and support (NiCarthy, Merriam & Coffman, 1984). The socio-cultural theoretical approach also promotes fostering psychosocial change at a broad level (for example, by agitating for a proactive response from the police and justice system).

These various perspectives are often used together for conceptualising men's violence to women (Saunders, 1992) and practice frequently draws on integrated approaches (Gray, 1994). The theory proposed by McMaster & Swain (1989), for example, blends the "*private and public; personal and political*" (p70). They consider that while men's **developmental** experience (or socialisation) takes place within his own family **system** and is unique to each **individual**, it occurs in and is derived from a **socio-cultural** context which supports and affirms men's violence to women. Their explanation of what causes and maintains this violence leads to goals and actions for stopping the violence at many levels - the individual man and woman, the couple, the family and social institutions (p82).

## Interventions

In the late 1970's, as the women's movement exposed the hitherto hidden occurrence of men's violence to women, programmes emerged in the United States to address the problem. Groups and refuges were set up to protect, support and advocate for women. Initial responses for men derived from the theoretical standpoint that the cause of the violence was located within the individual. Programmes employed individual counselling or groups for men with the emphasis on anger management strategies such as 'time out', relaxation training and emotional expression, following the early work of Sonkin and Durphy (1982).

As the therapeutic community entered into the management of men's violence to women, existing therapies were brought to bear. By the mid 1980's, family systems and individual psychopathology models saw the introduction of behavioural management, cognitive restructuring and joint conciliation counselling which was often court mandated (Gondolf, 1993).



Currently in the United States the approach and format of programmes for men vary, reflecting their theoretical foundation. These can be broadly classified as anger management, skill training or (profeminist) resocialisation (Gondolf, 1993).

### **Anger management**

Anger management programmes assume that it is the inappropriate escalation of anger that leads to men's violence towards women. Based on Lenore Walker's (1979) "cycle of violence", the focus is on teaching the individual man techniques for controlling his anger (see Sonkin & Durphy, 1982). Despite Walker's (1983) own and others' (e.g. Saunders, 1992) subsequent research which contradicts the "cycle of violence", most programmes include anger management as it provides the men with immediate practical measures to avoid violence which appear initially successful, hence rewarding and motivating (Gondolf, 1993).

However, there is evidence that these quick results can lead men to believe that they are 'cured' (Gondolf, 1993), possibly endangering the women. By focusing on anger, it enables the men to diffuse responsibility for the violence by blaming the anger and/or the women who are perceived to provoke it. This approach ignores the high level of control men do have over their anger as their selectivity shows. These men are able to control who they abuse (their partners, not the boss), the place where they abuse (usually in the home, not in public where they would be witnessed) and the part of the body they physically abuse (men often avoid injuring where it will be visible) (Hart, 1992).

Further criticism of the anger management model points out that men are often not angry when using premeditated controlling tactics (Gray, 1994). For example, the man who cleans his gun at the kitchen table after an argument is controlling, not angry. Critics also question the wisdom of teaching men who are already controlling further tactics for control when what is actually required is for the men to release control (Gondolf & Russell, 1986). Men also appear to stop, reduce or confine their physical violence to a form which they do not define as violence (e.g. 'playfighting') while on a programme only to resume it afterwards (Furness, 1993), further revealing the degree of control men have over their own violent behaviour.

### **Skill training**

Similar to anger management programmes, skill building programmes assume that the individual's intra- and interpersonal skill deficits, possibly developmentally acquired, cause him to be violent to his partner. Groups instruct the men and provide practice in communication, assertiveness, conflict management and relaxation. Cognitive restructuring aims at changing thought patterns which precipitate violence (Hamberger & Hastings, 1988).

This approach too is criticised for providing men with additional ways of exercising and maintaining control without addressing the power and control that is considered to underpin men's violent behaviour to women (Gondolf, 1993). Again, it can lead to men blaming their

childhood experiences or their partner's involvement in the communication or conflict, thus avoiding responsibility for their violent behaviour.

### **Resocialisation**

The resocialisation approach to treatment is based on a profeminist socio-cultural analysis of violence and focuses on making men accountable. It relies on power and control theory and instructs men in all aspects of the power and control wheel (Paymar & Pence, 1993). Men's sexist belief systems and feelings of entitlement and disrespect towards women are confronted in the group, as are instances of denial, justification and rationalisation in individual men. Men are encouraged to challenge the ideology of male dominance they have learned and that is sustained in social institutions and structures. Critics consider this approach is too political, negative towards men and ignores the part women play in men's violence to them (Gondolf, 1993).

### **Interventions in New Zealand**

In the early 1980's in New Zealand, men established psycho-educational groups for men who were violent to their women partners. Initially anger management was the predominant approach taken in these groups. Although the programmes continued to be called 'Anger Management', they were soon modified to include anger management, skills training, cognitive restructuring and education about power and control and the socio-cultural context of men's violence to women (McMaster & Swain, 1989).

More recently an integrated approach has been taken to the problem. Modelled on the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) in Duluth, Minnesota (Pence & Paymar, 1986), the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Pilot Project (HAIPP) was set up in 1991. All the agencies involved with men who are violent and their partners (i.e. Women's Refuge, police, the Court system, probation, men's programmes) cooperate and coordinate their responses to ensure consistency and accountability (Robertson & Busch, 1992). With the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (1995) in 1996 this coordinated response, intended to ensure the safety of victims as the paramount concern, has been adopted as Government policy (Department of Social Welfare, 1996). It is intended that programmes will be available under the Act for applicants (mostly women) and respondents (mostly men). Programmes for applicants will focus on empowerment, while programmes for respondents will seek to change abusive behaviour through education which draws on a socio-cultural analysis of violence and an understanding of gender bias and socialisation (Department for Courts, 1996).

## **Evaluation of men's programmes**

As Lloyd-Pask and McMaster (1991) point out, the questions most frequently asked about men's programmes are " *'Do they work?' and 'What is your success rate?'* " (p13). Given that men's programmes are being seen increasingly as a major part of the 'solution' to men's violence and that all respondents under the DVA (1995) are now automatically mandated to attend a 'stopping violence' programme, it is essential to have some understanding of the usefulness and limitations of these programmes. For some time the need for independent evaluation has been regarded as a priority (McMaster & Swain, 1989).

Currently in New Zealand and elsewhere (e.g. Australia, Britain, Canada and USA) a legal practice known as Diversion could inadvertently privilege men who assault women (Kelly & Radford, 1996). Men who have assaulted their partners, that is committed a criminal offence, are 'diverted' into a 'stopping violence' programme which if completed results in all criminal charges being dropped. Men's violence to women is being treated differently from other similar criminal offences suggesting that men's violence towards women is not as serious as other offences and does not require similar legal sanctions. If completion of a programme fails to produce any change in their behaviour, effectively these men are getting the message that they can get away with violence against women. Furthermore, their women partners are exposed to ongoing danger possibly believing that their partners' attendance at a programme will 'cure' him. Evaluation of men's programmes would now seem particularly pressing.

### **Issues of reliability, validity and utility**

In conducting evaluation work there are many issues which threaten the reliability, validity and utility of the findings. These issues include dropout and completion rates, definitions of violence and success, length of follow up, use of self report and referral source. Each of these issues is outlined below.

Dropout and completion rates affect samples for evaluation research. Dropout rates are estimated to average around 50% over a programme (Gondolf, 1993). An extended study on dropout rates reported a poorer picture. Of two hundred men who phoned a programme, only fifty turned up to an intake interview, twenty five attended more than one session of the programme, twelve completed three months, seven completed six months and two (i.e. 1% of initial inquirers) completed the full eight month programme (Gondolf & Foster, 1991). That is, 50% of those who attended an intake interview had dropped out by the end of the first session, indicating problems with engagement. New Zealand's National Network for Stopping Violence (NNFSV, formerly Men For Non-Violence (NZ) Inc.) figures for January to June 1996 reflect this,



with 62% of referrals engaging, similar to the figure of 65% for 1995 (National Network for Stopping Violence, 1996).

The New Zealand HAIPP study of its first year reported a completion rate of 48% (Robertson, Busch, Glover & Furness, 1992). Referral source had some bearing on the completion rate. In this sample, 71% of those referred by Community Corrections completed, 63% of those referred by the Family Court completed, though 42% of Family Court referrals failed to begin the programme, and 22% of self and other referrals completed. Likewise, studies overseas (e.g. Hamberger & Hastings, 1989) have found completion rates for Court mandated men substantially higher than for self referrals, though still only about 70% of Court mandated men completed.

Evaluation research at programme completion fails to take into account the non-completers with a consequent inflation of results.

Definitions of violence vary considerably as already noted (p3) affecting the validity and utility of findings. Historically, violence has been defined and measured by the occurrence of discrete acts of physical violence. This has been used in most evaluation studies and consequently are almost the exclusive focus of outcome measures (Gray, 1994). Yet when women themselves define an incident as violent this is usually not dependent on its physical aspect but on other features of the incident (Bograd, 1988). Defining violence solely in terms of physical violence fails to take account of the function and the effects of the acts as well as the victim's experience of the meaning of those acts.

Furthermore, as McMaster & Swain (1989) point out "*much violence is covert*" (p22) and consequently less accessible to measurement. Many evaluation studies do not include psychological violence within the definition of violence. This absence of psychological violence in definitions of violence fails to capture the wide range of behaviours that constitute men's violence to women and its function as a tactic to control and dominate women (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). The way violence is defined will have implications for how success is defined.

Definitions of success also vary, ranging from programme completion (e.g. Pirog-Good & Stets, 1985) to recidivism rates (e.g. Robertson et al., 1992; Shepard, 1992), reductions in physical violence or in levels of physical and psychological violence (e.g. Lloyd-Pask & McMaster, 1991). More recently, studies are measuring success as any improvements in the context of the women partners' lives. Increased safety and autonomy and reduced fear for the women, for example, would indicate success (Hart, 1992).

Length of follow up varies from immediate outcome at programme completion, to six months post (e.g. Lloyd-Pask & McMaster, 1991; Tolman & Bennett, 1990), eighteen months post (Edelson & Syers, 1991) and five years post participation recidivism rates (Shepard, 1992).

As the follow up period increases so too does the risk of losing research participants and those who are retained and cooperate are more likely to have made successful changes than those who are lost (Gondolf, 1993). However, that success rates tend to be lower when the follow up is longer (Tolman & Bennett, 1990) suggests that 'success' is not sustained over time. Gondolf (1987) points out the rapidly diminishing effects of rehabilitation programmes after about 8 to 14 months reported in studies of other similar programmes.

Self report is a common method used in evaluation studies despite widespread acknowledgement that men consistently under-report their violence, its frequency, severity and effects on the woman (Dutton, 1986, in O'Leary & Murphy, 1992; Edelson & Syers, 1990). Tolman & Bennett (1990) note that historically evaluation studies have relied on self reports by programme participants as the primary measure of success and that studies which base success on women's reports report lower 'success' rates. More recently studies are appearing which are based on the women partners' reports of their experiences (e.g. Furness, 1993; Martin, 1994) which confirm men's under-reporting of their violence compared to the women's reporting of it. However, women too conceal, minimise and under-report their partners' violence to them (Kelly & Radford, 1996; Neubauer, 1992).

Referral source (i.e. Court directed v. voluntary participation) has been shown to affect completion rates (see p13) and may affect conclusions about 'success'. There is some debate on this point. Some note that Court directed participants are demographically similar to voluntary participants and that the distinction may be illusory as very few men attend programmes voluntarily but instead are usually under pressure from their partners (Furness, 1993; Robertson & Busch, 1993; Tolman & Bennett, 1990). According to these latter authors, the suggestion that there be different groups for Court directed and voluntary participants is not supported. Gondolf (1993), however, believes that "*some men are being 'dumped' on batterer programs*" (p249) by the Courts when imprisonment, psychiatric or drug and alcohol treatment are indicated.

From January to June 1996, 50.74% of referrals to NNFSV programmes were mandated and 49.26% were non mandated, a slight change on figures for 1995 of 56.83% and 43.17% respectively (National Network for Stopping Violence, 1996).

### **Evaluation outcomes**

Despite the methodological difficulties in evaluation studies of men's programmes, some consistent findings have emerged. These concern completion rates, women's hopes, physical violence, psychological violence, programme length, women's involvement in the programme,

individual counselling for men, programme facilitator training and the teaching of programmes in schools. They are outlined below.

Completion rates are higher for men who are Court directed than for non Court directed participants as already noted (see p13).

Women's hopes that their partner's violence would stop are raised by his attendance at a men's programme, effectively giving him another chance (Furness, 1993; Martin, 1994; Robertson et al., 1992). For many, particularly Women's Refuge workers, the women's hopes and expectations of the programme are of great concern as it potentially places them at greater risk. Heather King of Western Women's Refuge expresses this view.

*"Men's groups? Won't have a thing to do with them. I've seen hundreds of women who've come through here, who think, 'Oh, he's going to anger management, he'll change,' so they go back. There'll be a honeymoon period but after a while he'll slide back. It gives a woman false hope and only interferes with her decision to leave. She'll come back 18 months later - with a new baby because of the intervening honeymoon." (King, in White, 1996)*

Evidence does indicate that one of the strongest predictors of a woman remaining in or returning to a relationship with her violent partner is his attendance at a programme (Gondolf, 1988). Pence & Paymar (1993) note in a DAIP evaluation that 60% of women partners reported feeling safer while their partner was attending a programme. A recent New Zealand study confirms this finding (Furness, 1993).

Conversely, their partners' behaviour after attendance at or completion of a programme can assist the women to decide about the future of their relationship. The women in Furness's (1993) study illustrate this.

*"the women were able to see that their partners had been given every opportunity to change which sometimes helped them in making decisions in their own and their children's best interests" (p214)*

Physical violence is reported to drop for the majority during the man's attendance at a programme, though some women report an increase (e.g. Dominick, Gray & Weenink, 1995; Lloyd-Pask & McMaster, 1991). Specifically, in a HAIPP study about one third of the women seemed to experience continued instances of physical violence (Robertson et al., 1992). Given the limited follow up period of most evaluation studies and the indications that changes in the men's behaviour are not sustained over time (see p14), some suggest the drop in physical violence is a temporary suppression of the men's behaviour, rather than a significant long term

change (Faulkner, Stoltenberg, Cogen, Nolder et al., 1992). In her review of eighteen outcome studies of HAIPP, Dominick's (1995) conclusion that there has not been a reduction in offending in the short term would seem to suggest that the suppression is very temporary.

Others (e.g. Edelson & Grusznski, 1988; Kelly & Radford, 1996) point out that because of the constraining effect of even a rare act of physical violence, a reduction in physical violence may produce no improvement for the woman despite it being of statistical significance. Furthermore, taking a *reduction* in physical violence as a measure of 'success' implies that some physical violence is acceptable (Rosenbaum, 1988).

Psychological violence, on the other hand, presents a less clear picture, in part due to the previously noted historical focus on physical violence in outcome studies (p13). However, there are indications that men's psychological violence may increase and that they may learn further controlling techniques as a result of their participation in a men's programme (Furness, 1993; Robertson et al., 1992). Specifically, McMaster (1992) describes how many men misuse the 'time out' procedure. Instead of just taking 'time out' to avoid an escalation into violent behaviour, the men use it to avoid the escalation and to avoid discussing or confronting the topic or situation which generated the need for the 'time out' in the first place. Women partners have also commented that men compare themselves with other men in the group, perceiving themselves as distinct and better than the others (Furness, 1993; Martin, 1994).

Anecdotal evidence, that programme participation frequently sees men's use of physical violence switch to other forms of psychological violence, is confirmed in a study which sought women's refuge workers' views of the impact of men's programmes on women partners. A decrease in men's use of physical violence reported by 55% was countered by an increase in emotional abuse reported by 42%. An increase in physical violence was noted by 4% against a decrease of men's use of emotional abuse by 12%. Similar levels were noted of no change in use of physical violence by 42% and of emotional abuse by 46% (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Length of programme affects completion rates, being higher for shorter programmes (Gray, 1994). A 26 week programme was found to be useful in allowing time to pick up whether changes were sustained and to continue challenging the men's behaviour. Though this prolonged period was stressful for the women because of having to cope with their partners' behaviour fluctuations, it did permit the time to make decisions (Furness, 1993).

In Martin's (1994) study, women's involvement in the programme was felt lacking but wanted by the women in order to get information about what the men were learning, to ensure accountability and that their viewpoint was understood by facilitators and participants. She also suggested that the "*involvement of women may well be a critical factor in the success of men's groups.*" (p127). Accountability of the HAIPP men's programme was improved by the attendance

of their women partners at the simultaneous women's group (Robertson et al., 1992). Furness (1993), in her study of women partners' perspectives of the HAIPP men's programme, found that the involvement the women had with the programme personnel *"was important for both the men's programme outcomes and for the women themselves"* (p215) and she recommended that the women be made aware that contact with the programme facilitator or co-ordinator was welcome at any time.

Individual counselling for men has rarely been offered alongside programmes for men and Gray (1994) reports there are no evaluation studies of one to one counselling in the literature. Furness (1993) noted that for some of the men participation in the group raised specific personal issues which it may have been helpful to address in individual counselling. However, she stressed the need for any counselling to be based on a power and control analysis, not a systemic analysis, of men's violence to women and for the men themselves to arrange this *"as part of their accepting of responsibility for themselves"* (p215).

Facilitators' training has not been evaluated, though McMaster and Swain (1989) refer to the need for facilitators of men's programmes to work within a supervised and supportive environment lest they become ineffective through burnout and disillusion. Some women have reported a tendency for male facilitators who had previously been programme participants themselves to inform the women of their own prior violent behaviour to women (Martin, 1994). It is unclear what these facilitators' motivation is for telling the women this, but as Martin suggests it may serve to raise the women's expectations of change in their own partners which, as already noted, may place the women at increased risk.

Programmes in schools which teach about violence in intimate relationships have been conducted. An evaluation of one such primary prevention programme for secondary school students reported significant positive changes in attitude, knowledge and behavioural intent, as well as high levels of awareness and experience of violence in their own and their friends' intimate and family relationships (Jaffe, Suderman, Reitzel & Killip, 1992). Furthermore, the students strongly supported prevention programmes in schools about violence in intimate relationships.

### **Telling women's stories**

The story of men's violence to women has only emerged into the public sphere over the last two decades. Even now it remains muffled in ways of speaking and writing that make



women's stories difficult to articulate and hear - euphemistically referring to men's violence to women within the home as 'domestic violence' is an example of this. Men's violence to women is also ignored in practice - an example of this is women's tendency to divulge their partner's violence to a health professional only once they have sounded her/him out and feel confident of a supportive response (Hoff, 1990). However, breaking the silence and telling the story does not guarantee being 'heard' (Laird, 1994).

Despite recent changes in the storying of the domestic sphere to include notions and practices of power and violence, the stories and voices of women are only starting to be solicited and heard. Nowhere more than in the area of men's violence to women is it evident that the problem this constitutes for women in their lives has been examined and measured by standards that they have had no part in formulating and which do not fit (Gilligan, 1982). Initial evaluations of men's programmes employed traditional practices of quantification to determine 'success'. Examples are an early study which measured success in terms of programme completion (Pirog-Good & Stets, 1985) and Straus's (1979) Conflict Tactics Scale which reduces violence to quantifiable acts divorced from their context and consequently devoid of meaning (O'Leary & Murphy, 1992). Undeniably such measures yield valuable information. However, professional definitions of 'success' or of the 'problem' which exclude and silence women's stories serve to perpetuate the very power arrangements they seek to study.

With programme success increasingly being considered in terms of the quality of the women's lives and environment (Hart, 1992), research on the perceived and practised solutions to men's violence to women is beginning to take account of the voices of the women (e.g. Furness, 1993; Martin, 1994). These women's stories of their private experiences become public, providing us with new knowledges, influencing our understandings of the problem and in turn being constitutive of a developing public story.

### **Purpose of the present study**

The present study does not intend to evaluate the MFNV programmes attended by these women's partners nor to conclude whether the programmes were successful or not.

It hopes to convey the 'realities' of these eleven women by presenting their stories about their lives and relationships at the time their then partners attended a MFNV programme. It intends to contribute these individual women's local knowledges to the developing body of understandings, thus redressing their prior absence.

The study also intends to present commonalities in the women's talk about the MFNV programmes and to see whether these confirm existing findings. Further, in making the women's private experiences public, their experiences in common as women becomes evident.

Finally, the present study seeks to analyse the women's talk and identify the shared linguistic resources and the commonalities within their use of these resources. I hope to illuminate how the women employ the resources which are socially and commonly available to them to construct not only their own but others' understandings of their personal experiences and world and the ways in which these resources are constitutive of themselves and their world.

### **Thesis organisation**

The following chapter (Chapter Two) outlines the theory of knowledge and the methodology on which the study is based. The women's stories are presented in Chapter Three with each woman's experience in relation to the MFNV programme at the end of her story. The common themes concerning the MFNV programmes are summarised in Chapter Four and a discourse analysis of the women's texts appears in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, focusing on talk about the women and the men, and the use of hedges respectively. Finally, Chapter Eight contains a discussion of the findings of the study in terms of the literature and current knowledge as presented in this Chapter (One).

## CHAPTER TWO

### Method

#### Epistemology

Any method and methodology used in research rests on a theory of knowledge. The particular theory of knowledge assumed will have implications for who can “know”, what is required for acceptance as legitimate “knowledge” and what can be “known” (Harding, 1987).

#### **Positivism**

Positivism, the dominant epistemology of mainstream psychology, assumes that there exists a single or true reality which is ultimately capable of being known in its entirety through the ongoing observation and measurement of research (Patton, 1990). Taylor and Bogdan (1984) summarise the positivist’s position thus:

*“The positivist seeks the **facts** or **causes** of social phenomena apart from the subjective states of individuals.”* (emphases in original)

In order to add to this store of knowledge about reality, the scientist, the “knower”, reduces the object of study to its basic parts and observes and analyses them. The practice of science, then, involves the continual accumulation of “facts” which add to a growing picture of reality. As the understanding of these universal truths increases, aspects of reality can be controlled, predicted and replicated.

For psychology this has involved reducing the organism (that is, the human being, the individual, the person) into multitudinous discrete components and studying them. The “facts” thus discovered contribute to the assumed laws of behaviour. For example, behaviourism reduces all human activity into stimulus - response sequences. Behaviourist research attempts to discover what stimulus will elicit what observable response with the aim of controlling, modifying and predicting human behaviour. Research within the positivist paradigm assumes that the researcher and the researched (psychology’s “subject”) are separate and that the researcher “knows” more about the topic under study than the “subject” (Reinharz, 1992). Objectivity and an absence of values are considered to be desirable and possible (Sherif, 1987). Values contaminate the “facts” and obscure the truth sought. Research conducted in laboratory settings is particularly desirable, therefore, as this offers the greatest possibility of eliminating such confounds and of being objective. Objectivity is further achieved by quantification (Patton, 1990). Subjectivity is acknowledged but the quantitative research methods of the paradigm



attempt to counteract or control this "property" of humans. The quantitative methodologies translate the experiences and aspects of people into numbers and categories (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991).

### **Feminist critique**

Criticism of this dominant positivist paradigm and the accompanying quantitative research methodology began to emerge in the 1960's and 1970's, largely from the women's movement (Mies, 1983), but also across disciplines including psychology (Gergen, 1985). Not only was the experience of women ignored but issues of concern to them were absent or misrepresented by psychology, reflecting instead the concerns and values of the dominant groups in society (Harding, 1987; Jack, 1991; Stanley & Wise, 1983a). This exclusion and devaluation expresses, highlights and reinforces the patriarchal structure which exists in society wherein women's interests are 'invisibly' subordinated to men's (Weedon, 1987).

While far from a unitary phenomenon, feminism seeks to change these unequal power relations between men and women. It is in this sense that Weedon (1987) states "*Feminism is a politics*" (p1) and others claim that "*'the personal is the political'*" (Stanley & Wise, 1983a). Feminist inquiry has sought to represent the personal experience of women. It rejects the possibility of objective, value-free research and instead insists on the value of the personal, of the everyday (Stanley & Wise, 1983b). The feminist researcher acknowledges that research inevitably involves bias and consequently she/he must endeavour to recognise her/his own biases and position in relation to the research question (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991). Furthermore, as would be expected with an ideology that seeks to change power relations between people, the relationship between the feminist researcher and the researched is non-hierarchical, interactive, collaborative and one where mutual influence occurs.

### **Feminist Poststructuralism**

Poststructuralism is difficult to define because the act of defining places limits around its possibilities and implies a fixedness which runs counter to the very theoretical position it expresses. Poststructuralist theory rejects the positivist view of a single reality, absolute truth and objectivity (Gavey, 1989). Along with other 'social constructivist' positions (Gergen, 1985), poststructuralism holds that knowledge and reality is socially constructed through language (Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987). Knowledge, therefore, is not permanently fixed or stable but constantly being constituted and reconstituted. Actions, events, situations and persons are all actively constituted and acquire their meaning in talk, language, and discourse, which carry predetermined and changing meanings.

An important aspect of a poststructuralist view of knowledge is that it is not disinterested (Foucault, 1980). Knowledge "*is closely associated with power*" (Gavey, 1989, p462). Those

with the power to decide what is true and real can also retain that power and the advantages that go with it. Legitimated knowledge has traditionally been, for example, coloured (white) and gendered (male). Consequently, the view(s) of the powerful are dominant and accepted as natural and obvious. Feminist interpretations of power relations between men and women fit closely together with this poststructuralist emphasis on dominant / oppressive and disruptive / resistant knowledges. The goal of feminist poststructuralist inquiry is one of *"disrupting and displacing dominant (oppressive) knowledges"* (Gavey, 1989, p463).

While there are many ways in which the term 'discourse' is used (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), Parker (1992) defines a discourse as *"a system of statements which constructs an object"* (p5). Hollway (1983, in Gavey, 1989) describes discourse as being a

*"system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values ... [that] are a product of social factors, of powers and practices, rather than an individual's set of ideas"* (p463).

By using a particular discourse in the construction of an account (of, for example, an event, a situation or one's self), the talker can explain, justify, excuse her/his actions but in so doing she/he is simultaneously reproducing power arrangements of domination or subjection. In creating or constructing one sort of 'reality' or self, the talker excludes other possible constructions and in this sense she/he is creating her/his own subjection. Parker puts this neatly (in Potter & Wetherell, 1987) in relation to the constitution of self.

*"A subjectivity is produced in discourse as the self is subjected to discourse"* (p109)

With its focus on power relations and the disruption of dominant knowledges, a feminist poststructuralist position fits well with the purposes of this study and indeed with any study that seeks to investigate gendered practices that involve ab/use of power, namely men's violence to women. The presentation of the women's stories, their local knowledges, contributes to the gradual disruption of dominant knowledges and the creation of new understandings. Further, the feminist poststructuralist emphasis on the constitution of self through and in discourse provides the basis for an analysis of the women's construction of themselves and their experiences through the discursive resources available to them. It also enables the examination of the ways in which the women's constitution of themselves and the(ir) world reproduce or challenge the conditions of which they speak.

Discourse analysis is a method which permits the critical analysis of texts, such as the women's interviews, from a feminist poststructuralist standpoint.

## **Methodology**

The method employed to conduct any research endeavour derives from a theory and an analysis of the ways research can or should proceed (Campbell & Schram, 1995). Quantitative methodologies have been referred to already (see Positivism, p20). Qualitative methodologies are discussed below.

### **Qualitative methodologies**

Qualitative methodologies were adopted as being able to address the actual experience of women *"in their own terms"* (DuBois, 1983, p108) and hence redress the biases of quantitative methods (Mies, 1983). Because reality has been defined such that what is quantifiable is real (Mies, 1991), quantitative methodologies have been held to be more 'scientific' than qualitative (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991). Despite this politicising of these methodologies, quantitative approaches are still considered necessary in feminist research as a different way of understanding any social phenomenon (Campbell & Schram, 1995; Jayaratne, 1983; Patton, 1990). As Du Bois (1983) indicates, the issue is not that one method is superior to another but that the research question itself determines the choice of methodology, that is the method most likely to provide the information sought. For example, a quantitative approach would yield answers to the question "How widespread is male violence against their female partners?", whereas a qualitative approach would generate understandings in response to the question "What do violent men think about and how do they feel about their violence towards their women partners?"

Qualitative research comprises a range of different methods and uses making it difficult to define. However, the qualitative method entails the study of people or phenomena in their natural setting, analysis and interpretation of the materials collected in a way that is coherent with the meanings the participants hold (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Texts are the materials that constitute data in qualitative methods, some examples being interviews, case studies and life histories.

## **My position**

There is evident in the presentation of my research the tension I have experienced between the 'objective', distant approach of traditional psychological research and feminist and qualitative approaches which assume the inescapable involvement, and (re)production, of the researcher's own subjectivity in the research process. Because my training in psychology has occurred within a positivist paradigm, albeit unacknowledged, and a feminist poststructuralist

analysis is one which I am still coming to understand, there is an uneasy coexistence of the "I" and the "third person" and all that that represents. However, rather than dismissing this as inconsistent as it may appear from a traditional viewpoint, this tension is a vivid instance of the struggles that are enacted in discourse, in this instance between different 'scientific' approaches with their differing privileged or marginalised positions. The text of my (and any such) research itself participates in the displacement of privileged 'scientific' practices and in the constitution of other ways of knowing and doing. As Parker (1992) states about discourse analysis as a disruptive method in psychology:

*"Discourse analysis is both a symptom and part of the cure" (p21)*

I have endeavoured to present this research in a way which both reports the content of the women's experience (Chapters Three and Four) and locates their accounts of their experience of violence within an intimate relationship in terms of specific discourses (Chapters Five and Six). The women's individual voices and stories are reported, but as these are told through socially available resources, the analysis of their discourse illuminates the shared nature of their experience.

### **Telling the women's stories**

In order to expand our understanding of the world, it is important to construct theory that is based on a full account of those who inhabit it. Therefore this must include those who have hitherto been left out in its construction. Parker (1992) suggests the current focus on language within psychology indicates the role of academics in oppressive practices but this focus can help to draw attention to power relations previously ignored.

*"the preoccupation with language in contemporary psychology is a symptom of an evasion of the material basis of oppression on the part of academics, but an attention to language can also facilitate a process of progressively politicising everyday life." (p21)*

One method of representing women's realities is to hear their stories and tell them - to give voice to their world and their experiences in the hope and with the intention that their validity and integrity be recognised (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan further states the logic for making the voices, the talk of people the focus of (her) research.

*"the central assumption of my research: that the way people talk about their lives is of significance, that the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world that they see and in which they act". (p2)*

According to many (e.g. Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Way, 1995), listening closely to a person's story is the only way to investigate the depth and complexities of her/his life. The person's words are also inseparable from their social and cultural context. The researcher needs to be aware of her/his own power to distort the voices of women participants. Care must be taken in the interviewing process (see Interview questions, p30 and Interview process, p31) and in the interpretation involved in the retelling of the women's stories (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). To address this latter concern, the researcher quotes the participants extensively in order to retain the veracity of the original when condensing the participants' stories into "narrative summaries" (Miller, 1988, in Way, 1995). Furthermore, because women's (or anyone's) experience can only be expressed through language, this experience is constructed in language, acquires its meaning through language and can only be understood through their language (Weedon, 1987). By using the women's own quoted words in the retelling of the stories the reader is able to judge for her/himself the validity of the researcher's interpretative process.

My desire to tell the women's stories necessitates summarising, as each interview generated approximately fifteen pages of transcript. My wish to retain the integrity of the women's words was assisted by constructing my own narrative of the content while simultaneously supplementing this narrative with related sequences of their own words. I chose a two column format to achieve these aims (see Chapter Three), with my narrative running down the left hand column and direct quotes running down the right hand column. While my narrative summary does not derive solely from the associated quote but from a series of such references, the inclusion of the quote, with its transcription notation (see Transcription, p32), conveys the flavour of the women's talk while providing a validity check for the reader.

### **Discourse analysis**

The method of discourse analysis varies according to the definition of 'discourse' employed (see Feminist poststructuralism, p21). However, it is a method of analysis which is compatible with a feminist poststructuralist position as it focuses on identifying those discourses used by women and men, examining the context of their use, noting the subject positions afforded by and constructed in those discourses, and analysing the ways in which specific

discourses represent or resist prevailing power relations (Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 1984; Weedon, 1987).

The analysis of discourse entails multiple readings of texts, not in order to discover a presumed 'real' meaning or reveal things such as attitudes or cognitive processes contained therein, but to examine how the text is constructed, what function this particular construction achieves (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and whose interests it serves or restrains (Parker, 1992). The focus is on the language people use, the way they use it as they account for events and various phenomena in their lives, the process by which they create understandings for themselves and others of these various phenomena and the implications a particular mode of discourse carries for the user. These processes involved in accounting are variable, inconsistent and shifting, not stable, fixed and regular (Gavey, 1989).

This method of analysis affects the kinds of research questions addressed. Potter and Wetherell (1987) summarise this as follows:

*"our research questions give priority to discourse, in any form, and ask about its construction in relation to its function" (p161)*

For this research, discourse analysis as a method enables the in-depth study of the language used by these eleven women to talk about their relationships. It provides a way of studying the functions fulfilled by their talk and the effects their talk has for them. The transcribed interviews of each of the eleven participants make up the texts. In the analysis, these texts are examined to identify variability and differences in construction and content between each woman's version, as well as shared and consistent features across versions. Each woman's interview is also examined for variation, contradiction and inconsistency within it. These differences and similarities show up patterns in the texts which point to functions and effects (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Analysing these women's talk thus permits the development of theory as to the ways in which these women constitute themselves and their relationships in discourse and the ways in which the positions made available to them by so constituting themselves reproduce subjugation or permit space for resistance and movement (Parker, 1992).

Participant selection, interviewing, transcription and coding are outlined below. The analysis of the women's discourse appears in Chapters Five and Six.



## **Participant recruitment**

### **Criteria for participation**

The criteria for participation were:

a woman who was separated from a partner who had attended a MFNV programme while they had been previously living together in a relationship.

While initially the reason for limiting participation to women who were separated from that partner was made on ethical grounds (see Ethical considerations, p33), these conditions actually produced a group who had a unique perspective. Their distance from the relationship and the experiences provides a particular kind of talk. Walker (1984) has noted women's impressive ability to recollect violent incidents over time and explains their accuracy in terms of the emotional intensity of the events. For this project the time lapse means these women are engaging in the construction and reconstruction of these vivid experiences and of themselves as subjects in these events from a standpoint which differs from the one they occupied at the time. Because the women have moved out of the material conditions of the experiences they are talking about, it is possible to examine their dual construction of themselves both within the experience and out of it.

### **Recruitment methods**

Several methods were employed to obtain participants for this study with varying degrees of success.

- 1 Letters were sent by the administrator of the Relationship Services agency which employed the researcher to approximately twenty previous clients of the researcher known to fulfil the criteria for participation. The letter contained information about the research, the criteria for participation and a contact phone number if they wished to find out more about the research and/or to participate. There was no response to this recruitment method.
- 2 Information Sheets (see Appendix A) were given out at the Relationship Services agency to clients who fulfilled the criteria for participation. If the woman indicated an interest in finding out more about the research and/or a willingness to participate she was asked if the researcher could contact her and if so how, by mail or phone. Three participants were recruited in this way.
- 3 Counsellors from other Relationship Services agencies were asked to give an Information Sheet to clients who fulfilled the criteria for participation, as above. One counsellor recruited three participants in this way.

- 4 Women's Refuges in two regions were asked to give an Information Sheet to clients who fulfilled the criteria for participation, as above. There was no response to this recruitment method.
- 5 Information Sheets were pinned in Women's Centres in three regions. There was no response to this recruitment method.
- 6 The researcher informed friends and acquaintances of the research who told their friends and acquaintances about it. Four participants were recruited in this way.
- 7 A co-ordinator of a Women's Group for partners of men attending a MFNV programme informed group members of the research. One participant was recruited in this way.

There are several possible explanations for the difficulty in finding participants. Response rates to single unsolicited requests by mail are generally low, around 20% (Bourque & Fielder, 1995). Sensitive and threatening topics also reduce the likelihood of people's participation in giving information (Bradburn, 1983). These factors partly explain the nil response by mail (Recruitment method 1) but when taken in conjunction with the common difficulty in finding participants for research into male violence against women it becomes understandable. Lloyd-Pask and McMaster (1991) report the difficulties encountered in finding men who are willing to participate in research to evaluate MFNV / Stopping Violence programmes. Saunders (1992) elaborates on possible explanations for women's reluctance to participate, citing women's shame because of the tendency for them to be blamed for their own victimisation, the women's fear of retaliation, loyalty to their abusive partner and an unwillingness to revive unpleasant memories. The eleven women who participated in this study did refer to the embarrassment of having been a victim and the desire to avoid painful memories.

Another possible reason for the nil response by mail and the difficulty in general was revealed by one of the eventual participants. This woman received a letter (Recruitment method 1) but did not respond. At a subsequent chance meeting with her she said she had not responded because she did not have anything good to say about her ex-partner's attendance at the programme and thought this would mean what she had to say was of no interest. After reassurance that the researcher was seeking any reactions to the programme - positive, neutral or negative - the woman was keen to participate so that her negative views could be recorded.

All the women who participated said that they were keen to participate because they hoped it would be helpful to other women.



## **The Participants**

All the data below is as at the time of interview unless otherwise stated.

The women's ages ranged from 22 to 39 years, with a median age of 28 years and an average age of 29.8 years. The men's ages ranged from 25 to 40 years, with a median of 30 years and an average of 31.6 years.

Seven of the women were living on the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB), one of whom also worked part-time. Of the three women who had re-partnered, all were the primary caregiver to the children and had partners who worked. One of these three women was also working part-time and another was also studying by correspondence. One of the women was a tertiary student who also worked part-time.

When the women were in the relationship with their ex-partners, ten of the women, that is all the mothers, were the primary caregiver to the children. Of these ten women, seven of their partners worked (two with professional jobs, two tradesmen, two labourers, one farm worker) and three of their partners were unemployed. One of the women, who did not have children, worked and her partner received a Sickness Benefit.

The highest qualification of eight of the women was a secondary school qualification. One of the women was doing a secondary school subject by correspondence and two were completing a tertiary qualification. Of their ex-partners, the highest qualification for seven of them was a secondary school qualification, two had trade certificates and two had a tertiary qualification.

Ethnicity of the eleven women comprised two Maori and nine Pakeha. The women's partners comprised two Maori and nine Pakeha. There were seven couples where both the woman and her partner were Pakeha, two couples where the woman was Maori and her partner was a Pakeha man and two couples where the woman was Pakeha and her partner was a Maori man. The various subcultural, cultural and ethnic differences between the women participants were not analysed separately as the study focuses on discourses in common used in a Western nuclear family culture.

Ten of the eleven participants had children. The number of children the women had ranged from 0 to 4, with the median number of children being two and the average being 2.2. Of the ten mothers, four had a child from a previous relationship. Consequently, of the ten ex-partners who were fathers, four of them were also stepfather to their partner's child from an

earlier relationship. Only one woman had had another child since the separation with her new partner.

The length of the relationship the women had with their ex-partners ranged from 3 to 13½ years, with a median duration of 8 years and average of 7.6 years. The length of time since the women had separated from their ex-partners ranged from 3 months to 5 years, with a median time of 1½ years and an average of 1.9 years.

Six of the ex-partners faced charges of assaulting their women partners while they were in the relationship. Of these, five of the men were charged by their partners and one was charged by the police.

Two of the women were living in a relationship with a new partner. One of these had had another child with this new partner. Two of the women were no longer living with their ex-partner but were still emotionally involved with them. One of these had moved to another town at some distance. One of the women had recently reconciled with her ex-partner after a 3½ year separation. The six remaining women had not re-partnered. All of the ten women with children had some sort of ongoing contact with their ex-partner because of the children.

## **Interviews**

### **Interview location**

The women chose where they wanted to be interviewed. Seven were interviewed in their own home, three at their local Relationship Services agency and one at the home of the researcher.

### **Interview questions**

Given that the purpose of this study was to hear what the women had to say about their relationships before, during and after their (ex) partners' attendance at a MFNV programme and to analyse how they talked about this, it seemed important that the women were asked specific questions to get at this information, but that they were also left to talk about the areas of interest to them. Questions (see Appendix B) were intended to be open-ended to avoid predetermined responses (Patton, 1990). Participants were also asked to recount things that happened to them (for example, *"What happened the rest of the time in the relationship?"*), as personal narrative generates a less formal talking style (Coates, 1993). As recommended by Potter and Wetherell (1987), I asked questions about the same issue in different ways and at different points in the

interview to provide opportunities for the participants to draw on the resources available to them in ways which might be both consistent and contradictory. This meant asking additional questions to those set out in the schedule of questions.

### **Interview process**

My aim in the interview was to direct the encounter sufficiently to obtain information and talk from the women around the topic and to make the experience of being interviewed if not a positive one at least not an exploitative one. Although most psychology texts (e.g. Davison & Neale, 1990; Kaplan, Sadock & Grebb, 1994; Martin & Pear, 1992) advise establishing 'rapport' with the interviewee as a primary task, there is some uncertainty about what it actually is and how to achieve it (Reinharz, 1992). However, there is some evidence as to effective and useful ways of interviewing women who have experienced violence from their partner (Saunders, 1992). Washburn and Frieze (1980, in Saunders, 1992) cautioned against reacting to the woman's talk of violence with shock and sympathy as this was likely to position her in a victim role. Likewise, reacting with revulsion to the violence understandably restrained the women from talking about their own violence to their partners and children. Similarly, Walker (1984, in Saunders, 1992) found the most helpful stance for the interviewer to adopt was one of direct acknowledgement and acceptance of the violent events while indicating compassion for her pain. Because of my counsellor training and experience and reflecting on my own practice I consider I achieved these ideals in the process of the interviews.

The interviews varied in length from ½ to 1½ hours. The shorter interviews were the result of constraints on the women that I had been warned of. For example, having to go and collect a child from playcentre or a child waking up and requiring attention. All interviews were audiotaped with the consent of the participants (see Appendix C). Although participants knew they could request that the audiotape be turned off during the interview if they wished (see Appendix C), no one requested this. The women did not appear to mind being taped although in a few cases they did talk even more freely once the tape was turned off.

The interview was semi-structured. While all participants were asked the same questions (see Appendix B), the interviewer left participants to follow their own direction to a large extent while pursuing some areas introduced by the participant. At the end of the interview and after the audiotape was turned off all participants were asked if there was anything else they wished to say and how they had found the process of the interview. Only one woman said she found it distressing to talk about the material in the interview. I remained with her for a further hour, listening and talking and offered to arrange counselling for her if she wanted. She did not. Most of the women (ten) commented that the interview had been an interesting experience because it was not something they had talked about much and it made many of them (nine)

realise how much their lives had changed since they had removed themselves from that partner's violence.

All the participants were offered a copy of the interview transcript once completed. Only three did not want a copy, their reasons being that they did not want to dwell on that period of their lives either because it was too painful for them (one woman) or because they felt they had moved on (two women). When mailing out the transcripts I enclosed a return post paid envelope and a note informing the women that if they wished to change or delete anything in the transcripts to feel free to do so. No one did this.

### **Transcription**

In transcribing the interviews I included all that myself and the participants said. With the first interview I did not use any transcription notation. However, I found that much meaning was lost by not including the pauses, the emphases, the loud talk and the occasions when the talk of participants and interviewer flowed on. These features evoked some of the women's uncertainty, certainty, doubt, anger, disbelief and humour. In the interests of retaining these important features of the women's talk I have left all transcription notation in all the quotes from the interviews.

I decided to use the transcription conventions (see Appendix D) outlined by Parker (1992) as these appeared to capture the level of detail that was of interest to me. They are very similar to those recommended in the appendix of Potter and Wetherell (1987) differing mainly in the amount of detail. For example, Potter and Wetherell time the pauses to the nearest tenth of a second. I found that this degree of precision did not add sufficiently to understanding to justify the extra amount of time involved. During transcription I listened to some sections repeatedly and to the interviews as a whole several times. This was invaluable in the process of starting to hear variability, consistency, contradictions and function in both content and form.

### **Coding**

Following Potter and Wetherell's (1987) recommendation, I selected categories which were relevant to the research question. These approximately twenty categories included, for example, a MFNV category, a violence category and a control category. As a first step I selected any words, phrases or references that related to the category. For the MFNV category, for example, this involved any references to MFNV, Anger Management, programmes, courses or sessions. Initially I coded the first three interviews thus and found at this stage that some of my categories did not occur in the data while others emerged. This coding process changed and evolved as I coded all the interviews and discernible patterns became apparent.

For each transcript I developed a file of all the relevant examples of a category. The repeated reading of these selected and categorised instances allowed the recognition of

particular patterns in content and in form between the women's talk as well as differences both between and within their own talk. This coding task contained the beginnings of the analysis of the data which follows (in Chapters Five and Six).

### **Ethical considerations**

When the focus of research is violence and the people affected by it, the researcher faces particular ethical considerations not normally encountered (Rosenbaum, 1988). For example, Rosenbaum refers to the possibility that an abused woman could be put at further risk by her participation. The safety of the women is the major ethical concern in research where the participants are women whose partners have been physically and/or psychologically violent towards them (Lloyd-Pask & McMaster, 1991). Participation in the research must not compromise the women's safety.

In order to avoid this very real possibility I decided to restrict the focus of this research to those women who no longer lived with the violent partner who had attended the MFNV programme. The likelihood of women being endangered by their participation was avoided because the ex-partner would not know of her participation. In my recruitment of participants it was made clear that the woman must be separated from her violent partner. Nonetheless, several women who were still living with their partners did offer to participate. The final group of eleven women includes one who had reunited with her partner after a 3½ year separation as she assured me that she was safe and she was keen to report her experiences of his participation in a MFNV programme.

Lloyd-Pask and McMaster (1991) and Patton (1990) point out another ethical dilemma. If in the course of the research the participant discloses violence which would result in conviction if reported (and they both cite child sexual abuse as a possibility) the researcher is caught between competing responsibilities - either to report the violence or to maintain confidentiality as agreed to in the informed consent declaration (see Appendix C).

Again, by restricting the study to women separated from their violent partner it seems less likely that this would happen, although it is obviously still possible. Indeed, one participant had been beaten by her ex-partner shortly before the interview but had herself reported this to the police and charged him with assault. Nonetheless, any ethical dilemma would have required a resolution in accordance with my own conscience and taking account of the threat of harm posed to anyone directly or indirectly involved, ahead of the continuance of that person's participation in the research project (Patton, 1990).

All participants were informed verbally and in writing of their rights: to withdraw from the study at any time; to refuse to answer any particular question; to provide information on the

understanding that it is completely confidential; and to have their anonymity preserved (see Appendices A and C).

The ethical status of this project was considered and approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Massey University.

## **Conclusion**

A rationale has been outlined for the presentation of both the women's individual stories and a summary of the experiences they had in common as women, particularly in relation to their partners' attendance at a MFNV programme. These follow in Chapters Three and Four respectively. The ways in which the women draw on commonly available linguistic resources to articulate their private experience appear in an examination of the women's discourse. Chapter Five contains an analysis of the resources the women share in constituting themselves and the world they inhabit. Chapter Six consists of an analysis of the resources employed in common by the women to construct the men and the world within which they are located. There is a brief outline of another linguistic device, hedges, used by the women in their talk in Chapter Seven. A discussion of the implications of these analyses is in Chapter Eight.



## CHAPTER THREE

### The Women's Stories

The women's stories are summarised below. In order to keep as much of the women's own meanings in the stories as possible I have included extensive excerpts from their talk. These particular quotes are not the only source from which I have drawn the accompanying narrative. However, the women's own words do act as a validity check on the interpretations I have made and enable the reader to perhaps draw similar or other inferences. My narrative runs down the left hand column with the women's words in italics running alongside as much as possible in the right hand column. This structure enables the reader to follow the narrative while going back to read the women's words as s/he chooses. All quotes are followed by the line numbers in brackets. The women's talk concerning the MFNV programmes forms the second part of their stories. All names have been changed to preserve the women's anonymity.

#### Eve

Eve is 26 years old, Pakeha, on the DPB and the mother of 2 children - Abe who is from a previous relationship is 4 years old and a baby, 6 months old. Adam is 29, Pakeha and unemployed. Eve and Adam have known one another for 8 years but were living together for 3 years. Adam is the father of the baby. Although Adam has not been living with Eve for several months by order of the Court, they still see one another and are 'sort of' together. Adam has had 6 assault and threatening to kill charges laid by Eve for which he has spent some time in prison. He has attended two MFNV programmes in a provincial city. The first time he was ordered by the Court to attend as part of Diversion and he did not complete it. The second time he voluntarily completed a programme early in 1996. Since completing the MFNV programme Adam has faced another assault and threatening to kill charge for which he spent a week in prison. If he comes before the Court again for assault he will go to prison for 9 months. Currently he is going to drug and alcohol and individual counselling. Eve is seeing the same counsellor for individual counselling for herself.

Adam has been physically and psychologically violent to Eve throughout their relationship, particularly when he has been drinking. Eve thinks people would find it hard to believe how violent he is. However, Eve considers Adam is a very loving person when he is not drinking.

*"when he drinks he's very very violent (1) very violent like um (2) people wouldn't understand it I don't think how violent he is (1) physically (2) TO (1) the HOUSE and myself (.) NEVER EVER near the kids (1) but myself and the house is normally quite a bit of a mess when he's finished" (84-88)*



She believes he does not remember his violent episodes.

Eve has talked about it with a friend who is in a similar situation. The friend tells Eve to leave the relationship though she does not do so herself. Eve has no contact with her family.

Eve is quite sure Adam's family background and childhood experiences have caused his violence. Adam's father was very physically and psychologically violent and he used to terrorise the children.

As a child Adam often witnessed his father abuse his mother who is an alcoholic. Now, when Adam abuses Eve he calls her his mother. Adam has also been institutionalised for much of his life, first in boys' homes and then in prison for several extended stretches. Eve considers that this has also had a profound influence on Adam and that only now is he realising that unless he changes his behaviour he will be institutionalised again, which he does not want.

Eve also considers that his current family interactions contribute to maintain Adam's violence. Recent visits from his sister and his mother were followed by violence from Adam. He was distressed at hearing his sister abusing her 18 month old son much as Adam had been as a child. He was also upset when his mother came to see him for the first time in 3 years and spent most of that time in the pub. Eve believes his family background has also led to his alcohol abuse and that the alcohol

*"he BLACKS OUT [ ] like he used to wake up in the morning and just see me and just totally start he DID NOT KNOW (.) and this is TRUTHFUL (.) he did not know you could see he was so surprised (1) and SPUN OUT and scared and confused all at the same time [ ] he doesn't know (.) he blacks out he loses it"* (213-219)

*"he has abused every woman he has come across because he has SEEN it when he was a child all he ever saw was his father ABUSE women"* (588-590)

*"VERY VERY VIOLENT his FATHER used to take pot shots at the kids (1) with a gun [ ] if the mother didn't put enough BUTTER on the table or something like that (.) he used to beat her til she was nearly dead in front of the kids (.) and that's no joke THAT'S the sort of lifestyle he was from"* (97-102)

*"of course he's going to think women are down there because he's never seen anything better"* (593-594)

*"the last time oh he went off the rails his sister come up here (.) and um he saw his sister abusing (1) her daughter like he was abused [description of event] he just couldn't handle hearing it (1) it just really (.) sort of pushed him (1) backwards"* (178-187)

*"his family just keep pushing him down and down and down"* (192)

and drugs block out the pain of his memories of his family.

Eve thinks that people who are abused require as much attention as the abusers. She has been to counselling and attended a women's group. She has learned a lot about abuse, codependency and drug and alcohol addiction. Eve has found all this helpful and it has made her much stronger. Her increasing strength has encouraged her to confront Adam when he is being verbally abusive and tell him to stop. Eve does not do this when he is physically violent as she knows that would be dangerous. Instead she phones the police.

*"they NUMB it so he doesn't have to think about it" (209)*

*"the women that are abused are just as messed up as the men that abuse them (3) so I'VE DONE A LOT OF WORK in this field since I've been an abused person" (347-349)*

*"if I've got enough guts to stand up and say to Adam blah blah blah DON'T YOU talk to me like that I've even noticed that Adam goes back into his little hole or he'll walk out in a HUFF but he won't keep his violence up" (360-363)*

## MFNV

Adam was ordered by the Court to attend a MFNV programme as Diversion for an assault charge. Adam often went to the sessions drunk and did not complete it. After this he went to prison for another assault and threatening to kill conviction. Eve believes that Adam was slowly starting to realise that his violence and alcohol abuse were a problem and that if he did not do something about them he risked losing his family, his partner and his children. Adam voluntarily attended a MFNV programme which he completed. Since this programme he has been before the Court again on another charge.

As a result of the MFNV programme Eve was hopeful that Adam would handle his anger a bit better and consequently be less violent. She hoped he would start taking responsibility for himself and his actions, not for anyone else but just for himself. She was also very keen for Adam to develop more self confidence so that he could state his own wants and needs.

*"I just wanted him to sort his (1) own life out for HIM NOT FOR ME or the BOYS (1) or the DOGS or his MUM and DAD or anybody just for him he has to do things for HIMSELF or they won't ever be done" (440-443)*

*"HIS OWN SELF CONFIDENCE so [ ] if I say to him shall we WHAT shall we do*

Eve does consider Adam has to some extent controlled his anger more since the course. The physical violence is now directed less at her and more at things such as the house. However, Eve points out that he has recently been before the Court on another assault and threatening to kill charge. While the physical violence has changed so has the psychological violence. It has increased and intensified. Eve has found the threatening and the psychological abuse as difficult to cope with as the physical abuse, if not more so.

Eve considers the men were taught some good coping strategies at MFNV but that they were not taught how to apply them properly. Instead they were being used by Adam as another manipulation tactic. One such strategy that Adam had learned and used as a tool for manipulation and which Eve found particularly irritating was 'owning your own problems'. He would use this as a way of trying to get Eve to own his problems as hers, for example his alcohol abuse. Eve, however, was quick to pick this up and was able to dismiss his efforts. But she thought this provided Adam with yet another way to avoid having to confront and do something about his own problems.

*today oh I don't know I'm um er er (.) cos he's not confident to say WELL I WANT to do this" (241-243)*

*"he STOPS AND THINKS a little bit more than what he used to" (271)*

*"last time [ ] he lost it he went off the rails again (.) he didn't hit me (.) HE (.) threatened to kill me (.) and he told me how he was going to do it slowly and perfectly and this is what I'm going to do to you (1) THIS is what he has learnt from [MFNV] (.) he used to just beat the living shit out of me that was cool (.) HANDLE THAT (.) can't handle the mental abuse that he has been TAUGHT (.) NOT TO HIT (.) now he has learnt how to do ANOTHER ONE (1) so (.) they have to deal with ALL types of anger not just ONE" (114-122)*

*"they ARE teaching them quite a good structural thing (.) the thing is they're not telling them when to use it (2) you know and they just use it they actually use it as an abuse without even realising it" (53-56)*

*"they should learn WHAT own your own problem means before they can just say it (1) cos I DON'T THINK they learn what it actually really does seriously mean" (273-275)*

*"I spose that's one way of blocking off their problems (.) you know oh well it's not my problem give it to someone else" (277-278)*

Eve thinks some of the responsibility for Adam's becoming more manipulative lies with the facilitators, of whom she is very critical. Some of the things that Adam has told Eve that the facilitators said at the course have been misleading and very unhelpful for Eve. For example, the facilitators told the group that they had a 100% success rate and told Adam that he was unlikely to re-offend and that if he got his anger under control he should be able to drink. While Eve accepts that ex-abusers have much to offer because of their personal experience she believes stopping being abusive is a long term business. She questions using ex-abusers as facilitators for the groups without having a qualified and suitably trained person present.

Eve was angry that MFNV got the funding to run groups for abusive men when there was no funding available for abused women.

At the course Adam attended voluntarily he was annoyed by the men who were attending by order of the Court because their behaviour was distracting.

Eve was also told that a woman from MFNV would come around to see her for follow up evaluations immediately after the course, 3 months and 6 months later. Though Adam has been followed up, no one has ever contacted Eve. Eve would not recommend a MFNV group to anyone because she has yet to see any results. Nonetheless, she thinks it helped Adam to

*"THOSE PEOPLE ARE QUALIFIED IN WHAT (.) went wrong with them (.) but they're not qualified in every situation" (563-565)*

*"THAT'S COOL THAT YOU'VE BEEN THE VICTIM or the (.) the ABUSER (.) but as long as you've BEEN the abuser and you're not STILL the abuser (1) and who knows those men still might be the abusers (.) you can't say they're not (.) can you until you [ ] definitely know (.) some of these men have only BEEN on a course a year ago or 2 years ago (.) and now they're facilitating courses" (526-532)*

*"violence goes both ways it affects both people not just one (1) so why the heck can [MFNV] get that sort of money and the women's groups get nothing" (424-426)*

realise that there were other men out there with similar problems.

While she puts Adam's current willingness to attend counselling and to confront his problems down to the recent spell in prison and the threat of a longer spell if he re-offends, she wonders if he has retained some of what he learned at the MFNV programme and is drawing on that now.

Eve thought the programmes needed to be longer and the men desperately needed ongoing support. The facilitators should not just be graduates from previous programmes because becoming non violent is a long term process and they should either have a "psychological learning background" (541) or be supervised by someone who does.

Eve thought it would be better to have separate groups for those men who wanted to attend and those who were forced to. Because so much of the men's problems was created in their past Eve thought the men would be helped by getting to understand their past and its part in their current anger. Individual counselling would be useful for this. Eve would also like to have known what Adam had been taught at the sessions and to have participated in some way, maybe by attending the last session.

*"I THINK THE STINT IN JAIL actually is the thing (1) that um I'm honest about this has woken him up MAYBE all the stuff that he learnt from [MFNV] stayed in his head (.) and he went back to prison and he kept thinking [ ] bits and pieces from everything he's learnt's actually come together and he's realised that maybe he doesn't want to do it anymore (.) BUT who can tell for another 6 to 8 months (2) it DOESN'T just work overnight" (481-488)*

*"they have to've been out of the cycle for probably 5 years BEFORE they could teach I'm sure of that" (539-540)*

*"they've got to know their past and they don't [MFNV] does not do enough (.) work into WHY they are angry people" (109-111)*

## Jan

Jan is a 27 year old Pakeha woman on the DPB. She has a part time job. Her ex-partner Dave, also in his late 20's, is Maori and employed. They have 2 children, aged 4 and 1½. Separated for 3 months now, Jan and Dave were together for 9 years. When Jan charged Dave with assault he went to a MFNV programme in order to look good in Court. He attended 5 or 6 sessions of the course in a provincial city in 1993.

Jan was very young when she met Dave. Even while Jan was still living with her parents she noticed Dave was very possessive. She talked to him about it and he agreed he would stop being possessive so Jan moved in with Dave. She was 19.

Dave was physically and psychologically violent to Jan. The physical violence started once they were living together. At first Dave's abuse was worst when he had been drinking but eventually he started hitting her when he had not been drinking as well. He used to hit her below the neck on her body so bruises were not visible.

Dave also used to swear and say horrible things to Jan about being fat and ugly. However, on the two occasions when Jan left Dave during their relationship, Dave manipulated Jan to have him back by saying the kinds of things that he knew she wanted to hear and promising that he would behave differently if they got back together. Reconciliation was soon followed by a return to his abusive behaviour.

Dave would ignore Jan when she talked to him. He also threatened that if she left he would come after her.

*"then he stopped being possessive and started letting me having my own life and do things and (.) THAT WAS REALLY GOOD (.) we moved in together" (25-27)*

*"when we were living together he was really quite violent when he was drinking he used to I mean he had a knife knife to my throat" (43-45)*

*"it was never actually IN MY HEAD [ ] he never really hit me on my face and all that (1) never where anyone could ever see" (192-194)*

*"he used to say oh God no you're always fat and you look horrible" (67)*

*"it was only once that I can remember he said that I looked nice [ ] only once but when we were separated he said he'd say all these nice things I wanted to hear when we were together (.) thinking that if I say nice things now she'll take me back" (71-74)*

*"he ignored me like if I would want to talk to him he'd be watching TV (.) like he was shut off all the time" (85-86)*



The best thing about the relationship for Jan was having the children. Also, during her pregnancies, Dave was less abusive to her and did not hit her, which led Jan to believe that he had changed. However, shortly after the births the physical and mental abuse started again.

Dave was very remorseful after his violent episodes saying he was sorry and that he hated hitting her. This gave Jan hope that he would change because she thought that Dave knew what he did was wrong. She noticed that Dave's behaviour occurred in cycles.

In spite of this, Jan also thought Dave had no control over his behaviour.

Jan was particularly concerned about the effects on their children of witnessing Dave's behaviour towards her. She worried that her son might do the same to his partner to the point where he killed her and went to prison for murder. And she worried that their daughter might be beaten up so that she might be hospitalised or killed. Despite these concerns about the effect of Dave's behaviour on the children Jan considers him to be a good father.

Jan thought the violence was caused by his upbringing. She also implicated alcohol. Dave did later become concerned himself that he was becoming like his father.

*"he was really good during my pregnancy I thought oh that's neat he's you know (.) changed and (.) it must've been 8 weeks after Anna was born (.) he started again (.) you know at me" (36-38)*

*"I mean he had a knife knife to my throat [ ] next day it was all different oh I'm sorry I'll never do that again (.) rave rave" (44-47)*

*"I don't know it's like BIG CIRCLES he (.) like he'll come right and then he'll (1.5) I don't know be horrible again" (60-61)*

*"he used to get in such a rage (3) he couldn't think" (104)*

*"he'd hit me and then he he'd want to stop but it was (.) it was TOO LATE" (106-107)*

*"I didn't want my children to go through it" (355)*

*"I didn't want my children to (2) especially Jo being a male grow grow up and do the same to his wife or partner or whatever but him ENDING UP in jail (1) for MURDER (.) because he'd hit beaten her so much that he'd killed her" (363-366)*

*"he's a really good Dad" (78)*

*"his family (2) he saw violence from his parents I think (3) he didn't I spose he didn't didn't know any better but (2) I don't know" (99-100)*



Initially in the relationship Jan was always trying to please him to the point of calling herself a doormat. She put on weight, blamed herself for what was happening and thought she could not cope on her own. Slowly, largely by talking to others, she came to realise that she was not alone, it was not her fault and she did not need to put up with it.

At the time of the interview they had been apart for 3 months and Jan knows she will not return this time.

*"Realising that I wasn't alone [ ] that I didn't have to put up with the things that I didn't really want to" (157-158)*

*"I actually said to him the other day (.) I'm not blaming myself anymore (.) I said you're the one that's at fault not me" (218-219)*

*"that's really what started I just started talking to people I think and that's realised I didn't I knew I didn't have to put up with it" (213-214)*

## MFNV

Jan charged Dave with assault when their first child was 14 months old. Dave decided to go to a MFNV programme at this time. He attended ½ of the programme.

Jan hoped that Dave's attendance at MFNV would end the physical and psychological abuse. She wanted him to just accept and love her how she was.

Jan believes Dave only attended the MFNV programme in order to look better in Court and so get a reduced sentence.

In Court the Judge told Dave that the charge would be dropped if he did not hit Jan or come before the Court again for assaulting Jan within the next year.

Dave stopped being physically violent towards Jan at this time but started again when the year was up. Jan believes

*"I just wanted him not to [ ] hit me [ ] not swear at me and call me names and that's (2) really all I wanted" (263-265)*

*"all I ever wanted was for him just to love me the way I was" (119-120)*

*"HE decided to go to make it look good" (97)*

*"you don't hit her you don't do anything to her within that year (.) and (.) we'll drop the [charge] otherwise you go to jail (.) and he was fine (.) for a year he was really really good ok we'd argue what most (.) couples do (.) yeah he was really good but it seemed like the DAY of his year thing was*

that Dave stopped his violence for that year because of what the Judge said and not because of the MFNV course.

Jan repeatedly said that there was no change in his behaviour or the relationship associated with the MFNV programme, though she acknowledged the physical violence was less violent.

Dave himself thought it was "*an utter load of rubbish*" (310) and was very uncomfortable there. He explained to Jan that Maori do not like to talk in a group of people they do not know and that he would rather speak on a one to one basis with someone. This, however, did not happen.

Jan did not know what happened at the sessions because Dave would never talk about it.

Jan thinks that the MFNV course contributed to her feeling that there was help out there. She came to realise that if she wanted to stop Dave abusing her she would have to take the initiative and leave. She did.

Jan thought the courses needed to be a lot longer, that the men should attend one-to-one counselling first in order to get used to expressing their feelings before entering a group and that the abused women should be involved in some way.

*up IT STARTED AGAIN (.) like the abusiveness"* (53-57)

*"cos he didn't want to go to jail"* (287)

*"WELL IN A WAY it did change because he did stop hitting me to an extent (2) he wouldn't he wasn't AS violent I mean if he had sort of slapped me a bit it wasn't as violent as what he was"* (300-302)

*"he didn't like opening up and talking in front of strangers"* (307-308)

*"it did nothing because [ ] being he said Maori he said they don't (.) like talking in (1) groups with people they don't really know"* (225-227)

*"he wouldn't talk to me about it [ ] just a bunch of men sitting round talking (.) about what they did wrong"* (236-237)

*"I didn't want to live like that"* (379)

*"I mean some people would need up to a year"* (334)

*"ok the men went and talked about [ ] THEIR SIDE (.) what about OUR side [ ] how we feel how frightened we are (.) petrified and things like that"* (255-258)

## Jenny

Jenny is in her early 30's, Maori and living in a provincial city on the DPB. Jenny and Sam have two children aged 8 and 5 years. They were married for 9½ years during which time Jenny left and returned 2 or 3 times. Sam was adopted, he had a job and did not use alcohol or drugs. They have been separated for 18 months and Sam has another partner. Sam voluntarily attended 3 or 4 sessions of a MFNV programme in a provincial city in 1990.

The best thing Jenny recalls about their relationship was the children and that Sam was good with them.

Sam was physically and psychologically violent towards Jenny. Although the physical violence stopped for about 3 years, Sam continued to threaten, control and isolate Jenny during this period.

Sam was "really VERY VERY possessive" (p2, 34) and jealous of Jenny and he behaved as though he owned her. Jenny was cautious about talking to her male workmates because Sam did not like her doing that. Whenever anyone -his or her family or friends- visited, Sam used to go out to the shed and only emerge as they were leaving. He did not like Jenny's family and because of the repercussions Jenny cut off contact with them. Jenny described their life together as extremely isolated and dull, without friends or any social life.

Jenny experienced many beatings from Sam during the marriage. On one occasion Jenny went with her sister to a funeral and arrived home later than intended. She became angry with Sam because the place was in a mess, no tea

*"he's really good with the children" (p2, 10)*

*"the relationship was (.) quite um (.) oh (.) violent and really abusive" (p1, 25-26)*

*"he treated me like a possession and that was that sort of thing" (p12, 45-46)*

*"we never really had many friends we just kept in our own little (.) space our own little world (.) and if I did attempt to have make new friends well he didn't really like it" (p2, 13-16)*

*"if he'd had the chance to put us on [ ] a little island well he would've been really happy" (p2, 19-21)*

*"we didn't really have a life at all" (p2, 41)*

*"he just went (.) off his face about (.) you know ah why did I stay that long and why how come I was like with these guys which was my sister" (p3, 37-40)*

was prepared and the baby was wearing only a nappy though it was a cold day. Sam retaliated by becoming angry and chasing Jenny around the house with a crossbow, throwing her against a wall and knocking her unconscious for 3 or 4 days. Jenny was hospitalised and in Intensive Care. No one charged Sam with assault.

Jenny did not talk to anyone about her situation, though her family knew about it and were delighted on the couple of occasions that she left Sam. However, Jenny herself felt lost and so returned. She told her family to mind their own business but knew they were waiting to help her if she wanted or needed it.

Jenny was uncertain about what caused the violence but thought it might be connected to upbringing. She discounted alcohol or drugs as a cause since Sam did not use them.

Although Jenny knew certain things, such as feeling jealous, made Sam angry and then violent, on the whole his violence was quite unpredictable and Jenny never knew what would precipitate an outburst. It could also occur extremely quickly.

Initially in the marriage Jenny would do whatever Sam wanted. She lacked confidence and lost her self esteem. Jenny was particularly concerned about the effect on the children of having a mother so unable to stand up for herself.

*"then he just picked me up off the ground (.) and then just threw me up against the (.) up against the wall and um (.) and then I woke up (1) it was like um mm (2) it was about 3 or 4 days later (.) I was in hospital yeah (.) and um apparently I was in the ICU for a couple of days too" (p3, 49-54)*

*"I did leave (.) is it maybe 2 or 3 times [ ] and everyone thought oh well that was just really wonderful sort of thing but (.) I don't know I just felt sort of um (.) I don't know lost" (p7, 23-26)*

*"it could come from their childhood" (p9, 6-7)*

*"it wasn't um you know brought on by [ ] drugs or (.) alcohol or anything like that" (p4, 29-31)*

*"little tiny things that will just set him off and (.) sometimes it'll just be like (.) well what happened really baffled (1) why why did he do it" (p13, 4-7)*

*"something happened and just bang bang bang sort of thing" (p12, 54-55)*

*"I was like practically [ ] a doormat" (p9, 32-33)*

*"I thought well I'd [ ] have to change for the kids cos they couldn't like have a mother that just [ ] couldn't stand up on her own 2 feet" (p10, 17-21)*

Gradually, as the children grew up, Jenny became more confident and more assertive. She believes meeting other mothers was helpful here. Jenny also started seeing her parents secretly so they could see their grandchildren.

Jenny attributes the return of Sam's physical violence to his inability to cope with this increasing confidence.

Jenny eventually asked Sam to go. He moved in with another younger partner who Jenny considers complies with Sam's behaviour in a similar way to the way she used to initially. She has heard that Sam physically abuses his new partner.

Since she and Sam separated Jenny notices a big change in the children, particularly her daughter. They have become more outgoing and confident. She also says that family and friends often visit her now. When she asked a cousin about this change her cousin explained that they stayed away because Sam made them feel unwelcome.

*"I started to stand up for myself and (1) telling him what to do" (p9, 44-45)*

*"he didn't like me having a mind of my own basically" (p9, 47-48)*

*"he couldn't really take the change in me" (p10, 6-7)*

*"I look at her and she's exactly like how I was like when we first met" (p10, 1-2)*

*"he's [ ] replaced me with a person that does whatever he wants" (p10, 4-6)*

*"he was really funny [ ] it felt like [ ] they weren't welcome cos [ ] whenever any family came round well he used to just hide away in the bedroom or go into his shed and just lock himself away in the shed" (p14, 38-43)*

## MFNV

On the occasion of Sam's assault of Jenny which left her unconscious for several days in hospital, Sam was shocked by what had happened. While in hospital a social worker spoke to Jenny and Sam and asked whether Jenny wished to lay charges. She did not. The social worker suggested that Sam attend a MFNV programme which he did for 3 or 4 sessions. He stopped because he did not like going.

Jenny hoped the MFNV course would result in Sam stopping beating her up and being less angry and more in control of himself.

At this time Sam did stop being physically violent to Jenny which she was very relieved about. This lasted for 3 or 4 years.

During these years, when Sam became angry he used to go out to the shed and punch his boxing bag.

Sam did not think the MFNV course was worthwhile. At the time he and Jenny separated he told her that he thought he was at a point where he could kill her if he did not leave. However, Jenny considered it useful because it helped Sam to control his anger for some time.

*"he did change for a while I mean (.) well I stopped getting beaten up" (p6, 18-19)*

*"it stopped the physical violence and I thought that was [ ] pretty good" (p12, 9-11)*

*"he used to (.) beat that up instead yeah let out his [ ] frustrations out on the boxing bag" (p6, 42-44)*

*"he thought it was a waste of time" (p11, 53)*

*"he said he would've just kept on beating me beating me til (.) til I was dead" (p11, 24-25)*

## Kris

Kris is 38 years old, Pakeha and does community work. Her husband Dan is a 40 year old, Pakeha professional. Kris and Dan were together for 10 years before they separated. They lived apart for 3½ years but have recently resumed their relationship and are now living together again. Their 3 children, who lived with Kris during the separation, are 14, 12½ and 8½ years old. A couple of years before they separated, Dan completed a MFNV course in a small provincial town in 1990 as the result of an ultimatum from Kris to attend or she would leave.

Kris found it hard to recall anything good about the relationship prior to the separation though she did appreciate that Dan spent quite a bit of time with the children. She thought their relationship was very unhealthy and that they were both quite 'sick', with each using the other as a scapegoat.

Dan was physically and psychologically violent towards Kris. On one occasion he broke her ribs. There would be an incident of physical violence about once every three months, until Dan attended MFNV when it stopped. Prior to this, Dan would lose his temper and lash out at Kris. She believes that this would happen when the pressures of money and young children got too much for Dan. However, his violence was quite unpredictable and so Kris was continually fearful and lived in a state of constant vigilance. Consequently she would always try to avoid Dan and there were particular situations which she knew were especially dangerous. For example, when Dan was fixing the car, if he became angry he was likely to throw a tool at her.

*"it was just a big bog and I deliberately blotted a lot of it out just to get by" (637-638)*

*"my husband was quite a bully [ ] verbally (.) physically (.) mentally (.) in every way" (36-39)*

*"I can remember driving driving home one night and (.) he was outside waiting for me and he dragged me out of the car and I didn't even know what I'd done wrong and ah (.) before I knew it he was doing it and into it with his steel capped boots" (101-105)*

*"I always was looking over my shoulder (.) if ever I'd been out I'd always (.) drive in with a half lit cigarette you know half smoked cigarette in my hands cos at least I had (.) a weapon if he suddenly came out and rushed at me" (295-298)*

*"I would NEVER go near him (.) I WOULD NEVER GO NEAR HIM if he was fixing a car (1) cos I was liable to get something thrown at me" (290-292)*



Dan would try and shift the responsibility for his violence onto Kris by telling her that it was she who made him angry and that since she did this it was her business to keep out of his way on those occasions.

Dan controlled what Kris did. She felt powerless and bitter. Because Dan never assisted with the children or the household chores and because of the state of fear Kris lived in, she felt exhausted.

Kris considers Dan's marijuana addiction was a major contributing factor to his violence and she was particularly wary of him when he had run out of marijuana. Kris believes the marijuana affected Dan physically and mentally. Because he was always stoned he did not have much energy and the little he had he put into his work which left him listless at home. Kris considers his concentration and memory were affected so that things would not sink in. It also inhibited his ability to think and blunted his awareness. This prevented him from learning from experiences and events and arrested his development.

However, Dan himself used his upbringing to explain his violence and spoke about it as though it was beyond his control.

Kris's family did not know about the violence in her relationship but one or two

*"he would always blame it on me (1) it was always my fault" (97-98)*

*"he's always saying [ ] that I'd just have to get out of his way and not wind him up" (112-114)*

*"I wasn't ALLOWED to do what I wanted to do" (30-31)*

*"I felt very downtrodden [ ] I felt very stomped on [ ] I um felt like I didn't have my own life" (30-33)*

*"he was STONED all the time (.) he wasn't very capable of of rationalising things or or thinking straight or emotional things at all" (518-520)*

*"I think it contributed a lot to the violence um (1) usually that would happen if he had run out (2) those sorts of times I used to notice quite severe mental (1) um it stopped him growing up [ ] it stopped him learning OTHER WAYS of of coping and dealing with things (1) because that was his crutch and he could just block it all out (.) and he didn't have to LEARN any coping mechanisms" (72-79)*

*"he probably felt he didn't have any choice (.) um (.) he's always saying that he'd been um beaten up a lot as a kid and (.) and um that was why it was all happening" (111-113)*

of her friends, who were in similar situations, did. They set up strategies that helped keep one another safe. Kris also talked to a counsellor about it.

Kris considers that she developed as a result of her own efforts to change her self and situation. Going to counselling and Al Anon in particular enabled Kris to dissociate herself from Dan's behaviour instead of reacting to it. She moved slowly from someone who she believes allowed Dan to be violent towards her to someone who got on with her own life.

Eventually Kris felt strong enough to leave and she did. Living without Dan established the safety for Kris that made it possible for her to set limits on his behaviour. It also meant that Dan had to learn how to take responsibility for the children while he had them, initially for one day and then for the whole weekend.

Kris established a "nice little life" for herself and the children. She was going out, getting jobs and got herself a car. Kris considers that Dan felt left out and like he was being left behind. About 1½ years after they separated Dan stopped using marijuana and slowly began to change the way he lived. After major changes in Dan, they reconciled recently.

*"I was reacting to the way he was behaving CONSTANTLY (1) um ALWAYS nagging him about giving up dope" (625-626)*

*"a lot of it happened because I allowed it to happen (1) um (1) and a lot of a lot of it happened (2) because my husband was quite a bully (2) and I and I allowed all that to happen too" (35-37)*

*"learning to um (.) separate myself from it and not react (.) and to get on with my own life" (620-621)*

*"I think having the courage to leave [ ] was the best thing I ever did" (275-277)*

*"I sort of started to take the attitude that mm [laughs] I don't CARE what you do I'm just getting on with MY life" (629-630)*

*"I was setting limits (1) you know and I'd always been scared to do that when we lived together (1) but now I COULD DO IT because um (1) PHYSICALLY I WAS SAFE MENTALLY I WAS SAFE I could shut off if I needed" (580-583)*

## MFNV

Dan went to a MFNV programme when Kris insisted he attend or else she would leave. Dan completed the programme. Kris and Dan separated 2 years after Dan went on the MFNV programme.

Kris believes the ultimatum she gave Dan to attend a MFNV programme came as a result of a combination of factors. In order to help the relationship, Kris had been attending counselling and Al Anon and was feeling stronger. She was thinking that she could leave Dan if things did not change.

Furthermore, because of his constant marijuana use Dan focused all his concentration on working but was not aware of much else that happened or its consequences and implications. Though Dan had broken Kris's ribs 2 years before Kris believes that it took the 2 years for Dan to actually realise what he had done and that this eventual realisation contributed to his decision to attend. Most importantly, however, Kris thinks Dan's fear of losing the family was a crucial factor.

Kris was hoping that by attending the programme Dan would stop all the abuse, grow up and learn to relate to Kris as a friend. She wanted to feel safe and for the relationship to be a real partnership.

Dan did completely stop being physically violent. However, because his physical violence had occurred about every 3 months it took Kris about a year before

*"I was just at the end of my tether and I felt (1) I was getting to the stage where I felt that I could just move away" (45-46)*

*"about 2 years before that he'd broken my ribs it'd taken him approximately about 2 years [ ] for it to sink in that he'd actually done it" (56-58)*

*"MAINLY [ ] because he was terrified of the kids [ ] leaving him (.) us leaving him (.) he didn't want to lose the kids" (51-52)*

*"without feeling threatened and just saying what I FELT and just being ME [ ] that I could just be me and feel SAFE in the relationship and relax at home (.) and feel safe at home" (396-400)*

*"it took a long time for me to start realising that um I was able to confront him about things without (.) the fear of being hit (.) that took me probably a year" (182-184)*

she realised that she was safe from this. Once she did realise, knowing that she was safe from physical assault, she was able to confront Dan and stand her ground.

Kris was surprised and disappointed that the psychological violence increased. She thought that Dan had learned new ways to manipulate her and to avoid taking responsibility for his behaviour. For example, he would misuse the time out procedure.

It seemed to Kris that the men were not being real and not acknowledging in the group what they were really doing. At the time Dan was attending Kris realised a 10 week course could only skim the surface. Nonetheless she felt angry that only physical violence seemed to be addressed and not the whole spectrum of abuse.

But the worst outcome of Dan's participation at a MFNV programme was his conviction that, compared with the other men in the group, he was really good and Kris was complaining without justification. He not only tried to get Kris to appreciate his goodness, as perceived by him, but he also thought she should be grateful for it. This made Kris's situation worse.

*"absolutely [ ] that all stopped and it's never (.) there's never (.) there's never even been a hint of it since" (178-179)*

*"in fact it got worse (.) um the physical violence stopped (.) but the ah mental and and emotional violence got got worse because then he had TOOLS [ ] he was given tools to (1) um get to me (.) with" (168-171)*

*"if he didn't want to talk about anything um yeah (.) he would just WALK [ ] THEN HE'D SAY oh well I WAS JUST TAKING TIME OUT" (429-431)*

*"the group actually made him look really good (.) um because it wasn't happening all the time [ ] so he just (.) yeah felt really pleased with himself" (120-124)*

*"[he] was CONSTANTLY throwing up at me this THING about that he was a pretty good guy you know and (.) not as bad as this one or that one and I should be really thankful for (.) um being able to live with him and all this sort of carry on (2) um which I FOUND just really SHOCKING after what I'd been through and what I was still going through" (420-425)*

*"he would say oh YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT IT BAD WITH ME I'M [ ] really GOOD compared to blah blah blah" (321-322)*

Kris was also critical of the facilitator whom she considered still engaged in abusive behaviour.

Kris thought that for Dan it was probably a start in educating him about how to change his life. She saw it as the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. Nonetheless, Kris has recommended it to friends for their partners, with the caution that the psychological abuse might get worse.

Kris thought that programmes should last a lot longer because the changes required of the men are big and wide ranging. Kris would have liked to see the programme cover other related issues such as drug and alcohol use.

Because of her experience of Dan's MFNV group facilitator, Kris thought the facilitators needed to be screened carefully for non abusiveness, be very skilled and highly trained in the area.

Kris would like to see the MFNV programme material being taught in schools.

Despite Kris's misgivings about the programme she was very supportive of the MFNV organisation and its objectives.

*"I really have my doubts about his fair play"*  
(477-478)

*"I've always cautioned them that the um (.) that the mental violence could get a lot worse (4) I've ALWAYS said that" (504-505)*

*"BIG LIFESTYLE CHANGES (.) which is basically what it is (.) it's it has to be lifestyle changes it's not just about stopping the violence it CAN'T just be that" (494-496)*

*"a really GOOD example of (.) you know what the programme was about" (482-483)*

*"I've probably been quite CRITICAL of the Men For Non Violence group but I do appreciate what they're trying to do (1) um yeah I REALLY DO and I admire them (1) you know good on them that's great (2) but ah" (641-643)*

## Lil

Lil is 26 years old, Pakeha, on the DPB and the mother of 2 children aged 6 and 4 years. Ray, her ex-partner, is 33 and works as a tradesman. He is the father of the children. Lil and Ray lived together for 7 years and had been separated for 1½ years at the time of the interview. On one of the occasions during the relationship when Lil had left Ray, Lil made Ray's attendance at a MFNV programme a condition of reconciliation. Ray voluntarily attended ½ the course, that is 4 sessions, in a provincial city in 1993.

The best times Lil recalls in the relationship was Ray's being present at the births of their children.

She also enjoyed it when they were both involved in doing up their house.

Ray was physically and psychologically violent towards Lil. His violence was unpredictable and could happen very fast. Lil described an occasion one Christmas at her mother's home in the presence of her mother and sister when Ray suddenly swung his fist to punch her. Lil's sister intervened swiftly by telling Ray not to dare to hit Lil which successfully stopped him.

Ray was possessive and controlling and did not like Lil doing things independently, such as going to her part time job or aerobics. He controlled her in many direct and indirect ways. He did not like her spending any money on herself especially if it involved something independent of him. For example, he made a big fuss in front of her mother about her buying a \$20 pair of sneakers because they were for aerobics.

*"he was there right yeah the whole time he was (.) right there with me" (48-49)*

*"we were both doing it we BOTH you know like wallpapering we'd get in there and we'd do it together [ ] it was good (.) I enjoyed that [ ] a bit of quality time together but um (1) yeah [laughs] that was about it" (53-56)*

*"it got real (.) bad but it was like SO SUDDEN" (270-271)*

*"REAL BASTARD just got up he had his fist and it was coming at my face you know it was just really fast and my sister just stepped in" (283-285)*

*"he wanted me all to him" (265)*

*"if I wanted to go out and do something (.) he'd get upset about it he would really get (.) knotty about it" (134-135)*

*"he's like running me down and making out I was a bad buzz (1) over a \$20 [laughs] pair of sneakers" (299-301)*

His controlling tactics isolated Lil. In a variety of ways Ray succeeded in cutting off Lil's outside contact and sources of support. He would always make it extremely difficult for Lil when they visited her family. For example, he was abusive in front of her family which, besides being painfully humiliating for Lil, meant her family avoided visiting her at her home.

Whenever they were out together Ray would embarrass Lil by talking loudly and creating a scene. Consequently Lil did not enjoy going places with him.

Lil also quit her part-time job as a result of Ray's violent behaviour while caring for the baby. She came home from work one day to find holes in the wall from where Ray had thrown the baby's bottle. Lil stopped working immediately because of her fears for their daughter.

The relationship was one sided with Lil cut off in the home with the children and Ray going to work during the day and out in the evenings. If Lil and Ray did do things together or go out it was always a case of doing what Ray chose to do. And once they were out, Lil would have to mind the children while Ray did what he wanted otherwise he would become very difficult.

*"he was just (2) ER packing a mental [laughs] the whole time we were here (.) because I was with my family" (267-269)*

*"they never hardly come around to my house (2) um I mean he'd DO things he even (2) ohh he'd do it in front of my family" (260-262)*

*"HIS MOUTH WAS LOUD and all these people around [ ] embarrass (.) he would EMBARRASS TOTALLY" (476-479)*

*"my daughter was about (1) 6 7 8 months old round there I went back to work part-time (1) and yeah he (.) I mean for a little baby I come home and he was like holes in the wall he threw her bottle you know and put holes in the wall (.) which (.) really THAT WAS IT I left the job" (137-141)*

*"I was always in the house [ ] I was just stuck in the house (.) and (1) he would be out you know (1) doing his things at night or whatever" (59-61)*

*"he'd do what he wanted to do and I WASN'T ALLOWED" (37)*

*"we never (2) couldn't do things together because I'd end up with the kids he'd be oh oh doing his you know it was ME doing all with HIM but otherwise he'd pack a mental" (458-460)*

*"I was trying to be NICE you know and do you mind bringing the washing in when I*



Ray used to criticise Lil all the time at home and in front of others which was embarrassing for Lil. But she also found his behaviour puzzling as she was constantly trying to please him.

However, because of the tension between them, Lil found the lack of contact was preferable. That way she avoided some of the arguments and abuse. She got to a point where she could not stand being in his presence. One source of Lil's disappointment when Ray stopped attending the MFNV course was that she would no longer have those evenings to herself.

Lil believed Ray used violence to try and maintain control over her.

Whereas in fact by default Lil controlled the household, the children and the whole domestic environment. She managed all their financial affairs. She was able to maintain control of the children which Ray was unable to do. He would allow the children to do whatever they wanted which meant that they would often misbehave with him and once that happened he could not cope. And Lil organised everything to do with the running of the household. She thinks that at some level Ray was aware of his own lack of authority and that he resented it.

*had the BABY [ ] then it would just build up [ ] he just used that for [inaudible] hole in the wall (.) hole in the door" (108-112)*

*"we couldn't (2) be happy in the same room together [ ] I felt uncomfortable (.) when he was around I was glad you know when he went out at night [ ] I felt relieved" (63-66)*

*"he was OUT OF THE HOUSE it was good you know I had (1) I didn't have to have him sitting there [laughs] (3) and then OH NO I'VE GOT HIM HOME on a Monday night or whatever night it was [laughs]" (556-559)*

*"he was trying to scare me (.) I'm the boss of the our house" (123-124)*

*"I had the control the little (1) that (.) bit of (.) more control than what he could (.) yeah he he (.) didn't have it with the kids (.) got no he's got no control with the kids they do what they want (.) but I have I've got authority with them [ ] in the house it was like (2) um he would (.) UNDER ME and that I think that's not good for a male to feel like that that's the impression I got you know I did all the dealings and paid everything [ ] he was there [points down and laughs] and at times yeah um (.) I think that really really got to him you know him not being up the top there" (124-133)*

Yet Lil desperately wanted for Ray to become more involved on the home front. She thinks some involvement from him might have not only improved her situation but also Ray himself would have benefited from an increased sense of belonging.

Lil's family knew all about the violence, were strongly opposed to it and wanted Lil to leave but realised it was her decision. They were very supportive of her and it was to her mother's that Lil went when she finally left Ray.

Lil only had one friend at the time who did know about the violence. More recently, since she has separated, she has a friend who she told after she had known her for a year or so. Lil was very surprised when the friend told her that she had left a similar situation. Lil has not talked to anyone else about it and does not really want to.

Although Ray always blamed Lil for his violence she found that hard to believe because he was like that when she met him. Even now since they have separated Ray still blames Lil.

Lil herself was uncertain about what caused the violence but wondered whether family background was involved. From TV programmes she had seen she was aware of the inter-generational transmission of violence.

*"I just wanted him [laughs] ROUND THE HOUSE [laughs] um (1) do things without me even asking for it [ ] just GET MORE INVOLVED" (446-449)*

*"[Mum] didn't want me to go back [ ] with him (.) she wanted me here you know she was (2) real worried and yeah (1) she offered to pay you know to get me back if I ever wanted to come back" (287-289)*

*"yeah [laughs] I feel embarrassed about it (2) yeah" (336)*

*"you get me going" (106)*

*"he always blamed ME [laughs] [ ] but (2) it (2) it's always been there even when we first [met]" (101-103)*

*"WHERE they get the violence you know WHERE does it (1) is it FAMILY" (411-412)*

*"I mean like you see on TV you (2) generation generation generation [ ] oh well I spose that does cause it but [laughs]" (414-416)*

Lil used to insulate herself and hide from Ray how hurt she felt by his behaviour. Because of Ray's violence and because of Ray's negative reaction to her contacts with the outside world, Lil was in a constant state of fear which also made the world feel frightening. In order to cope with this Lil believes she became hardened to it and shut herself off from it.

Nonetheless, all this abuse took its toll on Lil and the relationship. Lil started to intensely dislike Ray and give up on the relationship well before she actually left. She considers she hung on longer than she should have but was very reluctant to deprive her children of the family unit. Eventually Lil left and returned to her home town.

*"I spose you do feel it (1) but you don't show it (1) you don't show it (1) but you do feel it [ ] because you're you're tough too you know (.) you (.) you're yeah you're tough too (.) and the whole world is scary" (114-118)*

*"all those things just did so much damage to me that oh (.) he made me cope all the time" (479-480)*

*"WE'D LOST IT you know the communication wasn't going to come back it was like we'd really lost it [ ] I couldn't stand him anymore (.) but I stayed in there (.) it was really unrealistic though" (189-192)*

## MFNV

Lil left Ray after a violent episode during which he had butted her in the face. Lil's condition of reconciliation was that they attend joint counselling and Ray attend a MFNV course. Ray attended ½ a programme once they were living together again.

Ray only went to the joint counselling, which Lil considered unsuccessful, and MFNV at her insistence.

Lil hoped the course would change Ray, that the anger and violence would go. She also hoped Ray would start participating more in their family life which might help Ray develop a better understanding of what it was like for her.

*"not for himSELF" (92)*

*"I JUST NEEDED A BIT MORE UNDERSTANDING (1) yeah I spose yeah of the WOMAN" (427-428)*

Although none of these hopes were realised, at the time that Ray was attending MFNV Lil found him calmer and more willing to talk. At first he appeared interested and keen to go and when he returned from a session he would talk about it. For the 4 weeks while Ray was attending Lil thought Ray felt better about himself and that he was learning from it. Ray told Lil about the group discussions, time out, the violence cycle and how they were encouraged to set a goal and give themselves a treat every week.

Even though Ray obviously enjoyed going while he was attending, once he stopped Lil says that Ray would speak negatively about the programme.

Ray saw himself as different from the men in the group who were ordered by the Court to attend. Since he had not been directed by the Court, Ray considered he did not need to be there. Although Ray only went because Lil directed him to go if he wanted to return to the relationship and he would not have gone otherwise, Ray still perceived himself as going voluntarily.

When Ray had to take Lil to one of the sessions Ray refused to go and despite Lil's pleading he stopped attending the course at that stage. Lil wondered if part of the reason for his giving up was because he sensed that she had already emotionally

*"I must admit (1) while he was doing it HE CHANGED he did change" (175-176)*

*"he was a calmer person yeah and he tried to talk a bit" (188)*

*"when he'd come home you know he'd be da da da da da [laughs] all about it" (211-212)*

*"IT WAS GOOD [ ] because he'd he was actually feeling good about himself (.) he was feeling good about himself" (218-219)*

*"what HE'D SAY was it was a load of crap [laughs] because anything like that doing ANYTHING like that is just a load of BULL (.) you know COUNSELLING or ANYTHING it's just a (.) load of bull" (576-578)*

*"the THING THAT DIDN'T APPEAL TO HIM [ ] like he was voluntarily going (1) some of them were ordered by the Courts (.) to go and (.) it was like he felt it yeah I shouldn't be here (.) you know I haven't been ordered by the Court (.) you know that was HIS (.) INTERPRETATION of it you know um (1) but it was like well you have to do it (.) you know well me you have to do this" (387-392)*

*"he was trying to improve himself but it was like (1) what for cos deep down I knew mm (2) I'd had enough (.) but I stayed there [ ] in fact you know that could've stopped him from actually finishing it and (2) it wasn't going to work you know (1) we weren't*

withdrawn from the relationship, as she had, and so he felt like there was no point in continuing given he was doing it to keep her rather than for himself.

Ray soon reverted to his usual behaviour. Within a few months Ray was physically violent again. Because of his quick resumption of his violent behaviours, Lil did not think the MFNV programme did anything for him in the long run.

Even so Lil would recommend a course to others.

Lil believed it would be more successful if men actually wanted to attend rather than being forced to go. She thought individual counselling for the men would help them get used to talking. Lil also thought learning more about the origins of and reasons for their violence might help develop an understanding of themselves and their behaviour. Most importantly for Lil, since the relationship is where the violence occurs, she would like to see more information and a greater focus on relationships. This would involve more participation by the women.

*going to work so why bother doing it" (196-201)*

*"they need to do a revisal course [laughs] [ ] I mean he was back to it [ ] I think it was only a few months and then he smashed a window" (602-606)*

*"you should be going cos you wanted to (.) not because of conditions" (93-94)*

*"if they [ ] could LEARN how to TREAT WOMEN or something you know YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET VIOLENT IF THEY ASK YOU TO DO SOMETHING [ ] more [ ] about RELATIONSHIPS (1) um because a lot of the violence is (1) RELATIONSHIPS" (430-434)*

## Liz

Liz is 22 years old, Pakeha and living with her fiancé who works. Liz is studying through correspondence while she is looking after her 2 children aged 5 years and 1 year. Her ex-partner, Phil, is in his mid 20s, Pakeha and the father of the 5 year old. Her fiancé is the father of the 1 year old. Liz met Phil when she was 13 and they remained together for 6 years. They have been separated for 3½ years. Phil voluntarily attended and completed a MFNV programme in a provincial city in 1992 shortly before he and Liz separated. Early in the relationship Phil was in prison for 6 months for non-payment of fines. However, when Liz charged him with assault he received 2 months Periodic Detention. Liz found it difficult to understand the variation in sentence.

Phil was physically and psychologically violent throughout the relationship. The physical violence started after the first 6 months. Even though he frequently threatened to kill her and tried to strangle her, Liz has found that the psychological abuse had the most damaging and persistent effect on her.

Liz considers the birth of their (now 5 year old) child was the only positive thing to come out of the relationship. However Phil was also violent with the baby and Liz was unhappy about her growing up in that situation.

Phil was possessive and controlling which led to Liz's isolation. He did not like her having friends or her going out. If her friends came around to see Liz, Phil would behave in such a way that she would have to ask them to leave. As a result she lost many friends while she was living with Phil.

*"he was just really controlled me and possessive and (.) very violent" (47-48)*

*"yeah it was just ongoing violence all the time verbal A LOT OF verbal and emotional abuse (.) I think that's the one that sticks to me even now" (64-66)*

*"there wasn't really many good times at all" (46-47)*

*"he'd chuck her across the room" (144)*

*"he was SO possessive I wasn't allowed any friends (.) TO GO ANYWHERE or anything like that you know because if I was going out I was a slut (.) I was doing this that and the other thing which (.) I wasn't that stupid to do then because I knew if he found out then [ ] I probably wouldn't be sitting here because I mean he'd threatened to kill me so many times he'd strangled me and (2) things like that so" (282-288)*

He was easily jealous and used to accuse Liz of being a 'slut'. She was so frightened of him that she cut herself off and mostly complied with Phil's wishes.

Phil used to take anger that he felt towards others out on Liz and then he would blame her for his violence. Liz thought he would not dare behave towards another man as he did towards her because the man might retaliate.

Liz was extremely unhappy. She feels very angry now when she thinks about how Phil treated her when she was so young. Their relationship spanned from when she was 13 to 19 years old. She had no self esteem and she felt worthless and completely unloved.

At one stage Liz became sick. The stress, isolation and fear of her life with Phil combined with very little sleep to make her ill. She was also taking anti-depressants.

Phil used to hit Liz so that her injuries were not visible. Liz also concealed it herself.

Nonetheless some people knew of Phil's violence towards Liz because they saw it. But they ignored it. On occasions he would hit her when his friends were present. Instead of helping Liz or telling Phil to stop, his friends would just absent themselves. Phil's mother also knew but did nothing about it.

*"I lost a lot of friends [ ] they'd get in contact with me and if they like came around (.) he'd kick up a stink and I'd say well you know you'd better leave (1) but no yeah I lost a lot of friends through him" (290-294)*

*"there would be days when he'd be (.) you know fine and but it was usually if a guy had (.) pissed schizo [laughs] pissed him off (.) um he'd take that out on me (.) it wasn't he'd take it out on a guy (.) he'd blame me" (61-63)*

*"I thought I was just the dirt on the ground (.) the way he used to talk to me I had no self esteem at all" (137-139)*

*"I didn't feel loved by ANYBODY really um (1) yeah (.) no self esteem I didn't have any self esteem at all" (304-306)*

*"I got quite (1) oh SICK at that stage I was really anaemic and (.) had no sleep and on anti-depressants" (171-173)*

*"no one could see the bruises" (170)*

*"and I hid it pretty well" (171)*

*"he used to hit me in front of his friends but they never used to do anything (.) they used to just get up and walk out" (168)*

*"his mother knew he was doing it but she didn't do anything because she's pretty (1) hard herself" (92-94)*



Liz had an older friend who had been in a similar situation at Liz's age and who knew about the violence. This friend thought it would be a good idea if Phil went on a MFNV programme because her ex-partner had been on one. He had changed for a couple of months but then went back to what he was like before. She also encouraged Liz to leave.

Liz believes Phil's violence was caused by his upbringing. She has seen it suggested on TV documentaries that a violent family environment produces violent behaviour and wonders. She knows that Phil's father was violent and that Phil was abused himself.

Liz found Phil's explanations of his violence quite confusing. On the one hand Phil would say when he was violent that it was the way he expressed his love for her. On the other hand, however, he would acknowledge that what he did was wrong.

Liz considers living in that situation made her stronger and this strength enabled her to leave.

When Liz eventually realised that Phil was not going to change, she left. She got a lot of help and ongoing support from her family, particularly her father and stepmother, her fiancé and friends.

*"I did leave at one stage but I went back again (.) stupidity" (193-194)*

*"he's had a lot of (1) trouble in his childhood (.) I mean I've just found out recently he was abused and (1) his father was pretty abusive too so (1) I think that was mainly it" (85-87)*

*"apparently his father was really really possessive (1) and very controlling too" (298-299)*

*"he KNEW IT WAS BAD but [ ] he just felt like he HAD to do it he couldn't show his emotions another way (1) I mean when he would hit me he'd say (.) I'm just doing it because I love you (.) and you know you don't hit someone (.) it's a funny way of showing that you know I love you" (94-99)*

*"he knew it was not the right thing to do but yet he still continued doing it" (91-92)*

*"when I finally left (.) him (.) it was (.) no one (.) could make me feel any worse than he did so you know I was a lot LOT STRONGER [ ] I'm even now I'm just so much stronger than I was before" (256-260)*

## MFNV

After episodes of physical violence Liz and Phil talked about his violence and Liz suggested that he go to an 'anger management' course. Although Phil attended and completed the MFNV programme voluntarily, he appeared to have felt forced to go by Liz.

Liz was hopeful, as were her friends, that the MFNV course would change Phil. At first Phil also seemed hopeful.

Liz recalls after the first session Phil came home and beat her up. When he returned home after the sessions Phil was agitated and violent. Liz would try and find out what had happened at the group but was careful about what she said as she thought this might provoke Phil's violence.

Liz did not know anything about what went on at the sessions because Phil never talked about it and she did not know anyone else who was going. Phil did not appear to enjoy the sessions and claimed that the people there made him feel bad. He did not want to continue, but did complete it.

While Phil's physical abuse became less frequent the psychological abuse increased. This was very disappointing for Liz who, having heard positive and negative things about the programme, had been hopeful that her

*"I suggested maybe he should be going to a an anger management course" (76-77)*

*"the first night he went he came home and beat me up and said (.) oh you sending me to this (.) cos it made him feel (.) like shit you know" (78-80)*

*"when he first went he was really looking forward to it because he knew what he was doing was WRONG" (220-222)*

*"that's when it ALL (.) hit the fan [ ] verbally abusive when he walked in the door (1) um just hit me or something you know (.) cos if I said the wrong thing like I'd say (.) like how did it go and what happened and he wouldn't say he wouldn't tell me (.) what happened (.) he'd just say oh they just made me feel like I was (.) SHIT (1) yeah" (225-230)*

*"HE FELT THAT THEY MADE him feel like he was just you know (1) worthless (1) which I doubt it VERY MUCH but that's how he looked at it" (237-239)*

*"the VIOLENCE didn't occur everyday like it had been occurring um that was one thing but you know (.) it still happened (1) it was more the verbal abuse and emotional abuse that happened started happening then" (153-156)*

situation would improve. Nonetheless, Liz was pleased about the decrease in physical violence. But the simultaneous increase in emotional, verbal and sexual abuse left her with the view that the programme had done nothing for Phil or the relationship.

However, Liz's perception that the course had failed to bring about any change in Phil after he had completed it resulted in her giving up hope of Phil changing. She realised that if her situation was to change she would have to take the initiative. This realisation and her loss of hope were instrumental in her decision to leave the relationship.

Liz considers the programme did not work for Phil because of his attitude.

Despite her own experience of the programme, Liz would and has recommended the MFNV course to others for their partners. She refers to one friend's partner who changed a lot.

*"I was glad not to be getting hit (.) or anything like that but like I say it was just the emotional and verbal abuse that (.) still happened and that got worse increasingly worse (.) and then he (1) sexually abused me so" (160-163)*

*"he was just still the same it didn't honestly did not work (.) at all" (146-147)*

*"I think mainly for me it was (.) after he went on it and I saw that it wasn't going to change so I just left (2) mm yeah that was the best you know that was the best thing that I just gave up (.) finally gained some strength and got up and just left" (317-321)*

*"it was just his attitude he just can't couldn't care less about anything you know (1) HE DIDN'T WANT TO HEAR (1) other people telling him what he was doing was wrong (.) that's what he doesn't like" (367-370)*

## Lyn

Lyn is 30 years old, Pakeha and the mother of 4 children, aged 12 years, 7, 5 and 4 years. Lyn's 12 year old is from a previous relationship before she and her ex-husband, Les, had 3 children together. Les is 30, Pakeha and a farm worker. Lyn and Les were together for nearly 8 years and were married for 6 of those. They have been separated for 2 years. When Lyn charged Les with assault the Court ordered Les to go to a MFNV programme. Les completed the first part of the programme but only attended four or five sessions in the second part. He did this in a provincial town in 1993. Lyn is currently living in a new relationship and is caregiver for her children and her partner's children too as he works.

Lyn found it difficult to remember good things in the relationship but did recount one occasion where she and Les were very close when their child was in hospital with a life threatening condition.

Les was physically and psychologically violent towards Lyn. For example, when she was pregnant with their second child, Les beat her, breaking 2 ribs. Lyn was always on edge as Les's behaviour was very unpredictable.

Despite never being sure about what brought about a violent outburst and the unpredictability, Lyn attempted to avoid saying anything that she thought might provoke him.

Les used to blame Lyn for things that were nothing to do with her, including his own violent behaviour. He would always take anger that he felt towards others out on her.

Lyn was not the only one who disliked Les's behaviour. She believes people only accepted Les because of her

*"that was probably the only time we were (.) really close [ ] for 2 days and then he went back (.) to abuse" (36-40)*

*"he was good sometimes but (1) not really good I was always waiting for the next (.) the next time" (47-49)*

*"trying to figure out ways of (.) SAYING things that wouldn't make him angry I mean saying hello when he came home from work used to make him angry sometimes" (49-51)*

*"one night he came home [from the market] and he just called me a slut (.) for no reason he'd be ANGRY with someone at the market and like (.) he came home and he calls me a slut I mean I wasn't" (153-155)*

*"people didn't really know when (2) when he was in a good mood you know and um (.) so if if anyone came to visit (.) they*

and they did not like his attitude. She noticed that other people stopped visiting because the tension between them was always evident. Consequently Lyn became isolated.

Lyn would beg Les to talk to her but she thinks he really did not know where to start. He would then become very frustrated -and abusive. Lyn got the impression that Les's remorse about his behaviour was genuinely felt.

Lyn considers Les's violence and abuse was caused by his family environment and childhood experiences. He witnessed violence in his own home and was later in a foster home. Lyn knew that Les carried a lot of hurt and anger from his past for which he wanted to get his revenge. Lyn believes it was this anger he would vent on her.

In order for Les to change Lyn thought that he needs to let go of the grievances he was keeping alive from his past. He would also need to take responsibility for his own situation and stop blaming others for it.

Lyn did not want her family to know about the abuse. But she did used to talk to the priest's wife from her church who listened and who told Lyn she thought that Les's behaviour was wrong and that a MFNV course would be good for him.

Lyn was assertive and confident before she lived with Les and believes that is what he was attracted to in her. However, she lost her confidence and

would always pick up on the tension that was there" (178-180)

"I think a lot of people picked up on Les's attitude anyway and they actually stayed away" (173-174)

"when he used to SAY SORRY you know ya he used to mean it I think he meant it yeah" (94-95)

"he had a lot of built up anger from his childhood his parents (.) their relationship was (1) the same they used to chase each other round with knives and (2) yeah then he went into a foster home and that wasn't good for him and (2) then he had trouble at school [ ] once he said to me everybody that's hurt on me HE'S GOT A LIST (.) and he'll get them back" (82-87)

"[Les needed to] let go of the past and stop blaming me for things that (2) I wasn't even around to (.) be a part of (1) yeah all the resentment and bitterness he had (1) from years before" (246-248)

"he'd sort of put me in a place where (3) I didn't have any confidence I (.) I wasn't very assertive I was before I met him" (62-64)

assertiveness while in the relationship with Les.

Lyn considers her own personal development changed things in the relationship. She cites learning to drive as a particularly significant step in this process. As she started to feel better and become more assertive she stood up to Les.

This increasing strength enabled Lyn to charge Les with assault. At this time Lyn had a couple of counselling sessions with the man who ran the MFNV group. This was useful for her as the counsellor reassured Lyn that she was not responsible for Les's anger. After the assault charge the physical violence stopped. Lyn attributes this to the fact that Les now realised she would no longer tolerate being hit and would charge him with assault again if he did.

Lyn does not believe she had high expectations though she did want changes. Eventually she gave up any hope of these occurring. In her new relationship Lyn and her partner are able to communicate about things when they are wrong.

*"it wasn't til I learnt to drive that I actually began (1) to stand up for myself you know and not let him do that" (65-67)*

*"he didn't hit me badly that time but he hadn't done it for a while and I you know I was starting to feel a bit better in myself so (2) yeah and I thought he's not getting away with that anymore so (.) I lay I charged him" (73-75)*

*"once I laid the assault charge he did stop (.) hitting me and that wasn't because of the course that was just because (.) he knew that I wouldn't allow him to do it anymore" (143-145)*

*"I'm OUT of all that" (194)*

## MFNV

As a result of the assault charge that Lyn brought against him, Les was ordered by the Court to attend a MFNV programme. He completed the first part of the programme and attended ½ of the second programme.

Lyn had hopes that Les might learn from the programme. She had seen it as an opportunity for Les to begin to come to

*"I hoped that it would teach him (1) a different way of dealing with his anger" (107-108)*

terms with the influences that had contributed to his current feelings and behaviour. She also hoped that he would learn to cope with his anger in other ways. These hopes were not realised.

Although Les's physical violence ceased at this time Lyn is convinced that was the result of her charging him with assault and Les's realisation that Lyn would do so again. Furthermore, the other forms of abuse continued.

Initially Les appeared to enjoy and feel positive about the course and occasionally talked about what happened after the sessions, though this was usually about others, not himself.

Les would not use the 'time out' as taught on the course and so Lyn used to do it instead. Lyn recalls with some amusement a brief role play situation that Les told her about where the men each role played being the woman in a situation where the man was harassing her. The men found this unpleasant even though it lasted only minutes. Lyn thought it was a good idea for the men to experience this.

At the first session of the second part of the programme Les told Lyn how he had encouraged the other men present to take the course seriously.

Later on, however, Les's attitude changed. He was agitated before sessions, angry after them, considered it "a waste of time" and stopped attending. Lyn does not know why this happened but suspects that once things became personal to him he

*"it was disappointing for me because he (.) yeah I thought it was a chance for him (.) to begin to sort through things and na (2) yeah (2) it was just disappointing [ ] it wasn't what I'd hoped"* (158-161)

*"the [psychological] abuse never stopped (.) and he knew that I would do the same thing again"* (149-150)

*"sometimes he told me a bit about what happened like when he felt ok about it (.) as long as it was to do with somebody else"* (222-223)

*"the men had to be the wives and (.) and the other men were the husband badgering the wife so that they got the impression the FEELING of what it was like (.) to be the person receiving it [ ] I think that's good (1) I think (.) men need to know what it's like to be on the receiving end [ ] from what I gather none of them actually liked it (.) and it only lasted a couple of minutes [laughs]"* (225-232)

*"he had told everybody that (.) if they were there to muck around they'd better leave now because he did that the first time and [ ] they would all be wasting their time if they were just there to muck around"* (288-291)

*"I think (.) as it began to touch on (1) probably (.) THINGS (1) ISSUES for him [ ] he didn't (.) want to go"* (210-212)



lacked the skills to manage.

Lyn believes that Les's attendance at a MFNV programme raised his awareness of himself and his circumstances. Even though this new awareness did not result in any change in Les's behaviour, Lyn thought this was a good thing.

Lyn would recommend a MFNV course to others because she appreciates that everyone is different and someone else might learn from it and decide to change.

Lyn was dubious about the likelihood of success with men who were ordered to go by the Court. She thought change was more likely when men wanted to go rather than being forced.

Lyn suggested that individual counselling for the men before they started in the group might assist the men to talk about themselves and to focus them on choosing to change.

While Lyn thought it important to teach the men about power and control and the violence cycle she thought the MFNV programme should focus on teaching the men skills, such as communication and conflict resolution.

Lyn would have liked some support for herself, possibly individual counselling or a support group for the women. Part of the reason for this would be so that Lyn could have known how best to support Les.

*"once something someone says something or (1) something happens and if it doesn't sit right with him (.) and because he won't talk about it it stays there" (296-298)*

*"it did begin to make him AWARE of things in his life although he chose not to do anything about it (1) the awareness was there" (263-264)*

*"yeah I'd still recommend it I mean it may not have worked for us but (3) everybody's different I mean someone might (1) GET something out of it and decide well you know it's a better way to go" (316-318)*

*"in most cases I don't believe it works that way when someone's ordered to do something (.) it's not because they want to make a change (1) it's cos they don't have a choice" (311-313)*

*"a few sessions of one to one counselling so that by the time [MFNV] STARTS (1) it's what they really want [ ] they're focusing on wanting to change (.) and that the desire's really there" (305-307)*

*"it's the power and control that's (.) which is important [ ] but that's what they really focus on and (.) and that's the problem I think if they focused a (.) well as much on the solutions as they do on the problems that (2) that might begin to (.) work (.) a bit more" (335-340)*

## Sue

Sue is a 37 year old Pakeha woman on the DPB. She has 3 children: Jason, a 14 year old from a previous relationship, and Jimmy 10 and Henry 4. Bill is a 38 year old, Pakeha professional with a degree in Psychology and the father of Jimmy and Henry. Sue and Bill have had a relationship for 13½ years though for periods of this they have lived apart. After about 6 years together they married. This lasted for 12 weeks and is now dissolved. Sue moved to another town about 2 years ago but still has contact with Bill. When the Police charged Bill with assaulting Sue in a public place, he was ordered to attend a MFNV programme as Diversion. Bill completed this course and a couple of years later completed another as a condition of reconciliation with Sue. Bill attended these 2 courses in a provincial town in 1990 and 1992 respectively.

It was difficult for Sue to think of good things in her relationship with Bill though she enjoyed his humour. On the whole she found the time with him extremely tough and painful. Though their relationship involved many separations and though Sue has moved some distance away largely to remove herself and the children from proximity to Bill, Sue acknowledges that she still feels a strong bond with Bill. Nonetheless, she considers she is living an independent life and does not see a future with him.

Bill was psychologically and physically violent. Over the years Bill stopped hitting Sue but would still terrorise her. For example, once he pinned Sue against the wall wielding a broken bottle. Bill also abuses his parents and a brother who has a psychiatric illness. He would throw things, punch and kick holes in their walls and yell and scream at them. He also hits his brother but does not abuse his sisters who live elsewhere.

*"his humour really but you know (.) you know realistically it was a bloody nightmare"* (p2,54-55)

*"the only way I could describe it was [ ] casual on a long term basis"* (p1, 36)

*"there's a very strong tie"* (p2, 24)

*"I'm living a separate life I spouse"* (p2, 20-21)

*"he turned up at my place one night um very drunk and um (.) I opened the front door to him and I was holding Jimmy and he smashed a bottle and he held me up at the wall with this glass bottle"* (p7, 14-18)

*"I would pop in to see his parents and there'd be a hole in the door and it was because his father had infuriated him in some way"* (p9,45-48)

Bill always blames the victim of his abuse for causing it, whether it be Sue, his stepson, his brother or parents.

Sue was in a state of constant fear, even when they were living apart, of what Bill would do next because the violence was very unpredictable.

Because Bill was so easily influenced by others and outside forces, his moods fluctuated wildly and fast. He would be "deliriously happy" one minute and extremely angry the next which Sue found unnerving and exhausting.

Bill was possessive and jealous, accusing Sue of having affairs. Sue was frightened to go out and became isolated at home. While Bill wanted to possess Sue he was unable to take the responsibility of being there if she needed him, such as when she was sick or pregnant. She also could not rely on Bill to care for the children as he was unable to cope with them for very long.

Sue was very unhappy. She was depressed and at one stage was thinking regularly about killing herself. She blamed herself for the situation and the state she was in and for remaining in there. Though she realised the relationship was not doing her any good, whenever she tried to get out Bill would always offer her new hope and make promises. She believes that many people, including a counsellor they jointly saw, thought she was crazy.

*"whenever he's angry it's always someone [ ] has made him angry and (.) so that's the responsibility is on everyone else for his anger" (p3, 56-p4, 1)*

*"I was always scared of what he was going to say or do" (p6, 42-43)*

*"it's like riding a roller coaster" (p3, 30-31)*

*"there's no consistency [ ] you just really don't know where you're at (.) one minute to the next" (p4, 5-7)*

*"I'd spent years of being like a prisoner" (p4, 20)*

*"he [ ] wanted to [ ] own me but (.) not have the responsibility of me" (p1, 38-40)*

*"he's good with the kids for short periods of time but when he has to sort of like actually parent them and not play with them he gets really you know beside himself" (p3, 33-36)*

*"depressed and contemplating suicide quite frequently because I couldn't see the end to what was happening" (p7, 57-p8, 1)*

*"I was a wreck (.) I was grossly overweight (.) I was incredibly depressed" (p7, 8-9)*

*"I [ ] was down on myself for a long time [ ] like years [ ] why couldn't I get away and you know what's wrong with me and I'm stupid and ya ya it's my fault" (p2, 25-29)*

One of the most difficult aspects for Sue was her feeling that her credibility was always questioned. Though she told others about what was happening, she found that people either implied it was her fault, minimised it or they did not believe her.

Sue puts some of this down to the fact that Bill, with his professional job, was always well dressed, presentable and articulate, whereas she was perceived less positively.

Her own family were not supportive and indicated it was her fault. Bill's mother told Sue that a lot of other people had a lot worse to put up with and she indicated that Sue was being unreasonable not just putting up with Bill's violent behaviour as they did. Furthermore, Sue considers the Police discounted her calls for help. Living in a small town, Bill played rugby with many local policemen who did not believe that Bill could do what Sue claimed because their experience of Bill was different. All this increased Sue's feeling of isolation.

Sue felt powerless to affect his abuse. Despite attempts to calm things down, Sue knew that once Bill became violent she could only remove herself and the children to safety. She thought Bill could not control his violence and that he also had "blackouts" (p6, 56) to it. Yet Sue acknowledges that Bill seemed able to control his violence towards Jimmy and Henry, his 2 children, but not towards Sue and Jason, his stepson.

*"the worst thing contending with the violence for me was contending with everyone in [name of town] seeing Bill as being someone that was so unreal" (p7, 35-38)*

*"he presents himself really well" (p7, 7-8)*

*"it's not just those men with tattoos and [ ] people couldn't see it in Bill they saw him as being gentle" (p7, 42-44)*

*"[people saw] me as crazy and of course I appeared that way I think at the time" (p7, 54-55)*

*"I felt I couldn't call the Police because I had incidences where when I called the Police (.) you know he was always gone and my credibility was just zero you know they really treated me like a joke" (p8, 4-7)*

*"I soon picked up after a few years though that you know no matter what I did I couldn't stop what was happening" (p4, 58 - p5, 1-2)*

*"no matter what I did he was on his way (.) and the thing was just to get safe get everyone safe" (p5, 8-10)*

*"once he starts he can't stop" (p12, 56-57)*

Sue thought Bill's violent behaviour was in part caused by an undiagnosed psychiatric illness. She considered siblings of people with schizophrenia had a similar behaviour pattern which accounted for Bill's violence as he has a brother with the illness. She also believed that his family's tolerance of his abusive behaviour contributed to maintaining it just as her previous tolerance had.

Sue considers that initially she had "a role in it too" (p4, 46). Because of her own family background she grew up feeling absolutely worthless. Sue believes that her poor view of herself led her into the relationship in the first place and to her putting up with Bill's violence.

Sue has attended personal and joint counselling on several occasions and reports being diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder around the time that Bill attended the second MFNV programme.

Over the years Sue has developed in ways which means she would no longer permit Bill to hit her. Sue attributes Bill's eventual stopping using physical violence to her own personal development. Bill would simply no longer dare to hit her.

However, Sue believes that she might still choose to live with Bill were it not for the effect of his abusive behaviour on the children.

*"the behaviour of siblings of schizophrenics is you know they may not be diagnosed but you know he's obviously got the behaviour pattern of a schizophrenic because his um (.) reactions to um (.) situations are always you know um inappropriate" (p3, 21-26)*

*"Bill's like the (.) spoilt baby [ ] he still throws things at them and yells and screams and (.) they give him money" (p9, 51-54)*

*"I grew up with not just feeling I had um little worth it was more like I really didn't have little worth you know it wasn't just a thought that it was actually true" (p10, 36-39)*

*"back then [ ] there was something [ ] going on with me that obviously I've dealt with that has stopped [the physical violence] but he is still very abusive" (p4, 53-56)*

*"the things I should've recognised at the beginning as showing that there was a not a good situation there and and realistically if I had've felt good about myself I would've not gotten involved" (p9, 35-39)*

*"I'd recognised my you know part of the whole cycle and had withdrawn myself from it" (p13, 23-25)*

*"if I didn't have children I most probably would tolerate it [ ] children has been what's kept me out of that situation because I don't want the responsibility of children who end up like Bill" (p13, 40-43)*

## MFNV

As a result of a charge of assaulting Sue in a public place, Bill was directed to attend a MFNV programme as part of Diversion. Bill completed this programme. He later completed another MFNV programme as a condition of reconciliation with Sue.

On both occasions Bill felt forced to go by Sue even though the first course was a result of an assault charge laid by the Police.

By attending the MFNV course Sue was hopeful that Bill would assume responsibility for his anger and learn to control himself. She was very hopeful on both occasions. For herself she would have liked to be able to keep living with Bill without feeling constantly fearful of his abuse.

Sue did not believe the MFNV courses changed Bill or helped their relationship.

Bill resented having to attend the programme and thought he was different from the other group members.

Sue noticed an evangelical response to the programme in some men which appeared temporarily successful though she wondered about how long term this would be.

Sue thought it might help if the groups were broken up in some way because professional people, for example, might not want to attend with gang people. Sue also believes the women partners should be involved in the MFNV course in some way.

*"he was pissed off and angry that he was made to do this course because of something stupid I did" (p6, 49-51)*

*"even NOW (.) many years on he's STILL angry about having to have done those courses [ ] all it achieved was to make him angry" (p8, 12-17)*

*"it gave me hope for a short period of time the period of time he was on the course (1) I was hopeful that [laughs] that it would work yeah and the same the second time too just HOPE" (p14, 29-33)*

*"he really just thought it was a load of shit and designed for stupid people and not for him" (p12, 18-20)*

*"when you take it religiously you know like [ ] AA members [ ] that's when it seems to work you know but it's (.) I spose it's just living it you know that seems to be the hard thing for them" (p11, 50-55)*

*"he really felt that you know everyone there was stupid [ ] they were [ ] thick heads and um he couldn't relate to them and ah (1) that it was different for him" (p5, 53-57)*



## Tania

Tania is 28 years old, Maori and on the DPB. Jack is aged 36, Pakeha and employed as a tradesman. They have 5 year old twins. Tania and Jack met at a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre they were attending. They lived together for 10 years, were married for 7 of those years and have been separated for 4 months. Jack attended a MFNV course voluntarily in a provincial town in 1992.

Tania liked the feeling of strength and confidence that she experienced being in the relationship. She also enjoyed doing things together as a family. However she found Jack was immature, demanding and with little control over his mood or anger.

Jack was not physically violent towards Tania but throughout their relationship he was psychologically violent. He was verbally abusive and whenever he became angry, which could happen very quickly, he used to yell and swear at Tania.

He would always manipulate the situation so as to blame her for his behaviour. This had the effect on Tania of making her feel constantly anxious about her own behaviour in case it generated a fit of abuse from Jack. For example, if Tania went out, in order to try and avoid him becoming "shitty" with her, she used to phone Jack at home to check that he did not want the car while she had it.

Jack's ability to manipulate almost convinced Tania that she was responsible for all the problems in the relationship. Tania was particularly unhappy about Jack's yelling and screaming around the children and the effect it had on them.

*"he's 36 and he's really a 21 year old"* (p2, 32)

*"it was like I had a third child"* (p1, 55-56)

*"he's got a short temper he's got a TERRIBLE TEMPER"* (p3, 27-28)

*"he just seems to be able to manipulate it so that you either way you feel like you're in the wrong"* (p3, 33-35)

*"I was always nervous of (.) what I said or did in case I was going to you know get it in the neck from Jack"* (p3, 15-17)

*"I nearly believed him that what was happening was my fault"* (p3, 14-15)

*"I was more aware of it when the kids were little and he was yelling and screaming around the kids"* (p3, 18-20)



Tania thought Jack's need to be right all the time caused much of his abuse. Whenever he was challenged in any way he would become angry and abusive.

Although Jack's attendance at the drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre resulted in changes in his drinking, he has stopped drinking altogether, Tania considers that his behaviour did not change from what it was like when he was abusing alcohol.

Tania believes that the actions and views of other people affected the relationship and Jack in ways that were not helpful to her. On the one hand her family did not like Jack. This left Tania feeling caught in the middle and under pressure to take sides. At the time Tania thought that they did not give him a chance but now she thinks that they were probably right not to expect much of Jack. On the other hand there were a lot of people, friends, workmates and his family, who supported Jack on the basis of the changes they saw, such as his stopping drinking, getting a job, marrying and becoming a father. This enabled Jack to discount whatever Tania said to him about his behaviour. Tania considers these people were misled by the public manifestations of changes in Jack and did not look at what was happening within the home or the relationship.

Furthermore, Tania believes his family and others did not confront Jack when he was verbally abusive towards them on occasions in order to avoid conflict.

*"he's always been the sort of person who (.) likes to be right [ ] he doesn't like to see that anything's his fault and [ ] if he does his voice gets louder" (p3, 29-33)*

*"he's just slipped back into all his ol' old ways and um (3.5) I I believe he's a dry drunk" (p2, 44-45)*

*"that was a big issue with us (.) in our marriage (.) was people interfering" (p2, 5-7)*

*"HE HAS PROVEN what everyone [laughs] said was gonna would happen eventually yeah he's proven them all RIGHT" (p2, 36-38)*

*"people were saying he was wonderful (.) people were giving him an ego (.) so when it came to what I was saying to him what was happening in the home and what he was doing to me he didn't see it because everything else everyone else thought he was [laugh] WONDERFUL you know he was (.) he'd been dry for so many years he had a good job he had a family (.) that's [ ] what people saw and um (.) yeah he didn't have a problem" (p5, 49-57)*

*"people (.) like his family if they did pull him up on it (2) he they got it too (2) so everyone sort of let him get AWAY with it" (p5, 18-21)*

## MFNV

Jack attended the MFNV programme voluntarily. Tania had wanted him to go and thinks he went partly so Tania would stop pestering him. Jack was used to being in a group after his experience at the rehabilitation centre.

Tania hoped that Jack would start to take responsibility for his anger, to learn different ways of managing it and to communicate to her how he felt rather than exploding. She would have liked the relationship to be more balanced rather than Jack being dominating and her feeling nervous that Jack would get angry.

None of these things eventuated. Tania said repeatedly that she thought the MFNV course was a waste of time. In fact she found her situation became worse with Jack's attendance because he constantly compared himself favourably with the other group members who were physically abusive. Jack felt there was nothing the matter with his behaviour and was unable to understand what Tania was complaining about. This made Tania angry which she considers also contributed to the deterioration in the relationship.

Tania got the impression, from Jack, that the course focused on stopping physical violence. Consequently, the men believed that psychological abuse was not as serious, if they recognised it at all. Tania actually believes that after Jack returned from a session he was particularly convinced of the rightness of his behaviour

*"to get me off his back [ ] he is the sort of person that will say and do things (.) to keep people either quiet or keep them happy" (p3, 3-6)*

*"instead of getting in an argument we could've sat down and talked (.) and even if we were arguing he would've listened (.) rather than just yelling um (6) yeah just for him to (2) maybe (.) for him to realise that he was getting heated up and to be able to think sit back and think right you know let's do it a different way" (p7, 37-43)*

*"Nothing changed (1) I think things got worse (2) because he would come home and we would discuss it (.) and a lot of the time (4) he was discussing things that had happened to other people [ ] It was just a waste of time (1) you know it that made me angry because he was [ ] measuring himself (.) um against the others because he didn't hit or because [ ] he hadn't done this (.) he was fine he didn't have a problem and that made me angry so I think the situation got worse" (p4, 43-53)*

*"[MFNV] seem to (2) work mostly on physical abuse or the the guys seem to think that the physical abuse is more damaging and more um (2) hurtful and everything than the emotional and the (.) verbal (2) abuse" (p1, 18-22)*

because of this process of comparing himself with the others.

In the end Tania did not want Jack to continue with the course as an argument would always develop when he got home.

Tania believes the partners should be involved in the group since the men's abusive behaviour affects them. She wanted those running the groups to know what is actually happening in the family rather than relying on what the men say is going on. She thought the men's reports about their own behaviour would be highly unreliable either because they would lie about it for impression management or because they actually were unaware of the impact of it.

Given the effect the course had on Jack, Tania was reluctant to recommend a MFNV programme to others because of the safety of the women.

Changes that Tania thought would help in this regard were support for the women and the facilitators having an understanding of what the man was actually doing at home.

She also thought the groups needed to be expanded to focus on psychological abuse and not just physical abuse.

*"I think his ego had been boosted" (p6, 19)*

*"I got to the point where I wished he wouldn't GO because um he would come home and um discuss it with me and we'd end up in an argument and (.) I ah to me it was just a waste of time" (p2, 54-58)*

*"if these guys are doing these sort of things to me um (.) to a certain extent they're not going to be saying what they are really like I mean they don't KNOW well they don't seem to know really what they are like and I think for anyone to help them they need (1) the victim (1) to say look this is what he's doing to me (.) and then they work from there (.) um I mean it's easy for anyone to go along and make up a cock and bull story" (p6, 54-p7, 5)*

*"it would SCARE ME um asking someone's husband who was abusing them to go to the course if they reacted the same way as Jack did when he got back" (p7, 56-p8, 1)*

*"nobody knows if half those guys after hearing what had been said could go home and get in an argument with their wives and and beat them up because they've been at that course" (p8, 18-22)*

*"WHOEVER'S running it needs to know what's going on in the family before they (1) um do did things with them" (p8, 9-11)*

## Val

Val is 25 years old, Pakeha, on the DPB and the mother of 2 children - Johnny 8, from a previous relationship, and Daniel 3. Ed, her ex-partner, is Maori and the father of Daniel. Val and Ed were together for 5 years and had been separated for 3 months at the time of the interview. He now has a new partner. Ed was ordered by the Court to attend a MFNV programme when Val charged him with assault. He attended 4 sessions in a provincial city.

From the beginning of the relationship Ed was psychologically violent and aggressive, particularly in relation to Johnny, his stepson. Val always had to be careful about what she did with Johnny which affected their relationship as well. Ed's reactions to Johnny became so problematic that Val sent Johnny to live with one of his grandparents for a while.

Ed started physically assaulting Val when she was pregnant with Daniel. Val was not unaccustomed to abuse, having been beaten up as a child, and she used to minimise the effect of it on her. She now believes that it was a mistake not to protest against Ed's violence sooner. However, she knew that it could have serious consequences for her. Ed threatened that if Val charged him with assault he would leave her.

In spite of this, Val did charge him. Ed did leave her after the assault charge for which he was ordered to attend a MFNV programme. After 2 months Ed came to stay for the weekend during which he assaulted Val, breaking her nose, chipping her teeth and giving her 2 black eyes. This

*"like he never forgave me for having a kid first" (41-42)*

*"like one time Johnny wanted the light on (.) cos he was scared of the dark cos he was 4 (.) so he smashed the whole hallway light in and (.) so he couldn't turn it on I used to have to hide chips (1.5) for his lunch (1) you know to hide them so (.) he wouldn't get shitty" (44-47)*

*"I was (.) beaten up since I was a kid so it was like (1) I did the violence never bothered me it was (.) you know even when he used to hit me I used to I mean I did it all wrong I realise that now but (1) [ ] is that all you can do (1) you know it was like nothing anyway you know so (2) and that was no um no way to be" (69-73)*

*"I'd just HAD IT up to here" (80)*

*"I put him up for assault (1) it took a lot because he always warned me (1) that if I put him up for assault (1) that would be it (.) you know um that would be the end of the relationship" (65-67)*

time Val did not charge him to avoid a similar reaction.

Despite having been separated for 3 months at the time of the interview, Ed had assaulted Val just a week before which was evident from the bruising on her head, face and legs. Val charged him with assault for this.

Even though Val suffered a lot of physical harm at Ed's hands, Val found the psychological abuse more difficult than the physical abuse.

Val wished that Ed would just apologise and show some remorse as an indication to Val that he accepted what he was doing was wrong. He never did. Val was very hurt by Ed's failure to do this or to do anything for her. He would never assist Val with anything domestic, including the children nor did he ever take any responsibility in Val's absence. Even when she had to stay in hospital as a result of Ed assaulting her Val had to find someone to mind the children. While Val was not entirely sure, on the whole she believes that Ed does not actually understand that what he does is wrong.

Val tried to keep things going smoothly. However despite this Val noticed Ed's behaviour occurred in a relatively predictable cycle. He would be all right for a while but then slowly his level of tension and aggression would rise. This would be directed towards Val and would culminate in a violent outburst from Ed which often

*"but I never put him up for assault that time (1.5) because I didn't want him to (2) to be that way AGAIN (.) you know" (84-85)*

*"he gave me another hiding even though I'm not with him" (88-89)*

*"he played around you know with my mind and that (.) it was more like it was my fault" (127-128)*

*"mental abuse can be more damaging than physical any day" (335-336)*

*"he [ ] never apologise[d] like when I had to go to hospital (2) for my broken nose and that [ ] he (1) couldn't even look after the kids (2) you know he just (.) he didn't even come in to see me it was (3) um (1.5) no remorse whatsoever but HE KNEW HE'D done wrong (3) but not (2.5) that much so it was more like (1.5) making me feel it's more my fault (1) than his" (120-125)*

*"he doesn't even see what he did wrong (.) you know he just doesn't see (2) God if only" (137-138)*

*"I just tried so hard" (109)*

*"after every couple of months he'd get in one of those bad moods and everything would just (.) come out" (287-288)*

*"it was just like he hated me like he couldn't stand me after a while (2) and that's when you know in a couple of days that's when*

involved assaulting Val. Afterwards he would settle down until slowly the tension would build again.

Despite trying to please him and monitoring what she said, this continued. The inexorable cycle left Val nonplussed.

Others knew about Ed's violence towards Val: both their mothers, Ed's sisters and Val's friends. Initially Val's mother was not helpful because of her own experience. Like Val she did not take the violence seriously. But after a few years her mother's attitude changed and she is now pleased Ed is gone.

At first Ed's family were not supportive of Val either. Val believes that because Ed is the only boy in the family anything he does is condoned. More recently, however, Ed's family have supported Val.

Val's friends were always supportive and repeatedly suggested that she leave Ed. But Val wonders what friends can actually do for you when they think you should leave a violent relationship but you stay there. She accepts that the decision has to come from the woman concerned.

*he'd show his worst (.) aggressiveness and (1) then he'd be all right you know come all right [laughs] and you know I got sick of that" (289-293)*

*"WHAT WAS I SPOSED TO DO you KNOW" (294-295)*

*"[the violence] wasn't like no big deal anyway" (181)*

*"his family all stuck up for Ed" (182)*

*"cos he's been like the only boy so whatever he's done he could do no wrong (1) but now they've they're actually sticking up for me they're saying no don't (.) don't let him see the kids" (186-188)*

*"my friends are good (.) you know but then (.) after a while if you're just going to like take take them back and whatever I mean what what can they do (.) I mean what can they actually say you know they can't say Val (.) or GIVE UP with saying you know Val just get rid of him don't put up with it (1) you know and um (1) so when it I don't know what sort of support you can get when you you're putting up with it yourself" (221-226)*



Val considers Ed's violence was caused by his family environment which was also extremely violent.

Over their years together Val developed a lot. She became much stronger and realised that she did not have to put up with Ed's behaviour. Val came to realise that if her situation was to change she had to do something herself because Ed was not changing.

Val told Ed to leave, hoping that this might make Ed understand she was serious about him changing and that he would do something about himself and his behaviour. One week later Ed moved in with a girl just turned 16. This has been very painful for Val given the behaviour she has endured from Ed in the hope that things would improve. That he has moved in with someone who Val considers will not challenge his behaviour and that he has just walked away make it particularly difficult for Val to accept.

Despite the extensive physical damage Ed had done to Val and their home and the persistent psychological abuse Val and Johnny sustained, Val would be satisfied with a genuine apology from Ed. This would be recognition that Ed acknowledged and accepted that what he had done to Val was wrong and he was sorry.

Val now wants to get on with her life.

*"he's just in a violent family (1) um very violent family" (106)*

*"yeah (3) it's all got to do in the past" (297)*

*"I know for myself that no matter what your friends say no matter what they do it's up to (.) it's up to you to do something about it" (247-249)*

*"I finally had enough guts to kick him out [ ] not to finish but for him to buck his ideas up or finish" (188-190)*

*"you know it's like he couldn't hurt me anymore (.) but then he goes and does that (.) you know it's just the worst feeling possible (.) to know that (.) here he is with a girl that would idolise him (.) that would stick up for him no matter what you know cos you don't know you're naïve (1) you just have no life experience whatsoever at 16 (2) while he's gone and done so much to this family (1) and he would never even sit back to even realise um what he's done wrong" (192-198)*

*"I mean all I want him to do (4) is apologise" (211)*

*"I can do better (.) I know that" (206-207)*



## MFNV

As a result of the assault charge Ed was ordered by the Court to attend a MFNV programme. He attended ½ of the programme, that is 4 sessions. Val was very hopeful about Ed going on the course and she thought he was too. Val refers to this renewal of hope as the best thing about the programme and would recommend it to others because of this, even though her own hopes were not realised.

Val had no idea about what happened at the sessions because when she asked Ed would not tell her. He only ever talked about some of the other participants. When Ed returned from a session he would go for a walk, a drive or to the pub which annoyed Val because she would have liked to talk about it and to have known what happened at the group.

Although Ed's violence continued, Val believes he was less violent less often. He stopped hitting her around the face and was less destructive of material things, but he was still hitting and kicking her. Nonetheless, Val did notice a reduction in intensity and frequency. This improvement did not persist as evidenced by his recent assault of her which also involved damage to the house.

*"it was good because we sort of gave everything another go (.) you know just it gave us hope (1) well it gave me hope (.) and I think it gave him hope (.) too" (167-169)*

*"the good thing about it is it gives (.) them both hope again (.) you know like another chance another another try (3) something to hope for it gives the women something to hope for that it's going to end" (231-234)*

*"that used to annoy me TOO because (1) you know he should be able to talk about it (1.5) just sit down on one on one basis" (310-311)*

*"then [before MFNV] he was hitting me every week" (98)*

*"but after he'd started going there he wasn't like hitting me in the FACE (.) it was more kicking and (.) throwing and (.) whacking (.) around it wasn't so much (.) and then he'd done no more damage to the house so (1) he had helped in that way but he did kick that (.) hole in the door about a month 2 months ago" (100-104)*

*"he wasn't nowhere near as aggressive" (174)*

Val thought that if a man was sent by the Court he should be made to attend. She also thought the programmes should be longer and that they should not be on Thursday nights, as Ed's was, because that is pub night and this would increase absenteeism. Val thought individual counselling for the men would be helpful. Val wanted someone other than her to tell Ed that what he did was wrong.

For herself, Val would have liked some information about what was the best way for her to manage in that situation. Most importantly for Val, she believes the men need to be educated about family life and what it means to be a husband and father.

*"he needed someone to like tell him how WRONG and how bad it was (.) and not just like accepting it and and and carrying on with his life" (300-302)*

*"I would've liked to have known how to handle him more" (269-270)*

## Zoe

Zoe is 39 years old, Pakeha and a student who is also doing part time community work. Zac, her ex-partner, is 34 years old and on a Sickness Benefit. They were together for 3 years and have been separated for 5 years. Zoe made Zac's attendance at a MFNV programme a condition of the continuation of the relationship. He completed a programme in a provincial city in 1989.

Zoe found the relationship with Zac at the time very difficult and unrewarding for the most part. Looking back she realises now that both of them were finding it hard to cope anyway and that their own personal difficulties put a great strain on the relationship.

Zac was psychologically and physically violent towards Zoe. Though he used to hit her, Zoe found the psychological violence more distressing. The tactics Zac used to intimidate and threaten Zoe were more unnerving than the actual physical violence. For example, Zac drove his vehicle straight at her and would have run her over if she had not got out of the way. This left her far more fearful than being hit.

Zoe considers Zac's violence was a product of his family background. She believes that he acquired his explosiveness, his emotional inexpressiveness and his inability to resolve conflict from the models that he witnessed in his family. In addition, Zac was the youngest child and his mother was very protective of him. Within his family anything he does is condoned and as a result Zac did not learn the connection between his behaviour and experiencing any consequences for it.

*"we were both going through a lot of personal growth at the time [ ] struggling against family conditioning [ ] that was quite debilitating in many ways (1) and and it was quite destructive to um (1) to have to go through that with another person [ ] who was also struggling" (41-45)*

*"hitting was really a a minor form of expression [ ] there were a whole lot of other events (.) and um threatening intimidation and emotional (.) violence (1) in some ways hitting and a bruise was was a relief because it was actually tangible and you could see it and and you knew there was some evidence that it had happened" (124-128)*

*"his background his family models of how how relationships were and how conflict was never resolved in constructive ways" (98-100)*

*"he could do no wrong and he was never challenged on his behaviour" (106-107)*

*"he was always protected and covered up (.) so he never experienced consequences for his behaviour" (108-109)*

Furthermore, Zoe considers that Zac's family continued to support his abusive behaviour and were an important factor in maintaining it. For the period that Zoe and Zac were living away from his family, which was also the time when he attended the MFNV programme, Zac's abusive behaviour reduced. However, when they moved back and he was in close contact with his family again, his behaviour degenerated. At the time, Zac was a sickness beneficiary and his family provided additional financial support which Zoe considers kept him tied into his family system with all its other implications for Zac, and her. Because of her efforts to get Zac to change his behaviour Zoe was perceived as the 'enemy' by the family.

However, Zoe acknowledges that she too was labouring under her own developmental influences. Zoe considers that both the lack of acceptance she experienced in her own family coupled with her father's physical violence towards her contributed to her low expectations for herself and her poor self esteem. This led to her relationship with Zac feeling familiar and his treatment of her natural. Zoe believes this also meant that initially she too participated in maintaining Zac's violent behaviour by ignoring it.

Zoe also noted another factor which she thought served to maintain Zac's violence. Not only did his family condone Zac's behaviour but Zoe felt that there was a general social acceptance of this kind of violent behaviour. Zoe only told those people who she felt sure would be

*"[his family] just kept reinforcing everything that I was trying to change" (186-187)*

*"when he was around his family [ ] it would be like he'd taken 2 steps back take one forward and 2 steps back and we'd go back [ ] to the same stuff again" (231-234)*

*"they were very powerful because he was dependent on them to a certain degree financially at the time (.) and they had a very powerful effect on him emotionally economically (.) socially (.) in every way" (238-240)*

*"I was (.) challenging (.) the whole their whole family system [which] was geared around protecting him" (189-193)*

*"I had low self esteem and I didn't expect any more than that (1) PLUS I had a father who used to lash out who hit me physically and that was just part of my normality too so (.) so (.) it felt very familiar and (1) and and in that sense we kind of suited each other [laughs]" (113-116)*

*"me covering up by sort of pretending it wasn't happening" (409-410)*

*"there was also (.) a sort of oh well you can't do anything about it you know they're like that (1) and there's kind of resignation (1) not not sanctioning it but a kind of (.) exasperation and resignation well you know it's happening all around us" (266-269)*

supportive of her situation. However, while being extremely supportive of her, these people conveyed a general compliance and a lack of resistance towards Zac's behaviour. Nonetheless, the support and understanding she received were extremely important to her as it helped validate her own experience in a situation where Zac constantly blamed her for what he was doing.

Zoe noticed Zac's abusive behaviour occurred in a cycle with a build up in tension culminating in some sort of 'explosion'.

Zoe attended counselling for herself and went to a joint session with Zac and the counsellor attached to the MFNV programme. She recalls this being crucial to her realising the extent to which she was participating in Zac's violent behaviour by hiding it.

This period in her life was very formative for Zoe. The experiences and events in her relationship with and separation from Zac led her to make a decision which was a turning point in her life. She decided not to continue living with violence.

*"it was socially sanctioned (.) in many ways" (138-139)*

*"I got a lot of (.) support (.) and also just got my (.) my (.) experience of what was (.) happening validated which was really important for me" (271-273)*

*"it would be very good for a (.) a couple of days (1) and then there'd be the build up again" (326-327)*

*"a joint session with his counsellor that I went to [ ] quite woke me up to the fact how much I had actually concealed it and I sort of lived 2 separate lives" (245-248)*

*"it was a pretty (1) pivotal time in my life and I guess I made some (.) decisions about my personal values and about my lifestyle and about myself as a result of my experience (1) which has subsequently affected my life and the choices that I have made" (15-18)*

## MFNV

Zoe moved to a job in another town and Zac's accompanying her was conditional on his attending a MFNV programme there. Zac completed the course and also attended an ongoing support group that met occasionally for the rest of the year. When they returned to Zac's hometown Zoe wanted him to attend another MFNV programme but he refused. Zoe decided to separate not long after their return.

Zoe was hopeful that Zac's attendance at the MFNV programme would result in the changes she was wanting as she had decided that without these changes she needed to leave the relationship. She wanted Zac to stop his violent behaviours and begin to take responsibility for himself. She wanted him to stop taking his own difficulties or unhappiness out on her, to have some goals for his own life, to become less dependent on her, to have some friends of his own and for there to be less tension between them.

When Zac started attending the group he became less abusive and less dependent on Zoe as he developed some friends of his own. This was a tremendous relief for Zoe because she had found his dependence on her exhausting and unsustainable. Zac enjoyed going and was keen to learn from the programme. Initially he practised the time out procedure and other tools of the programme.

However, Zac actually misused the time out tool by not returning to address the issue that he was taking time out from. As a result Zoe would become infuriated because Zac was now avoiding discussing things with her and remaining remote by using the time out procedure. Zac was able to shift responsibility onto Zoe for the ensuing argument by claiming he was using time out. It took her some time to realise that this is what was happening.

*"if [MFNV] didn't work then (.) that was it"* (173)

*"I just hoped that (.) there'd be a real a transformation not not unrealistic"* (161)

*"that he would no longer dump on me when things were going wrong for him"* (387)

*"also just get some male figures in his life and hopefully some positive role models"* (178-179)

*"a sense of freedom that I wasn't his only confidante and I (.) I didn't have to be his counsellor as well as his partner and a friend and that was a HUGE relief"* (416-418)

*"he (1) was waking up [ ] we went through this good phase [ ] it was kind of like um (3) ah (1) salvation for him and he was really energetic about it "* (201-204)

*"he would just use time out (.) and so STILL he was disconnecting (.) he just had a a a tool that was SANCTIONED (.) to disconnect"* (360-362)

*"he started to misuse misuse the tools that he learned and he just used those as [ ] another weapon for intimidation (.) and another escape from actually dealing with the conflict [ ] playing the same games although he'd armed himself a lot better and he thought that [ ] he was fine"* (525-530)

Zac compared himself favourably with other members of the group who had been directed by the Court. Although Zoe had not charged Zac with assault Zoe considers that was because she was not yet ready to do that, not because he did not assault her. Zac did not identify that he too had been 'directed' to attend by Zoe and that he too could have been charged with assault given what he was doing.

When Zac came under the influence of his family again his behaviour slipped back.

Zoe thought that if the women partners were given information about what the men were learning then they would be able to respond to misuse of the tools more readily. For example if she had understood about time out, she could have managed that situation more effectively. Zoe thinks a support group for the women would be beneficial and that this should run alongside the men's group so information can be fed across groups. Conflict resolution skills could be taught either in the support group or in joint counselling. Role playing would enable each partner to experience constructive ways of resolving their conflicts.

Although Zac's changes were not maintained Zoe considers it was quite an achievement for Zac to even attend the programme. She would recommend it to others warning against having too great expectations of it considering the changes that are required take time.

*"the fact that they'd been like like referred by the Court well obviously they were much worse than he was" (452-453)*

*"he did have some trouble with some of the members of the group [ ] because he didn't want to see that that perhaps he was like that" (436-439)*

*"as soon as he was back here it was very difficult for him and he wasn't able to stand on his own 2 feet" (543-545)*

*"I would also encourage not just the male doing something but the female doing getting some support [ ] just on a basic support level or are ready to do some work for themselves about (.) why they're staying in those relationships and I think that those (2) those 2 processes should be integral (.) they should be happening simultaneously" (310-317)*

*"I would also caution [ ] to not not expect this total transformation (.) that it takes time" (475-476)*

*"I still think it's better than nothing (.) and and I think it's a really good first step and I would certainly encourage (.) going to the programme" (308-309)*



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Women's Views of the MFNV Programmes

Interestingly, although the women knew the focus of this study was to hear their experiences of the MFNV programmes and they were being interviewed to talk about these, on the whole the women did not talk a lot about the course. When they did they were quite dismissive. There was a sense in which the MFNV programme was irrelevant to their lives. Given that in most cases the physical violence lessened, albeit temporarily, it would appear surprising that this was not a striking benefit of the men's attendance. However, if you compare what eventuated for these women with what they hoped would happen their lack of satisfaction becomes understandable.

With the women's stories making their private experiences public, their experiences in common become evident. This chapter describes the major themes that emerged from the women's stories regarding the MFNV programme. It must be remembered that none of the women had any involvement in the programmes or any independent contact with the facilitators. (Two of the women, Sue and Lyn, had one joint session with a facilitator and their partner.) Their experience and knowledge of the programme was gained entirely from the men themselves, that is from what the men said and how the men behaved.

### Demographics

The eleven men went to a total of fourteen programmes, as three of them went a second time. However, only one man actually completed two programmes. The programmes were 8 to 10 sessions long and attended between 1989 and 1996 in five different locations. All programmes were affiliated to the National Men For Non Violence Network organisation ensuring some consistency of theoretical orientation, content and process. Of the fourteen courses attended, eight were completed and six were only attended for ½ of the programme, that is four or five of the 8 to 10 sessions (see Table 1).

Four of the men attended (five) programmes because they were directed by the Court as Diversion when appearing on a charge of assaulting their partner. The other (nine) programmes were attended by men who self referred. However, being self referred is not synonymous with going voluntarily. In many instances the men are being 'directed' to go by a different authority - their partner. I have termed their attendance as 'conditional'. These include a variety of reasons. The most common being that the woman's return to the relationship from a

**Table 1: Number of programmes completed and not completed by year**

Year Attended	Completed	Not Completed	Total
1989	1		1
1990	2	1	3
1992	3		3
1993	1	4	5
1994		1	1
1996	1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>

period of separation or her staying in the relationship is conditional on the man's attendance at a programme. Other reasons were to 'look good' in Court when appearing on an assault charge and shock at the outcome of an assault of his partner that left her unconscious in Intensive Care for 3 or 4 days. Even those (three) whose attendance is termed 'voluntary' were all under considerable pressure from their partners to attend. See Table 2.

**Table 2: Men's programme completion in relation to referral source**

Status at Termination	Referral Source			Total
	Court	Conditional*	Voluntary	
<b>Completed</b>	2	3	3	8
<b>Not completed</b>	3	3		6
<b>Total</b>	5	6	3	14

\* 'Conditional' refers to the man's attendance at a programme being a result of conditions imposed on him to attend by others or himself

It is interesting to note that in this group, completion was highest amongst those who felt they had some element of choice to attend and was similarly low for those directed to go whether by the Court or by some other source. The reason for non completion was unclear but

seemed to be solely the man's decision. In no case was non completion due to imprisonment or any further order of the Court. None of the (three) Court directed men who failed to complete the programme incurred any penalty for non completion.

### **Women's Hope and Hopes**

*"the good thing about it is that it gives (.) them both hope again (.) you know another chance another another try (3) something to hope for it gives the women something to hope for that it's going to end" (Val, 231-234)*

The hope that their partners' attendance at a MFNV programme gave the women was strong and sustaining. The women saw his attendance as an acknowledgement that his violent behaviour was viewed as unacceptable. For the men who were directed by the Court, this acknowledgement was imposed publicly and not necessarily held by the men themselves. For the men who went for other reasons, their partners took it as a tacit indication that the men must realise that their behaviour was unacceptable, though again this was not necessarily the case. Every woman also saw this acknowledgement by the man as an essential step in the process of change for him. And they saw the MFNV programme as a place where the view, their view, that violence was unacceptable would be upheld. The women's hope had the effect of giving the men another chance.

The women's hopes and expectations were remarkably similar and modest. They all wanted the physical and psychological violence to stop. In their words, they wanted the beating, hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, whacking, screaming, yelling, threatening, swearing, name calling and neglect to stop. They did not just hope some things would stop, however. They also hoped some things would start.

They all wanted the men to learn how to talk, to participate in their domestic life and to take some responsibility for themselves and the family. Specifically, the women wanted their partners to learn how to communicate in order for the men to be able to say what they wanted and how they felt without being angry and becoming abusive. They also wished the men would become more involved in the home and with the children so that their lives together felt like more of a partnership. For example, Kris would have liked Dan to be able to independently plan and organise transport to get one of the children to sport without relying on her. The men learning to take responsibility for themselves and their feelings, particularly their anger, was another wish expressed by the women. For example, for Lyn this would have meant that if Les became angry

with someone he would try and sort it out with that person or some other way rather than coming home and taking it out on Lyn.

Only one of the women (Kris) felt cynical about the likelihood of anything positive coming from the course. Her cynicism derived from her perception of her partner Dan's motives for attending and his continuing substance abuse. Dan was driven to go to the course by fear - fear of Kris leaving him and of losing his family - not by a desire to be non violent. Nonetheless, Kris still hoped that Dan would learn skills which would help him communicate, be assertive and cope better.

Conversely, when it became obvious to the women that their hopes had not been fulfilled there was a resulting loss of hope. They realised that the only way to stop the abuse was to remove themselves from its source. So the loss of hope was instrumental in their decision to quit the relationship.

*"after he went on it and I saw that it wasn't going to change so I just left (2) mm yeah [ ] that was the best thing that I just gave up" (Liz, 318-320)*

### **Physical Violence**

All the (ten) women whose partners were physically violent to them experienced at least a reduction in the intensity and frequency of the physical violence directed towards them at the time the men went to the MFNV programme. However, the stopping or the reduction was often only temporary. See Table 3.

**Table 3: Physical violence: number of women for whom it stopped or reduced, permanently or temporarily**

Length of Time	Physical Violence	
	Stopped	Reduced
Permanent	1	3
Temporary	1	5

For one woman (Kris) the physical violence stopped permanently. Because of the intermittent nature of her partner's violence it took Kris about a year to realise that it had stopped and that she was safe from being assaulted. Kris accounted for his stopping being physically violent by his attendance at the MFNV programme. For the other woman (Jenny) for whom the physical violence stopped, this stop was only temporary. He started being physically violent to Jenny again after about 3 years and expressed fears that he could kill her if they continued to live together. He is now violent to his current partner. Jenny accounted for his stopping hitting her for this period by his attendance at ½ of a MFNV programme and by the fact that he had got such a shock after his last assault at the damage he had done to her which resulted in Jenny being unconscious for several days in Intensive Care.

For the three women (Liz, Lyn, Sue) who experienced a permanent reduction in their partner's physical violence, only one of them (Liz) attributes this to the MFNV programme. Both Sue and Lyn are sure the change occurred because of their refusal to put up with being hit any more and their partner's realisation that they could no longer get away with it as Sue and Lyn would now call the Police and charge them with assault. Indeed these men's attendance at the MFNV programmes was a result of them being charged with assaulting Sue and Lyn. In Sue's case a reduction in physical violence meant no actual physical damage done to her body. So while Bill's physical violence reduced, he would still do things like hold Sue against a wall with a broken bottle at her throat.

The partners of five of the women (Eve, Jan, Lil, Val, Zoe) reduced their physical violence temporarily for periods of a couple of months (Eve, Lil, Val) to one year (Jan). Jan believes the MFNV course was not a factor in reducing Dave's violence. When Dave appeared in Court the Judge told him that if he reappeared in Court for assaulting Jan again within a year he would go to prison and if he did not the charge would be dropped. Jan believes it was this that reduced Dave's violence as he started hitting her again as soon as the year was up. Eve, Lil, Val and Zoe all attribute their partners' temporary reduction to the MFNV course. Despite Eve and Val noticing the physical violence towards them was less frequent and less intense, they were still experiencing extreme physical abuse. For example, Eve was being held down while Adam described how he was going to kill her and Val was being kicked, pushed and punched in the body but no longer in the head.

Of the four women (Kris, Liz, Lyn, Sue) who experienced a permanent stopping or reduction of physical violence, their partners completed 5 of the 6 programmes that they attended (Sue's partner completed 2 programmes). Of the six women (Jenny, Eve, Jan, Lil, Val, Zoe) who experienced a temporary stopping or reduction of physical violence, their partners completed 2 of the 7 programmes they attended (Eve's partner completed one of the 2 programmes he attended). See Table 4.

**Table 4: Number of MFNV programmes completed for permanent and temporary reduction / stopping of physical violence**

Number of:	Reduction / Stopping of Physical Violence		Total
	Permanent	Temporary	
<b>Women</b>	4	6	10
<b>Courses attended</b>	6	7	13
<b>Courses completed</b>	5	2	7

For this group of ten women, those who experienced a permanent reduction (three) or stopping (one) of physical violence is associated with a greater number of courses completed by their partners than for those who experienced only a temporary reduction (five) or stopping (one) of physical violence.

Although several women reported that their partners already only ever hit them where it would not be visible, one woman (Val) noted that after her partner (Ed) was convicted of assault and attended the MFNV programme he stopped hitting her where it could be seen. It seems the lesson for Ed was not to get caught.

All these women were pleased by this change in their partners' physical violence. However, because of other changes that occurred simultaneously the benefit of this change was greatly diminished.

*"I can't remember any good things coming out of it really apart from that I just wasn't HIT anymore" (Kris, 186-188)*

### **Psychological Violence**

*"I was glad not to be getting hit (.) or anything like that but like I say it was just the emotional and verbal abuse that (.) still happened and that got increasingly worse (.) and then he (1) sexually abused me so" (Liz, 160-163)*

All the women endured a continuation of the psychological violence and most experienced a marked increase in intensity and range of tactics used. This was the most



distressing aspect for the women of their partner attending the MFNV programme. The benefits associated with any reduction in physical violence were obliterated by this increase. The psychological violence involved intimidation, threatening, damage to property, blaming, manipulation and yelling. Many of the women felt that at the programme the men had actually learned new ways of manipulating, controlling and intimidating them.

The women also felt the MFNV programme focused too exclusively on physical violence and that psychological violence was either ignored or treated as less serious. This had the effect on the men of sanctioning the use of psychological violence. It also implicitly provided the men with a misleadingly limited measurement category (i.e. 'physically violent' / 'not physically violent') which enabled them to compare themselves, always favourably, with other group members (see below). The effect for the women was to leave them still feeling fearful and in many cases angry - angry that he now had another way of controlling her which he appeared to believe, or at least tried to persuade her to believe, was permissible. For the one woman (Tania) whose partner was not physically violent this reaction was particularly notable, though for most of the others it was similarly detrimental. Tania found the relationship deteriorated further because of her partner's enhanced self image acquired in the group because he was not physically abusive.

The women's concerns about the increase in psychological violence emerged in two specific areas. It is notable that the women themselves introduced these particular concerns independently. They were not asked about them.

### **Men comparing themselves favourably with others in group**

*"[he] was CONSTANTLY throwing up at me this THING about that he was a pretty good guy you know and (.) not as bad as this one or that one and I should be really thankful for (.) um being able to live with him [ ] which I FOUND just really SHOCKING after what I'd been through and what I was still going through" (Kris, 420-425)*

The men compared themselves with the other group members in self enhancing ways and then used this to try and silence their partners' complaints about their behaviour. This was the most common explicit complaint about the effect of the men's attendance at a group. Eight of the eleven women referred to this at some length. Perhaps if the others (Jenny, Liz, Val) had been asked it might have emerged there too.

Some of the women (e.g. Kris, Tania) considered that comparing themselves against the others in the group actually served to strengthen their partners' belief that there was nothing wrong with them or their behaviour. Being so reassured about themselves, the men then



proceeded to try and convince the women of this. This involved constantly telling them so and would be used as a defence against any criticism by the women.

It appeared the men did believe that they were "better" than the others. As mentioned above they were able to achieve this distinction by using the 'physically violent' / 'not physically violent' classification. However, this was also achieved by using the referral source as another way of classifying themselves. Excluding those three women who did not mention this feature, when the man's attendance was not Court directed (i.e. 'conditional' or 'voluntary') he used this as an indication that he was not as bad as the Court directed members because they had been up for assault. As the women pointed out, the fact that the men had not been charged with assault was usually because the women were not ready to take such a step, not because the men were not assaulting them.

Nonetheless, the Court directed men used other points of difference between themselves and the others which functioned as a reason why the course was not suitable for them and why they should not be there. For some, they distinguished themselves from the others by considering that the others were more stupid than them. This was particularly manifest in the men with professional jobs. For example, Sue's partner, Bill, who has a degree in Psychology and holds a professional position thought the other group members were '*thick heads*' and hence different from him which led him to believe that what went on in the group did not apply to him. One man (Dave), Jan's partner, who is Maori said he did not like being with the group as Maori do not like talking in groups with people they do not know.

In addition, two of the men who attended a second programme were able to differentiate themselves from the others by their previous attendance and consequent superior understanding. In Les, Lyn's partner's, case he actually told the group members on the first night of his second programme that if they were going to "*muck around*" then they should leave now, otherwise it would be a waste of time for them. Les himself failed to complete this programme.

### **Misuse of time out**

*"he would [ ] play up on this time out thing um (1) and just walk away from a conversation without even sort of saying hey look I'm going to take time out he would JUST WALK AWAY (.) um in the middle of a sentence [ ] if he didn't want to talk about anything um yeah (.) he would just WALK [ ] and THEN HE'D SAY oh well I WAS JUST TAKING TIME OUT"* (Kris, 426-431)

The misapplication of the strategies that were taught to the men on the programme was another source of dissatisfaction for the women. Time out was the tool most commonly referred to as being misused. The men would abandon a discussion with their partner on the grounds that they were taking time out as they had been taught to do. However, the men failed to later return to resolve the matter under discussion. Moreover, they also claimed that their avoidance was what they were supposed to do and that they did it with the authorisation of the MFNV programme facilitators. This was disheartening and infuriating for the women. And because the women only knew of this time out procedure by way of their partners, they often were completely confused by what was going on and how to respond to it.

One woman (Eve) also described her partner's (Adam) misuse of another thing he learned at the group. Adam was told that you had to '*own your own problems*'. However, instead of acknowledging and '*owning*' his own alcohol abuse, for example, he would endeavour to get Eve to '*own*' it as something that she was responsible for. Again, this was initially confusing for Eve and it took her some time to see that he was using this to manipulate her and to avoid accepting responsibility for his own problems.

### **Women's Suggestions**

Most of the women made suggestions about what they thought would improve the effectiveness of the programmes and about what would have been helpful for them. These have been grouped together and appear below.

#### **Longer course**

All of the 14 programmes attended by these men were 8 to 10 sessions long. All the women who suggested changes considered the courses should be longer. Their rationale for this being that the types of changes and understandings that were required in the men would take time. Some of the women believed that the men would need to attend a group for at least a year (e.g. Jan) to overcome the level of anger that they harboured. Others (e.g. Eve, Kris) perceived that a major change in lifestyle was necessary for the men to become non violent. This would mean addressing a range of issues, for example substance abuse, (step) parenting and learning to cope independently. They thought that the extent of these changes would necessitate some programmed input for several years.

### **Focus on psychological violence**

Because of the women's perception that physical violence was the main target of the programme, many of the women suggested that the programme focus on the whole range of violent behaviours, particularly psychological violence. They thought it was important that the men understood how this was as damaging as physical violence, if not more so.

### **Understanding of men's past on present**

Virtually all the women thought the men needed to gain an understanding of how the environment they had grown up in had shaped their current behaviour and in many cases was contributing towards maintaining it. This was seen by the women as an essential step in the men's gradual progression towards becoming non violent. This would involve addressing the built up anger, hurt and resentment these men had amassed and then teaching the men different ways of coping. The women did not think this was addressed in the programme and some were uncertain that it could be.

### **One to one counselling for men**

Many of the women (e.g. Eve, Jan, Lyn, Lil, Val, Zoe) suggested that the men have individual counselling. Because most of the women believed that the men would only become non violent if they came to understand their upbringing and family background, individual counselling was seen as the arena where this understanding could best be achieved. Here the men could deal with specific situations and personal material which there was neither the time for nor the inclination to disclose in the group. Secondly, and similarly, the women knew that the men found it difficult to talk about themselves anyway. Individual counselling would provide an opportunity where it would be easier and more likely that they would talk.

There were differing views on whether the men should attend the programme or the individual counselling first. Some (e.g. Lyn, Jan) thought individual counselling would prepare the men for the group situation by getting them accustomed to talking about themselves and how they feel. Others (e.g. Zoe) thought the group would loosen the men up and help them identify issues that they could then talk more about in counselling.

### **Ongoing support for men**

Ongoing support was considered essential for the men. Many of the women (e.g. Eve, Jan, Jenny, Kris, Lil, Lyn, Val, Zoe) reported a reduction in tension and an improvement in the general mood of the men while they were attending the programme. This was not maintained after the men stopped. Continued contact with the facilitators, the other group members and/or a counsellor were offered as possible forms of ongoing support.

### **Different groups for Court directed & non Court directed**

Because of the adverse impact on the women of the phenomenon of the men comparing themselves favourably with others in the group and because much of this centred on the 'Court directed' v. 'Non Court directed' categorisation, a few women suggested that there be separate groups for these men. The women (e.g. Kris, Lyn, Sue) whose partners attended the MFNV programme in small towns especially recognised this. For example, Sue thought the likelihood in a small town of professional men, say a doctor or a policeman, attending the programme with '*gang people*' was very low. Having separate groups was considered a possible solution.

### **Facilitators as models of non violence**

Reference to the calibre of the facilitators was made by only two of the women (Eve, Kris) as a result of their experience. Kris and her partner Dan, who attended a group in a small town (population approx. 2500), became aware that the facilitator of the programme himself engaged in abusive behaviour. Likewise Eve considered that the facilitators of Adam's group did not fully understand what it meant to be non violent as many of them had only recently been on a programme themselves. To guard against having facilitators who were not good examples of what the programme aimed to achieve, these women suggested facilitators should be trained in and recognise the full extent of abusive behaviour, have a psychological learning background, be carefully screened and have been non violent themselves for at least 5 years.

### **Relationship, communication and conflict resolution training**

Many of the women wanted the men to be taught about how to behave in a relationship and to understand that a relationship was a partnership. The women also suggested the men be taught that the women's expectations of participation were realistic and fair and that they were not being demanding. Training the men in how to resolve conflict and communicate with their partners was considered an important step towards this.

### **Support for women**

All the women suggested support for them would have been helpful. This could be achieved by either a support group, individual counselling or both.

### **Information for women about the course**

Many women thought information about the programme content would have enabled them to assist their partners. In particular those women who reported the misuse of the tools that the men were taught at the programme (e.g. time out) suggested that if the women had this information they would better understand how the men were misusing them and respond more appropriately.

### **Women's involvement**

Most of the women would have liked some involvement in the programme. Suggestions ranged from attending the final session with their partner to having a follow up group after the men completed the MFNV programme for the men and their partners in order to develop relationship skills.

### **Accountability**

Several women considered that the women should have contact with the facilitators in order that the facilitators know what was really happening in the relationship. This was one way of ensuring the men were accountable for their behaviour. For example, Tania thought the men's reports in the group about their own behaviour would be highly unreliable and so the women's reports would provide a more accurate picture.

### **Taught in schools**

Two women (Kris and Zoe) would like to see the MFNV programmes being taught in schools so that non violent behaviour can be encouraged earlier.

## **Conclusion**

The dismissive and irrelevant way in which the women talked about the MFNV programme is understandable when the programme is viewed as yet another source of disappointment for them in a series of disappointments. Nevertheless, in retrospect many of the women saw the programme as a first step or a window for the men of an opportunity they might choose to revisit later when they were ready. The majority of the women would recommend a MFNV programme to others, while cautioning the women against expecting too much.

While this and the previous Chapters (Three and Four) have reported *what* the women have said, the following Chapters (Five, Six and Seven) present an analysis of *how* the women have constructed their accounts.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discourse Analysis: the women

When the women talk about their experiences they are engaging in a complex process. They are not only presenting a public account for me, the interviewer, and a wider audience who they hope will hear their voices, but at the same time they are also involved in a continuous process of creating a personal construction of their own experience for themselves. For the women it was often the first time they had talked extensively about these past events and it was often a long while since they had revisited these experiences. The women were talking about a period in their lives that they were keen to put behind them.

*"I deliberately blotted a lot of it out just to get by (3) I haven't really wanted to drag it up again [ ] I've got no need to" (Kris, 637-640)*

Their public accounts are not polished performances of well rehearsed material. The women are participating in producing a coherent account that will be both publicly and privately acceptable. The women are struggling to make their position comprehensible and meaningful, to us and to themselves, from a position which already differs from the one they occupied within the events they are revisiting. In constructing their accounts, the women draw on the discursive resources available.

The following analysis documents the resources that I have observed these women use to help them make sense of their experiences. Firstly in relation to the women's construction of their own selves I outline an 'oppression' discourse, a 'motherhood' discourse, a 'strength' discourse, a 'psychology' discourse and an 'in love' discourse. Then, in Chapter Six in relation to the women's construction of the men and their partners' construction of themselves as reported by the women, I outline a 'naturally aggressive man' discourse, a 'dependent child' discourse, and a 'developmental' discourse. A few of the women also use the 'developmental' discourse to construct themselves, though to a much lesser extent. The discourses are analysed in relation to the subject positions or self constructions that they make available to the person constituted within them, the functions that the discourses perform for the women and their effects. I then refer to the construction by a few of the women of a 'good father'. Finally, in Chapter Seven, there is an examination of the meaning and function of the many forms of 'hedges' (for example, "you know", "um", "sort of") used extensively throughout the women's talk.



## **The 'oppression' discourse**

The women use an 'oppression' discourse when talking about themselves in their relationship with their violent partner. That is, this self is a 'previous' or 'former' self. For the self who is positioned in this discourse there is submission and efforts to please, fear, constriction, self denial, endless service, humiliation, exhaustion, self blame, no confidence or self esteem and no power - just being controlled. The outsider views the person so positioned with pity, sympathy and contempt. Because of the difficulty in understanding why the oppressed person remains in that position it may lead to irritation, intolerance, lack of sympathy and blame. This effect of being positioned within a discourse of oppression is realised in the extensive literature on victim blaming (see Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Within this tradition, women who live with men who are violent towards them have been variously termed 'violence prone' or 'addicted to violence' (e.g. Pizzey & Shapiro, 1982; Norwood, 1985) and as requiring 'treatment' for their individual psychopathology.

The person positioned in the 'oppression' discourse is in a considerable dilemma. The very thing which she fails to resist (the violence) is by its nature overpowering and unable to be resisted alone. So the woman is damned both ways. If she resists she is placing herself, possibly her life, in serious danger. If she does not resist she earns the contempt of outsiders and possibly of her abuser and herself.

All the women use this 'oppression' discourse frequently for a variety of purposes. Although on most occasions the women's use of this resource produces a variety of functional effects within the same piece of talk, I shall examine separately the ways in which the women's use of it performs particular functions: to describe, to explain and to justify their and their partners' states, selves, behaviour, thoughts and events.

## **Self construction / Subject position**

This discourse enables the women to construct themselves as a person who did and could exist in that situation and endure those circumstances. In this self construction a number of devices drawn on by the women are metaphoric.

One metaphor used by several of the women which captures much of what it is to be in this position is the 'doormat', which evokes a range of associations and feelings. 'Doormats' have things done to them. They are passive. The image most likely conjured up by the word 'doormat' is a submissive, dowdy, defeated woman of lowly standing. Doormats are largely female. Jenny and Jan use the doormat metaphor to constitute themselves as they were in their relationship.



*"I was always like at his beck and call and doing everything that he wanted me to do and (1) I was like practically um er a doormat sort of"* (Jenny, p9, 30-33)

*"he yeah (.) sort of like lost his (.) doormat [laughs]"* (Jenny, p9, 51-52)

*"I'd do things to make him happy (1.5) like a doormat really"* (Jan, 141-142)

Others allude to the "trodden on" aspects of being oppressed and doormat-like. In many instances this was not merely figurative as kicking was a routine form of physical abuse for many of the women by their partners. (For example, *"and into it with his steel capped boots"* Kris, 104-105)

*"I felt very downtrodden [ ] I felt very stomped on"* (Kris, 30-32)

*"I mean I thought I was just the dirt on the ground"* (Liz, 137-138)

Liz here constructs herself metaphorically in terms of *"dirt on the ground"*, worthy only of being trodden on. Sue uses the metaphor of imprisonment, the epitome of oppression, to (re)present her state as she had been within her relationship.

*"I'd spent years of being like a prisoner"* (Sue, p4, 20)

All of the women talk of themselves extensively as being oppressed. This discourse provides a way for the women to speak of their oppression and its effects on them. Each of them elaborates on the characteristics of this position, such as lack of confidence, self esteem, assertiveness and power, submission, being controlled, fear, exhaustion and attempts to placate. Though there are examples too numerous to include, some are outlined below.

Kris who felt downtrodden and stomped on elaborates on her powerlessness through the 'oppression' discourse. She also explains her constricted state through the control her partner exercised over her life.

*"years of you know nappies (1) and no money (2) and no no power in the relationship"* (Kris, 26-28)

*"I wasn't ALLOWED to do what I wanted to do [ ] I um felt like I didn't have my own life"* (Kris, 30-33)

Lil articulates the differing positions of oppressor and oppressed within this discourse by presenting the different possibilities for action available for herself and her partner.

*"he'd do what he wanted to do and I WASN'T ALLOWED" (Lil, 37)*

Tania voices the fear and uncertainty experienced by someone who is positioned within this discourse.

*"I was always nervous of (.) what I said or did" (Tania, p3, 15-16)*

Some of the women (for example, Eve, Sue) present themselves as a 'victim' or 'codependent' - terms employed within psychology to represent the phenomenon of the person positioned within an oppressive relationship (see the 'psychology' discourse, p124).

In the example below, Eve also uses the metaphorical construction of being "*trodden*" on. She constitutes her own self indirectly by referring to a wider arena of oppression wherein all women are so constituted. She not only draws on the 'oppression' discourse to do this but she refers to the discourse itself while noting its cultural basis.

*"but then again in this society (.) women are lower and they're supposed to be trodden all over" (Eve, 426-427)*

Sue, too, alludes to the extent of her helplessness when so constituted.

*"I felt I couldn't call the Police because I had incidences where when I called the Police (.) you know he was always gone and my credibility was just zero you know they really treated me like a joke" (Sue, p8, 4-7)*

Her powerlessness occurs within her relationship and at the broader social level. Sue was held in place in this position not only by her partner's violence but also by the police's failure to respond, leaving her vulnerable, undermined and feeling ridiculed.

The 'oppression' discourse is also employed by some women to construct their ex-partners' new younger partners whom they know are now also being abused.

*"here he is with a girl that would idolise him (.) that would stick up for him no matter what you know cos you don't know you're naïve (1) you just have no life experience whatsoever at 16" (Val, 194-196)*

*"he's just like right replaced me (.) with a person that does whatever he wants"*  
(Jenny, p10, 4-6)

Val constructs the new partner's submission in terms of her youth. Initially she talks about this particular "girl" and then shifts to the inclusive second person (e.g. "you", "you're naïve"). This device directs attention away from Val herself and strengthens her claim that no one of that age could resist by making it a generalisation thus deflecting responsibility away from the girl. Val has constructed this new partner as positioned in the 'oppression' discourse by virtue of her age. Jenny, too, positions the new partner within the 'oppression' discourse by explaining the partner as a replacement, almost a replica of her own former self as she has constructed this self in her talk. Both Jenny and now this new partner in their relationship with Sam are positioned as someone who *"does whatever he wants"*.

### Function

#### **Explanation**

These women reflect back on their situation and explain their compliance using the 'oppression' discourse. Using it makes it more intelligible to the outsider and themselves why they continued on. Jan's statement above that she was *"like a doormat"* is quoted below within its surrounding context.

*"sometimes I'd do something wrong I spose (.) always trying to please him I spose I was trying to please him too hard (.) cos I didn't want (.) the violence I didn't want the (.) the abuse so I'd do things to make him happy (1.5) like a doormat really"* (Jan, 139-142)

This is an example of Jan constructing and explaining herself in her talk within this discourse. She begins by assuming responsibility for causing her partner's violence, though she qualifies this with *"I spose"*. She elaborates on this by presenting her placating behaviour as being excessive, again with some qualification, *"I spose"*, but then proceeds to explain the reason for this - she was trying to avoid the violence. She illustrates the dilemma for the person positioned in this discourse - the very behaviour (placating) which she engaged in to try and avoid the violence increased her oppression. Even her efforts to improve her situation made things worse for her. Here Jan is explaining to herself and to others how it was that she behaved like a doormat.

Similarly, Liz's statement above, in which she constructs herself metaphorically as being like *"dirt"*, is followed by an explanation for being this way.

*"I thought I was just the dirt on the ground (.) the way he used to talk to me I had no self esteem at all" (Liz, 137-139)*

Given how her partner used to talk to her, it is understandable that she felt like "dirt" as her loss of self esteem depends on an external cause, her partner. Likewise, Tania's (re)presentation above (p107) of herself as "always nervous" is made comprehensible by what follows.

*"I was always nervous of (.) what I said or did in case I was going to you know get it in the neck from Jack" (Tania, p3, 15-17)*

Her fear is understandable and silence would be reasonable given the possible penalty for speaking out.

The women are able through the 'oppression' discourse to account for their apparent lack of resistance to their oppressor in a way that makes it comprehensible to the outsider. For example, when she was pregnant with their second child, Lyn was badly beaten by Les who broke two of her ribs. When asked if she contacted the Police at that time, Lyn responds:

*"Not through all of that no I didn't I think because I was (.) he'd sort of put me in a place where (3) I didn't have any confidence (.) I wasn't very assertive" (Lyn, 62-63)*

She draws on the 'oppression' discourse to constitute herself as a woman lacking confidence and assertiveness. She also uses it to defend herself against the possible implication that there was something wrong with her for not doing so, implicating Les as the agent of her predicament.

Some women explain their acceptance of the violence through this discourse.

*"I was (.) beaten up since I was a kid so it was like (1) I did the violence never bothered me" (Val, 69-70)*

*"I had low self esteem and I didn't expect any more than that (1) PLUS I had a father [ ] who hit me physically and that was just part of my normality too so (.) so (.) it felt very familiar" (Zoe, 113-115)*

Val and Zoe are able to call on this discourse to construct themselves as people for whom it made sense to put up with their partners' violent treatment. As someone who had been physically abused in childhood when acceptance was the only available option to them for

coping with the abuse, Val and Zoe were already constituted as selves who were accepting of physical violence. For Val no further explanation is required, whereas Zoe explains how this worked to position her as accepting of violence because of its familiarity and the "low self esteem" so engendered. These are also examples of the overlap with the 'oppression' and 'developmental' discourses (see p140).

Interestingly, Jenny uses her transformation from doormat to someone with a mind of her own to explain the re-emergence of her partner's violence.

*"the anger's like resurfaced back up again cos he yeah (.) sort of like lost his (.) doormat"* (Jenny, p9, 51-52)

Having for years submitted to Dave's controls, Jenny starts to assert herself and stand up for herself. She is getting stronger (see p118). Jenny produces the disappearance of his doormat as the reason for Dave's renewed violence. Once she is no longer positioned within the discourse she behaves differently and this has different effects for her. Jenny now no longer submits which enrages Dave to the point where killing Jenny looks possible, leading inevitably to separation.

### **Justification**

The women also used the discourse to justify their failure to remove themselves from their position. Although it appeared that the women largely engaged in explaining their position in their talk, as quoted above, sometimes they appeared to be constructing a justification which oriented towards defending themselves against the accusation that it was their fault for staying.

Jan's statement below is clearly spoken by someone who no longer considers herself to be in the position of subject of the 'oppression' discourse. She is talking about herself as she was when positioned within it from her current position outside of it.

*"I always thought I couldn't cope (.) I thought that he was going to (.) you see he used to always like threaten me you know like if you leave me I'll come after you and (2) mm but I didn't realise that he was (.) ACTUALLY PROBABLY NOT"* (Jan, 160-163)

Jan here is orienting towards the possible, and frequently asked, question about 'why didn't you leave?' She is using the discourse to justify why she stayed in the relationship and to defend herself against possibly being blamed for her plight.

Similarly, having just presented how it came about that she charged Ed with assault on a previous occasion and that Ed had left her when she did, Val justifies why she did not charge Ed with assault again on another occasion 2 months later.

*"he came to stay here for the weekend and (1) he (.) broke my nose gave me (.) chipped my teeth and 2 black eyes (1.5) but I never put him up for assault that time (1.5) because I didn't want him to (2) to be that way AGAIN" (Val, 83-85)*

Val is aware that her response to this assault requires justification and provides it.

### **Summary**

The women use the 'oppression' discourse retrospectively as a descriptive and explanatory device in the process of constituting themselves as people who lived in that past situation. They draw on it to describe their feelings (of fear, powerlessness, worthlessness and selflessness) and their behaviours (of subjugation, placating and subservience). Alongside their descriptions of themselves the women usually provide an associated explanation and sometimes a justification for being so positioned.

If the context within which the interview took place had been different, the women may well have been more defensive and less explanatory in their use of the 'oppression' discourse. It is also possible that another reader may interpret the women's talk as justificatory. To me it appeared they were explaining their position to themselves and me while alert to the possibility that others may accuse them of being the authors of their own fate.

This discourse provides a resource for the women to construct themselves within their relationship and the associated explanations for remaining in that position. If the women had used this discourse to construct themselves in the present, which they did not, a consequence of being so constituted would be to render them powerless and immobilised.

### **The 'motherhood' discourse**

Another resource the women employ to explain their own behaviour is a 'motherhood' discourse. Motherhood evokes feelings of warmth, caring and protection. While the mother is romantically revered and glorified, the 'motherhood' discourse places the child at its centre with an associated position of self denial for the mother. The mother is positioned as wholly

responsible for her child's needs and wellbeing, and often implicitly by extension for her partner's too. Mothering is the primary obligation of the mother, a task to which she is 'naturally' inclined because of her 'maternal instinct' (see Shield (1984) for a discussion of the concept of maternal instinct). A consequence of being so positioned for the mother is that any failure to fulfil the child's needs, any subsequent imperfections in the child or any attempt to place her own needs ahead of the child's are evidence of the mother's culpability. Motherhood then places the woman in an invidious position. She cannot succeed in the impossible task of creating the child free from imperfection, and yet when she fails she has no one to blame but herself. This leads to an inescapable state of self blame for the mother as well as incurring blame from others. As Croghan and Miell (1995) show, this can extend to mothers being blamed for their male partner's violence towards their children.

This discrepancy between the societal idealisation of motherhood and the woman's personal experience of being a mother (Rich, 1976) is not articulated in the 'motherhood' discourse wherein the mother simply inhabits a glorified sphere which bestows her with moral integrity. The associated but unacknowledged implications of self denial and self blame are also present. O'Brien (1981) referred to this romanticised motherhood as "*the moth-eaten cloth of venerated Motherhood*" (p75). Nevertheless, motherhood is also characterised by being proactive. The subject is essentially active.

The women particularly use the 'motherhood' discourse to justify a variety of their actions and to ward off the possibility of being blamed or criticised for being selfish. It makes possible the construction of someone motivated by selflessness. In contrast, they are able to draw, in a way that is empowering, on the moral purity implied by the discourse when required, while suffering from its unachievable ideals.

### **Self construction / Subject position**

The women draw on the 'motherhood' discourse to construct themselves as selfless, as someone whose motives and intentions are without self interest and for whom their children are their primary concern. In the following extract Sue highlights the construction of herself as selfless and self sacrificing, and at the same time proactive, which is contained in and made available by the 'motherhood' discourse.

*"most probably if it wasn't for children I most probably would choose to live in that situation and be able to sort of (1) put up with (.) his ways you know (.) but I just can't with kids"* (Sue, p14, 39-43)



In a similar vein, Val's positioning within the 'motherhood' discourse enables her to accept the violence for herself but not for her children because of her responsibility as a mother.

*"[I said to him] that if I put him up for assault (1) that would be it (.) you know um that would be the end of the relationship (1.5) and um (1) I was I WASN'T (1) ANTI THE VIOLENCE (.) I mean I was in front of the kids" (Val, 66-68)*

While Val has constructed herself as being a self who is almost not a self because she can be abused to no effect, her children are constructed as selves deserving of protection from the violence and that protection must come from their mother.

### **Function**

#### **Explanation**

Many of the women's actions are explained by drawing on the 'motherhood' discourse, as illustrated in the following extracts.

*"I just knew that I had to get the kids out I couldn't leave them in there listening to it" (Sue, p5, 30-31)*

*"I was more aware of it when the kids were little and he was yelling and screaming around the kids I think that's when I really started to notice and think well I don't want my kids (.) to be brought up with this" (Tania, p3, 18-22)*

*"I just felt that they [the children] weren't learning um good ways to cope (1) um they were that was (.) their example of LIFE and I didn't want them to end up repeating that behaviour in in their adult lives I wanted more for them than that (.) I just wanted to show them that there were other ways to live" (Kris, 216-219).*

Sue is able to explain why she walked out on her partner on one occasion when he was being verbally abusive by drawing on the responsibilities associated with motherhood. Both Tania and Kris express their awareness that their partners' violent behaviour was unacceptable not through reference to themselves but again by drawing on their role, their selves, as mothers. In all these cases, by drawing on the 'motherhood' discourse these women as mothers are clearly positioned as responsible for the children's care and protection, even, or perhaps especially,

from their own fathers. Their subsequent course of action, to separate, is explained in terms of this role of motherhood.

Some of the women also explain the effects of separation and the benefits of no longer living with the violence by drawing on the 'motherhood' discourse. In response to the question "what's it like not having that violence?", Jenny is extremely positive.

*"Oh it's really good (1) it's really it's really good and um and (.) I find that the children are really happy too (.) they are really happy [10 lines about positive effects for children] [they are] a lot more outgoing well my daughter is well she was um (.) really really shy she was (.) really shy she didn't have very much (.) confidence in herself either and now she's um (1) she's got a lot more friends and she's not scared and is it going to her friend's place to play at and (.) oh she's getting into sports whereas before she um (.) just wanted to stay at home with me (.) and that was that nothing else nothing at all (.) and she wouldn't ever go to (.) anybody's place to play (.) and yeah she would never play sports but now um (1) she wanted to play sports this year and (1) and she likes going to like her best friend's place to play and (.) things like that yeah"* (Jenny, p13, 32-56)

Jenny does not allude to any effects for herself beyond that "it's really good", but elaborates on the positive changes in the children, particularly her daughter. Although she does refer to herself indirectly (Jenny is the other person who did not "have very much confidence in herself either"), it is almost as if she is able, through the 'motherhood' discourse, to construct her daughter as more confident, outgoing and happier in a way that she is unable to convey directly about herself. Jenny illustrates again the selflessness of the mother as positioned within the 'motherhood' discourse.

### **Justification**

All the women use the 'motherhood' discourse defensively, to justify particular behaviours of their own for which they might be open to criticism. Should they be challenged for being selfish by breaking up the family for instance, this allows the women to appear selfless. Indeed, on one occasion one woman accepts this possible accusation. Having insisted that her ex-partner have their children for access because she needed a break and this ending up rather disastrously for the children, she frames her looking after her own needs ahead of her children's as selfish and hence un-motherly.

*"I put (1) you know I did that me bit at that stage"* (Sue, p14, 47-48)

Some women draw on the 'motherhood' discourse to justify their own anger at their partner. For example, Jenny gives a lengthy (40 lines) explanation of the lead up to an occasion where her husband Sam assaulted her which resulted in her being unconscious for 3 or 4 days in Intensive Care. She explains the reasons for her anger which becomes justifiable when expressed in terms of the 'motherhood' discourse. It also serves to undermine the possible accusation that she might be blamed for Sam's assault of her.

*"and then cos when I got back cos when I left the house it was all nice and tidy and (.) and just sort of like you (.) left him instructions what to do and [14 month old baby] was nice and (.) she was all (.) nice and tidy and clean and everything like that and (.) then when I got back well tea wasn't (.) cos I was away for the whole day and tea wasn't cooked and the house was a mess and (1) [baby] was just in in (.) in a nappy and because it was a cold day and I was really mad so I just got really angry with him"* (Jenny, p3, 25-34)

Some women used the 'motherhood' discourse to justify deceiving their partner or doing something secretly that their partner had forbidden.

*"I mean I met my [current] fiance when I was with my [ex-partner] (.) um but I mean he slept around on me that many times I (.) can't even count them on my fingers [laughs] um (.) but no and a lot of support from him and my (.) and Izzy my daughter (.) she you know I didn't want to see her grow up in that sort of situation"* (Liz, 268-273)

Liz draws on the positive connotations of the protective aspects of the discourse to bolster her inadvertent admission that she had been unfaithful to her ex-partner. Liz clearly considers that such an admission requires justification because she immediately provides one, focusing on her ex-partner's more numerous infidelities which also deflects attention away from herself. After some awkwardness (she laughs at this) and hesitancy ("(.)"), Liz proceeds ("*but no*") and moves to talking about her motherly responsibilities to protect her daughter from that situation. This second justification again moves attention away from herself and actually enables her to turn her potentially blameworthy admission of infidelity into a vindication.

Jenny's partner Sam would not allow her to have any contact with her family. However, Jenny deceived Sam and saw her family without his knowledge.

*"[I, Sam] DON'T want you to see your parents (2) oh oh yeah ok that's fine sort of thing (.) but then after I after I had [baby] I thought um (1) well you know Mum*

*and Dad a right to see [baby] it was their first grandchild sort of thing and (.) so um so I used to (1) um I used to see them secretly” (Jenny, p15, 33-39)*

She is able to present this instance of lying to her partner as acceptable by drawing on the selflessness implied in the ‘motherhood’ discourse. Jenny’s uncertainty surrounding her admission of dishonesty is further realised in the ‘um’s (see Hedges, p148) leading up to her ‘confession’.

When trying to justify why they stayed with and / or why they left their ex-partners the women largely drew on this discourse. Some would explain their reasons for remaining in the relationship by alluding to the mother’s responsibility to provide the children with a ‘normal’ family, that is, one with a father. Lil has been describing how she stayed on in her relationship with Ray despite being abused, knowing she no longer even liked him and their relationship becoming so tense that she was relieved whenever he went out.

*“but you (.) DO IT because you’ve got children involved (.) you know (1) you keep it going because you’ve got the kids (.) um and you want (1) you want a GOOD LIFE for them you know” (Lil, 68-70)*

Her remaining is justified with reference to the children’s needs. Lil uses the inclusive second person (“you”) which further deflects attention from her own self by generalising and implying that anyone would do the same in that situation. The repeated “you know”s also signal that Lil assumes that the interviewer, who she knows is also a mother, participates in that shared understanding of motherhood. Lil orients towards this by soliciting an affirmative, or at least empathic, response from the interviewer by repeating “you know” (see Hedges, p148).

Zoe, despite not being a mother, provides a defence of her friend, who is a mother, using the ‘motherhood’ discourse. When explaining her friend’s failure to make demands of her violent partner, for example that he must attend a MFNV programme, Zoe introduces her friend’s role as mother, with its associated responsibilities, as an explanation assured of acceptance and understanding.

*“for her own reasons she wasn’t able to yet (.) and also because (1) um she had young children and there were repercussions of the demands” (Zoe, 292-294)*

Conversely, most of the women use the ‘motherhood’ discourse when explaining their eventual rejection of the violence/abuse and their decision to separate. The following extracts illustrate how drawing on this discourse enables the women to present themselves, to others

and to themselves, as the laudable protectors of the children rather than the self-seeking destroyers of the family.

*"but I mean you know (.) I had no option I just had to get them [the children] out"*  
(Sue, p5, 43-44)

*"and I FINALLY after a LONG LONG time got strong enough to up and leave (1)  
and then it you know it was better for the kids if they weren't in that  
environment"* (Kris, 204-206)

Both Sue and Kris underline the selflessness of their decision to leave. For Sue, her primary responsibility to protect the children overrides any other possibilities and determines what action she must take. For Kris, having given a reason "to up and leave" which centres on her, she is able to justify her action by introducing the benefits for the children.

When asked if part of her reason for leaving was because the violence continued, Jan draws largely on the 'motherhood' discourse to legitimise her action. The direct statement about her own wishes is embedded, almost hidden, within her explanation.

*"Yes I think it was because I didn't want my children to go through it (2) that's what I could see was happening (2) I didn't want my son to end up (3) hitting a woman and (.) I mean I wanted to I couldn't live like this either (.) it was (1) I mean I couldn't live with the threatening anymore (.) I just hated it (.) [gap of 4 lines] I didn't want my children to (2) especially Jo being a male grow grow up and do the same to his wife or partner or whatever but him ENDING UP in jail (1) for MURDER (.) because he'd beaten her so much that he'd killed her (.) or my daughter ending up in hospital or ending up DEAD because she'd gone out with a man that (.) beat her up (.) I didn't want that for my kids"* (Jan, 355-368)

Jan, who has had a knife held to her throat on occasions, uses the 'motherhood' discourse to sanction her leaving. To avoid such a thing ever happening to her daughter carries greater moral weight than if Jan were to leave because she had had enough.

Some of the women referred to the 'motherhood' discourse to support their emergence from the isolation imposed by their partner and their desire for a life of their own.

*"and then as the children got older well I just thought to myself you know (.) well heh you know the kids can't have a mother that just can't you know barely (.)*

*stand up for herself and oh that's no good sort of thing (.) and so I sort of like got out "* (Jenny, p9, 37-41)

Rather than expressing this as a wish for herself, Jenny expresses her emergence as being necessary for the children, again guarding against the possible accusation that she was being self seeking.

### **Summary**

The 'motherhood' discourse provides ways for the women to constitute themselves as selfless. This is achieved largely by drawing on the aspect of the discourse which positions the mother as the person who is not only primarily responsible for the children, rather than the father say, but also for whom the children are her primary responsibility, ahead even of her own self. The women explain many situations in terms of the 'motherhood' discourse making comprehensible the actions they take, such as leaving their partners.

However, the women principally use the discourse to justify a range of behaviours and actions which could potentially attract disapproval, such as being angry with, deceiving or leaving their partners. The major functional effect for the women of using the 'motherhood' discourse defensively is that it enables them to act. It provides them with a defence against criticism and hence the opportunity for resistance. Through the 'motherhood' discourse the women construct the reasons for their behaviour, the why, whereas the means or the way in which they came to change as they did, the how, is achieved through the 'strength' discourse.

### **The 'strength' discourse**

All the women talked about the changes they underwent - changes in attitude, behaviour and view of self. These changes occurred while they were still living with their partner, over the time that he attended the MFNV programme(s), up until and after they left their partners. None of the women actually presented these changes in themselves as personal development though they could be viewed as such. However, all the women talk about gaining strength. Whether they constituted themselves as getting stronger with time or as slowly coming to realise their existing strength and allowing this to emerge, the women explain their eventual resistance to and rejection of their partners' violence in terms of their increasing strength. The self who is getting stronger is a more confident, assertive self evolving away from submission and into resistance.



The women draw on this in much the same way they drew on the 'oppression' discourse to describe their formerly unresisting selves. But they employ the 'strength' discourse to characterise themselves as women who will now no longer submit to ongoing violence and abuse. For the women, this strength is used as the foundation for their leaving the relationship. To talk in these terms provides the women with a way to talk of themselves as people who have authority and are in control of their lives. It is a resistant discourse. And it is used by all the women.

### Self construction / Subject position

The women use this discourse to construct the person who emerged within the relationship and who now constitutes their present selves. They give various accounts of their strength.

*"no one (.) could make me feel any worse than he did so you know I was a lot LOT STRONGER [ ] even now I'm just so much stronger than I was before"*  
(Liz, 256-260)

Liz came to realise that she was incredibly strong to have endured her partner's physical and psychological violence and this realisation provided her with the impetus to get out of the relationship. This has been an enduring change as Liz *"even now"* constitutes herself as a person of strength.

*"I FINALLY after a LONG LONG time got strong enough to up and leave"* (Kris, 204-205)

*"I wasn't hiding anymore [ ] I'd come out of my shell"* (Jan, 179)

Jan and Kris capture the emergent nature of this getting stronger. Not only does Kris present this gaining strength as a slow process, but also produces its effects for her. The strength enabled her to leave her partner. Kris constitutes herself as a person who became strong and then uses this to explain how she came to act. Jan changed from someone who previously was *"hiding"* to someone who emerged from her *"shell"*. Jan uses a metaphorical device (coming out of her shell) to account for how her strength enabled her to stand alone without her protective casing.



Jenny also uses a metaphor (standing up for herself) to (re)present her newly found strength in physical terms. She follows this with the change this brought about in her behaviour and the effects for Sam which ultimately had consequences for her - separation.

*"I started to stand up for myself and (1) telling him what to do and he didn't like me telling him what to do [ ] he didn't like me having a mind of my own basically" (Jenny, p9, 44-48)*

The women give various accounts of their different paths which led to their gaining strength. While their paths are different they have a similar thematic. The women produce their strength discursively through their connecting with others. By making contact with others and thus breaking their isolation, the women become independent and strong. The accounts have in common this connection with others. For some (Eve, Jan, Kris, Sue, Zoe) their strength was acquired by actively seeking help to improve their situations.

*"and then I went to Al Anon and that kind of helped me back off and just start to um feel a bit stronger" (Kris, 48-50)*

*"I sort of started to take the attitude that mm [laughs] I don't CARE what you do I'm just getting on with MY life" (Kris, 629-630)*

Kris, for example, attended counselling and Al Anon, which was pivotal in pointing her towards change. She learned different ways of responding, such as disconnecting and not reacting to some of Dan's addictive behaviour which enabled her to get on with creating a life of her own.

*"I've done a lot of counselling um I've learnt everything I can about alcoholism um drug addiction um abuse codependency I've LEARNT nearly everything you can learn about it if you know what I mean [ ] [which] MAKES ME STRONGER" (Eve, 351-357)*

*"realising I didn't need to put up with it (1.5) I realised there was help out there for me too" (Jan, 144-145)*

Likewise, Eve and Jan realised that there was help available and found that what they learned gave them strength. For others (Jan, Jenny) their strength grew as a result of talking to other women and mothers.

*"that's really what started I just started talking to people I think and [ ] I knew I didn't have to put up with it" (Jan, 213-214)*

*"realising that I wasn't alone (2) really um (3) that I didn't have to put up with the things that I didn't really want to" (Jan, 157-158)*

*"meeting is it different mothers and things like that that that helped me change [ ] helped me give me (.) yeah confidence and (.) and my self esteem back again too" (Jenny, p10, 21-26)*

Talking to and connecting with others had the effect for Jan of providing support and the understanding that she could leave if she wanted to. For Jenny, talking to other mothers produced increased confidence and self esteem.

One woman (Lyn) considered that learning to drive was a turning point for her.

*"it wasn't til I learnt to drive that I actually began (1) to stand up for myself you know and not let him do that" (Lyn, 65-67)*

Lyn also uses the 'standing up for herself' metaphor and explains the effect this had for her which was to stop the physical violence.

## **Function**

### **Explanation**

Through the 'strength' discourse the women are able to explain change. It is an explanatory device to account for the change in them and in the associated actions. The women accounted for any cessation or reduction in physical violence by their partner in terms of their own getting stronger.

*"I was starting to feel a bit better in myself so (2) yeah and I thought no he's not getting away with that anymore" (Lyn, 74-75)*

*"he did stop (.) hitting me [ ] that was just because (.) he knew that I wouldn't allow him to do it anymore" (Lyn, 143-145)*

*"if I've got enough guts to stand up and say to Adam blah blah blah DON'T YOU talk to me like that I've even noticed that Adam goes back into his little hole or he'll walk out in a HUFF but he won't keep his violence up" (Eve, 360-363)*

For example, Lyn got to a point where she would no longer put up with Les's physical violence. She constructs the resultant change in Les's behaviour in terms of her own increased strength. Eve too presents Adam's desisting from his violence to her as a consequence of her own authority and strength. She even expresses herself with strong emphasis ("DON'T YOU talk to me like that") to highlight how she now, from a position of strength, confronts Adam, with positive consequences for her.

The statements below typify this use of the discourse to explain the change which enabled the women to remove themselves from the violence in their lives.

*"[I] finally gained some strength and got up and just left" (Liz, 320-321)*

*"I finally had enough guts to kick him out" (Val, 188-189)*

Again they also embody the gradual development of this strength. However, once strength is achieved the consequence is clear - the women no longer tolerate the violence and separate.

The discourse is drawn on to account for the changes not only in the women but in the men as well. Kris's statement above (p120), when seen in full below, describes her blossoming strength and its consequences.

*"[I] just start[ed] to um feel a bit stronger (1) and um so I gave him an ultimatum and he ended up going" (Kris, 49-50)*

Her giving her partner "an ultimatum" is made comprehensible by her gain in strength. Furthermore, the action (her insistence that Dan attend a MFNV programme) borne out of her new found strength had some result for her (Dan went). Through the 'strength' discourse Kris gives a simple sequential account of the positive effects for her when she became strong - she behaved differently, she left and she continued to develop.

*"I started setting limits (1) I moved out (1) I um set up quite a nice little life for myself and the kids [6 lines describing her life] and he saw me I WAS OUT GETTING NEW JOBS and (.) you know I had THINGS WERE GOING GREAT GOT MYSELF A CAR and you know um (.) and he suddenly felt like he was getting left behind" (Kris, 529-538)*

Kris speaks about these effects in a strong tone - louder and with emphasis. She also refers to the resultant effects for Dan, which ultimately led to major changes for him ("he made a big lifestyle change" 552-553).

The women not only positioned themselves as the subject of the 'strength' discourse, but several saw that if other women did they too could progress out of their oppressed positions in relation to their violent partners. It also offers the possibility of change for other women. For example, when asked what she would like to see other women do who are in a similar situation, Lyn would like to see them resist, which requires strength.

*"I don't believe they should put up with it" (Lyn, 198-199)*

Kris suggests that, by using their strength, other women could improve their situations.

*"have the strength to sort of (.) um get active about it too and and (1) um give their husbands ULTIMATUMS [laughs] OR [ ] having the courage to leave (.) just like I did (2) um which was the best thing I ever did" (Kris, 269-277)*

Here she outlines how strength is an enabler of other behaviours which produced positive outcomes for her. She uses the word "*ultimatums*" again capturing the firmness and courage that come with strength. She offers her own actions as possibilities for other women.

### **Summary**

The women use the 'strength' discourse to construct themselves as strong. By constituting themselves in this way, as opposed to constituting themselves as submissive through the 'oppression' discourse, they are able to account for the change in themselves, their behaviour and their circumstances. They relate several different ways of achieving this strength and then use it to explain their resistance to their partners' abusive behaviour.

The discourse is not drawn on to justify why they changed or why they behaved with resistance, as the 'motherhood' discourse is. It is used as an explanatory device to make comprehensible how they changed and how they came to behave with resistance. As such, the 'strength' discourse complements the 'motherhood' discourse in that the former provides explanation while the latter permits justification, together offering the possibility for resistance and change.

### The 'psychology' discourse

The vocabulary and concepts of psychology are continually being absorbed into contemporary culture. Words like "ego", "neurotic" and "schizophrenic" have been a part of our vocabulary for nearly a century. Others such as "*denial*", "*codependency*", "*reinforcing*" and "*an unhealthy relationship*" (all terms used by these women in their talk) are more recent additions. It is not just the words, however, that have penetrated our lives, but the understanding, the view of the world and of people, they constitute. The system of meanings attaching to this popular psychological understanding comprise a 'psychology' discourse. Using the 'psychology' discourse can provide a way of talking about oneself, other people and relationships that helps to make sense of it all. However, for the object of the 'psychology' discourse, the one being talked about, it can have unwanted implications. It is likely that the object is regarded as abnormal, mentally ill or in some way psychologically unsound and can therefore attract sympathy, scorn, and/or fear. Being so defined can also place the object as not accountable for his/her actions because s/he is afflicted with some 'thing' beyond his/her control.

Virtually all the women use this discourse. In particular, those women (Eve, Kris, Sue, Tania, Zoe) who have had more contact with 'mental health' services, (for example, counselling, Al Anon, women's support groups) use it extensively. All the women know that the interviewer is a psychology student and presumably assume I will understand the implications of such talk. It occurs in a variety of circumstances: to construct themselves and their relationships, to explain change in themselves and to explain their partners' violence.

### Self construction/ Subject position

The women constituted themselves as being psychologically unhealthy within their relationships with their partners. Many drew on terms which derive from the discourse of psychology. For example, Liz and Sue talked about their low self esteem and depression while in the relationship.

*"no self esteem I didn't have any self esteem at all"* (Liz, 305-306)

*"I've gone right through all those victim codependency kind of crap"* (Sue, p4, 48-49)

*"I mean I was just [ ] hopelessly depressed really just really suicidally depressed and contemplating suicide quite frequently"* (Sue, p7, 55-58)

*"I'd been diagnosed as having um what do they call it post traumatic stress syndrome or whatever yeah"* (Sue, p8, 24-26)

Although Sue is not entirely clear about the label (*"what do they call it"*) or the meaning (*"or whatever yeah"*) of her 'diagnosis', she still uses it because of the meanings it does connote which derive from the 'psychology' discourse. These work to establish her self as she was within her relationship. Functional overlap with the 'oppression' discourse is evident here. The 'psychology' discourse is one resource used by the women in their construction of themselves as positioned within the 'oppression' discourse.

Many of the women drew on a conception of an *"unhealthy"* or *"healthy"* relationship, with the relationship under discussion being unhealthy and the hoped for relationship being a healthy one.

*"a very unhealthy relationship (1) um (1) you know we were both fairly SICK (.) in our relationship"* (Kris, 88-89)

*"just a good (1) healthy relationship one that's not (1) you know perfect [ ] just yeah loving (1) a stable environment you know one that (.) you can communicate when there's something wrong"* (Lyn, 257-260)

Kris speaks of her relationship with Dan in a way that assumes an understanding of what an unhealthy relationship involves. The *"you know"* serves to include the hearer of her talk and infers that the hearer understands or agrees with her statement. In a similar way, when asked what she was hoping for with Les, Lyn's response relies on the shared understanding of what constitutes a healthy relationship. Lyn uses *"you know"*s and the inclusive second person (*"you can communicate...."*) which strengthen her construction of a *"healthy relationship"* by generalising the view she expresses to others.

Some women use the 'psychology' discourse to construct the men.

*"at the [rehab centre] Jack was really into TA he got everything out of the TA"* (Tania, p6, 36-37)

*"Bill [ ] had a real problem with denial"* (Sue, p8, 23-24)

Tania, for example, talks of Jack as having some psychological understanding (of Transactional Analysis) and that this was useful for him in some way. Sue constitutes Bill as a person with a



"problem" through the 'psychology' discourse. This has the effect of diverting attention away from Bill's violence by focusing on his psychological "problem". It also permits the shifting of responsibility for Bill's violence from Bill onto some aspect of his psychological makeup for which he implicitly may not be responsible.

### Function

#### **Explanation**

Using this discourse, some of the women were able to achieve an understanding of what was happening to them and how they could best help themselves. It enabled them to explain how they became stronger.

*"I've done a lot of counselling um I've learnt everything I can about alcoholism um drug addiction um abuse codependency I've LEARNT nearly everything you can learn about it [ ] I've been there [learning it] MAKES ME STRONGER"*  
(Eve, 351-357)

Eve constitutes her participation in the 'psychology' discourse as having been empowering for her by contributing to her increased strength. This shows an overlap with the 'strength' discourse. Eve draws on the 'psychology' discourse as a means of explaining her positioning within the 'strength' discourse.

The women employed the 'psychology' discourse to explain the men's violence. It enabled the women to supply a reason for the men's violent behaviour which did not involve the women. By providing a psychological label for the men's behaviour, however, it served to distance the men from their violence which inadvertently removes responsibility from them. Nonetheless, it did evoke what required attention in order for the men's behaviour to change.

*"he's still very much in denial"* (Sue, p8, 50)

*"I think that the schizophrenia issue is a big one that that you know the behaviour of siblings of schizophrenics is (.) you know they may not be diagnosed but you know he's obviously got the behaviour pattern of a schizophrenic"* (Sue, p3, 20-24)

By referring to the mental illness in Bill's family as being central to Bill's behaviour, Sue positions Bill within the 'psychology' discourse which serves to make his violent behaviour

beyond his control. His being *"in denial"* also achieves this. Similarly, Tania and Kris 'diagnose' their partners' problem.

*"he's just slipped back into all his ol old ways and um (3.5) I I believe he's a dry drunk"* (Tania, p2, 45)

*"he had addiction problems"* (Kris, 44-45)

It is implied in Tania's statement about Jack being a *"dry drunk"* that this is the explanation for his reverting to his previous behaviour.

Zoe explains how Zac's continued contact with his family was contributing to maintaining his violent behaviour.

*"his family [ ] just kept reinforcing everything that I was trying to change [gap of 5 lines] that whole family system was geared around protecting him"* (Zoe, 186-193)

Again, responsibility for Zac's continuing violence is diverted away from Zac and onto his family *"system"* by drawing on the 'psychology' discourse.

### Summary

The 'psychology' discourse is a resource used by the women in constituting their own selves, their partners and the relationship. There is considerable overlap with other discourses. The women use the 'psychology' discourse in their construction of themselves as positioned within the 'oppression' discourse. It is constitutive of their psychological processes. Likewise, the 'psychology' discourse functions to provide explanations for the women's construction of their changed strong selves.

One implication of using the 'psychology' discourse in the construction of the men as having some 'problem' is that it limits the possibilities of change for those men. If someone is defined as being a *"dry drunk"* or the sibling of someone who has a mental illness they can become confined within that definition, limiting their options and mitigating responsibility for their behaviour.

## **The 'in love' discourse**

There is a widespread understanding of what it means to be 'in love'. It is a state or condition that is the stuff of songs, poems, movies, fiction and real life. After all, "love makes the world go round". The subject of the 'in love' discourse is in a state of powerful emotional attraction and attachment towards the object of his/her love. The strength of his/her love leaves the 'in love' subject vulnerable because of the associated fear of loss of the love object and willingness to overlook features in their loved one that others might find intolerable. The person 'in love' can also behave in ways that might otherwise be inexcusable since "all's fair in love and war". The 'in love' discourse was only used by 4 of the women (Jan, Lil, Lyn, Val) and reportedly by one of the men (Phil, Liz's partner) as an explanatory and justificatory device.

### **Self construction / Subject position**

This discourse is drawn on by the women to construct themselves as someone who is willing to surrender her own self to the person with whom she is 'in love'.

*"you may be in love with them but what's more important yourself or (.) love"*  
(Jan, 385-386)

*"a girl that would idolise him (.) that would stick up for him no matter what you know"* (Val, 194-195)

Jan constitutes the subject of the 'in love' discourse as being vulnerable because of this self surrender. Val constructs Ed's (her ex-partner) new partner as being someone blinded by love. Being positioned within the discourse makes it comprehensible that the subject would defend the object of her love regardless of his behaviour.

### **Function**

#### **Explanation**

The 'in love' discourse was an explanatory device introduced into the women's talk to account for why they remained persistently hopeful that the men would change. The converse also applied. Once hope is lost, the woman then fell 'out of love' and once 'out of love' she no longer need tolerate the intolerable.

*"well they thought it was wrong you know but um (.) I 'spose cos the decision was up to me on what I wanted to do (.) and I did love him" (Lyn, 171-172)*

*"of course when you're in love (.) you think you know that (.) things (.) will change but (2) they don't really" (Jan, 47-48)*

*"I fell out of love with him because (.) I gave up you know I yeah (.) I gave up on (1) him ever changing" (Lyn, 251-253)*

When Lyn is asked what the people who knew about her partner's violence to her thought about it, she draws on the discourse to explain, perhaps even to justify, her lack of resistance. While Lyn hedges the preceding statements ("*well*", "*you know but um (.) I spose*") her statement about loving him is clear and simple, without qualification. Love is an explanation which is easily understood and guaranteed acceptance. Jan speaks of the hope associated with being positioned as someone who is "*in love*". She strengthens the validity of this claim by prefacing it with "*of course*". Lyn similarly uses the 'in love' discourse to explain how her loss of hope meant she "*fell out of love*". Losing hope also means losing one's positioning within the 'in love' discourse.

*"ok you may be in love with them but what's more important yourself or (.) love (1) really (1) you can always find love somewhere else (1) if that's what you're looking for (1) ok you might be alone for (1) a year or 2 years or something but (2) that doesn't matter" (Jan, 385-390)*

Here Jan speaks from a position of someone who is no longer "*in love*" and she speaks to all women. Her use of the second person addresses and includes all women who are in relationships which are damaging to "*yourself*". She explicitly presents the dangers to the self of being positioned as subject of the 'in love' discourse. Once out of that position she is able to advocate for not giving up your self for love to an abusive man, that being alone is preferable and that love is available elsewhere.

### **Justification**

Phil reportedly employed the 'in love' discourse to support his violence to his partner, Liz. Phil's justification for his violent behaviour, however, did not appear to be coherent with Liz's understanding of being in love.

*"when he would hit me he'd say (.) I'm just doing it because I love you (.) and you know you don't hit someone (.) it's a funny way of showing that you know I love you"* (Liz, 97-99)

### Summary

Use of the 'in love' discourse is confined to a few women as an explanatory device to explain why they remained in the relationship. While one woman reports her partner using it to justify his violence to her, she does not accept this use of it.

### Conclusion

When the women articulate their experiences they use the linguistic resources available to them to create their realities, past and present. Their accounts indicate what discursive resources are available to them to account for these experiences. In the process of creating their context the women construct, through language, a variety of positions for themselves. These women construct themselves as persons positioned variously within the 'oppression', 'motherhood', 'strength', 'psychology' and, less frequently, 'in love' discourses. Establishing themselves in these ways enables them to account for their circumstances and behaviour. At the same time their positioning within a discourse carries implications for them as to what sorts of action and behaviour are made possible.

All the women constructed themselves as subjects within an 'oppression' discourse where options were limited, when they were with their partners who were violent to them. Here the women constituted themselves as helpless and powerless which served to explain their unresisting behaviour. All the (ten) women who were mothers positioned themselves within the 'motherhood' discourse and the one woman who was not a mother positioned a friend who was a mother within it. Being constituted within the 'motherhood' discourse as selfless enables the women to justify any actions which could arouse disapproval, criticism or condemnation and also to explain other behaviours and situations. The women explained the change that occurred for them by means of the 'strength' discourse. Repositioning themselves out of the 'oppression' discourse and within the 'strength' discourse makes available to the women the possibility to behave differently. It also enables them to account for their changed behaviour. Together the 'strength' and the 'motherhood' discourses provide the space to act, with the former permitting explanation and the latter legitimising the action.

The women's talk in which they locate themselves within the 'oppression' and the 'strength' discourses draws on the 'psychology' discourse. They also use the 'psychology' discourse in their construction of the relationship and the men as persons who had some problem and who were consequently not responsible for their violent behaviour. Several women use an 'in love' discourse to variously explain their remaining or leaving the relationship.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Discourse Analysis: the men

When the women talk about their partners and when they are (re)presenting how the men talk about themselves, the subject they create inhabits two seemingly incompatible positions. One is the man as naturally aggressive. The other apparently contradictory position is the man as a dependent child. These two subject positions permit the man to be split into two 'different' or separate people who can be called upon in particular circumstances to explain, defend, justify, or excuse their actions. And yet the 'naturally aggressive man' and the 'dependent child' are coexistent. Interestingly, these two positions are similar to men's two typical presentations to mental health services - violence and abuse or passivity and weakness (Flewett, 1992).

When asked directly what they thought caused the men to be violent, all the women drew on a 'developmental' discourse for explanation. The man's violence was understandable on account of some aspect of his developmental history. Finally, a few of the women drew on a construction of a 'good father' which ignored the effects on the children of witnessing the men's violence towards their mothers.

#### The 'naturally aggressive man' discourse

The 'naturally aggressive man' is biologically driven to be aggressive. His aggression is innate, uncontrollable and necessary. It is an essential characteristic required in the mythical warrior, the hunter-gatherer. For the survival not only of the species but of his own tribe/clan and family the man must be able to respond instantly to attack and fight the enemy, the external threat. He is the warrior hero with his "*predilection for violence, intemperate and exploitative sex, and recklessness*" (Ruth, 1980, p49).

This 'naturally aggressive' man echoes the man who inhabits the 'male sex drive' discourse delineated by Hollway (1984). Herein, the male is constructed as having a powerful, and to great extent uncontrollable, sex drive which his biology necessitates in order to perpetuate the species while the female complies incontrovertibly to his dictates. Similarly, the 'naturally aggressive' male is compelled by his 'innate' nature. Once aroused his response is automatic, swift and uncontrollable. The object of his attack is subdued and rendered powerless. It is his generic function to protect and defend his own. He is revered for his fearsome strength. He cannot, nor should he, be restrained as his aggression is in the service of others, indeed of



the species. There is nobility, then, in the man's natural aggression. While he is a natural force, awesome in his invulnerability, he can also be unpredictable, unrelenting and frightening. Once aroused and his violence unleashed, he is unstoppable. Biology overpowers reason. In particular, the man becomes extremely dangerous if he mistakenly perceives one of his own as external and threatening to him.

There are implications for both the men and women of positioning men in this discourse. One of the consequences is that it relieves the men of responsibility for their actions. Because the aggression is natural, it not only gives them permission to behave aggressively, but it also legitimises their violence. For the women, because the aggression is inherent and uncontrollable, there is no hope of non violence. It renders pointless any challenge or opposition to the men's violence. Attempts to 'tame' him are doomed to disappointment. It places the women in a position of having to accept their men's aggression. Another possible implication of this discourse is that the men experience their partners as threatening and situated externally to themselves. Since their natural aggression is a response aimed at subduing a threat, in some way the women must be responsible for provoking the men. In the context of this discourse, this would account for the women's propensity to blame themselves for the violence.

Nearly all the women referred to the men in terms of this 'naturally aggressive man' discourse and the women represented the men as also drawing on it extensively themselves to justify their violence to their partners.

### **Self construction / Subject position**

The women use the 'naturally aggressive man' discourse in their construction of their partners. Jenny specifically refers to Sam's violence as an essential part of him. When trying to explain what she thinks caused Sam's violence she dismisses alcohol and drugs because he did not use them, but describes how any tiny thing would set him off.

*"it was just um his (.) natural way"* (Jenny, p4, 31-32)

*"he'd hit me and then he he'd want to stop but it was (.) it was TOO LATE"*  
(Jan, 106-107)

Jan constructs her partner as 'naturally aggressive' by referring to his inability to control that which is beyond his control, that is, his nature.

The women use words like *"lashing out"*, *"losing it"* and *"going off"*. Tania draws on an analogy from the uncontrollable world of nature to (re)present Jack's unpredictability and violence. She uses the terminology employed to evoke an active volcano or geyser.

*"he'd just BLOW" (Tania, p4, 31-32)*

*"he will just continue (.) to to (.) blow" (Tania, p3, 50-51)*

Lil and Val use similar explosive terminology to (re)present their partners' violent outbursts.

*"sometimes he'd really just (1) go (2) yeah he'd really just go" (Lil, 104-105)*

*"everything would just (.) come out" (Val, 288)*

Tania also produces Jack's abusiveness as an essential part of him, though she constructs him in these terms only once she has given up hope.

*"I suppose NOW I realise um (.) that that's Jack (1) he that's the way he is"  
(Tania, p7, 30-32)*

Many of the women characterise their partner's violence as unstoppable once unleashed and describe the danger this posed for them. Once his essential aggression appears he is beyond reach and reason.

*"ONCE HE'S GOT STARTED you just (.) get out" (Eve, 366)*

*"no matter what I did he was on his way (.) and the thing was just to get safe"  
(Sue, p5, 8-9)*

## **Function**

### **Justification**

The men reportedly used the 'naturally aggressive man' discourse to justify their violent behaviour. According to Jenny, Sam drew on this discourse to show to Jenny that his decision to leave her was reasonable and one for which he could not be blamed.

*"he said that he (.) can't control his anger anymore he says it's (.) come back again" (Jenny, p11, 14-15)*

*"he said that he would um (1) would've hit me til I was dead (1) he said he would've just kept on beating me beating me til (.) til I was dead he says you*

*know (.) he says it's not um really nice having um having you 6 feet under"*  
(Jenny, p11, 23-27)

*"I just thought that it was really good of of him being honest yeah by saying that"* (Jenny, p11, 48-50)

Having claimed that his anger had returned and it was beyond his ability to control, Sam reportedly presents the inevitable consequence for Jenny to be death. Though Sam's explanation shocks Jenny it fits with her understanding and she accepts it. She even appears to feel grateful to him for warning her. There is no suggestion from Sam or Jenny that he could control his violent behaviour in any way. Positioning Sam within the 'naturally aggressive man' discourse serves to support the notion that Sam cannot control or be held responsible for his violence.

According to Liz, her partner Phil positioned himself within the 'naturally aggressive man' discourse.

*"he KNEW IT WAS BAD but [ ] he just felt like he HAD to do it"* (Liz, 94-96)

Phil talked about his violence to her as something he was compelled to do and Liz stresses the compulsion aspect by saying "HAD" louder than the surrounding talk. She constructs Phil as a person whose violence was so overwhelmingly powerful and beyond his ability to control that it even overrode his own moral code. Nature subdues morality.

Dave too would tell Jan how he was not able to stop himself from hitting her which again is understandable to Jan.

*"he said [ ] he hated hitting me he always felt guilty after hitting me but he couldn't cos he used to get in such a rage (3) he couldn't think"* (Jan, 102-104)

The "rage" is a manifestation of the natural aggression. Both Jan and Dave constitute his violence such that once aroused it overwhelms any ability to think, reason or take control of himself.

If both the women and the men position the men within the discourse wherein the naturally aggressive man's violence is aroused in response to perceived threat, then it is easy for both the men and the women to position the object of the violence as having been threatening, otherwise the men would not have been roused to aggress. In the context of this discourse this places the women as responsible for provoking the men's violence. Jan produces,

as do many of the women, the possibility that it is her behaviour that provokes Dave's violence. Jan reports that Dave too expresses this view, as do many of the men reportedly.

*"sometimes I'd do something wrong I spose"* (Jan, 139)

*"he said if I'd SHUT UP when I was told to SHUT UP he just used to say he wouldn't hit me"* (Jan, 342-343)

Despite expressing the view that she might be responsible for Dave's violence, Jan is not entirely committed to it. Jan only thinks this is the case *"sometimes"* and she hedges her statement with *"I spose"*.

### **Summary**

When the women construct the men as naturally aggressive it serves to explain the men's violence to the women. A consequence of positioning the men within the 'naturally aggressive man' discourse is that it makes any attempts to make the men non-violent pointless as it is a part of his essential nature. Both the men and the women remain powerless to affect the men's violence rendering the men not responsible for their violent behaviour. And according to the women, the men frequently draw on this implication of this subject position (i.e. not being able to be held responsible for one's aggression) to justify their behaviour. Furthermore, in the context of the discourse, the men are able to shift responsibility onto the women for provoking the dormant beast. In their talk the women realise a qualified acceptance of this implication.

The seeming converse of a naturally aggressive man is one who is passive and dependent as outlined below.

### **The 'dependent child' discourse**

The women also frequently represent the men as passive, dependent and immature. Their partner is likened to another child. This 'dependent child' discourse is prevalent among the women but they do not report it being articulated by the men. In this the man is positioned as being emotionally immature, dependent on his partner for emotional succour and fearful of and unable to cope with wider social interaction. This 'child' has as yet a limited repertoire of strategies available to control his environment. In the wider arena he remains fearful and withdrawn, yet in the private arena of home he throws tantrums to try and get what he wants. He

is also frightened of losing his 'mother', socially isolated and excessively reliant on the approval of others. A consequence for these adult men of being so placed is to infantilise them. The position allows them to become emotionally sheltered and protected, to hide, rather than learning how to cope. Further, if dependence produces anger and fury in the dependent towards the person on whom he is dependent, then the men are likely to feel thus towards their women partners.

However, being positioned within this discourse does provide a space for the men to develop, to learn to be adult, to grow up. It defines the women as 'mother' in relation to their child-partner. It is not a relationship between equals. The role in which the woman is cast within this relationship has the effect of her being responsible for this 'child' in the same way as she is responsible within the 'motherhood' discourse. In this instance the mother has unwittingly taken on a difficult child. The man is perceived as hard work and in the case of these women this work became finally unrewarding and so they abandoned their child and left. If the 'dependent child' discourse provides the space for the men to grow up, then it may also provide the space for the women to pull back from the mother role in relation to their 'child'.

### **Self construction of men**

Some of the women specifically constituted their partner as being like a child. Other women talked about themselves as 'mother' in relation to their partners and still others talked about their partner in the way that one would talk about a child, for example in terms of "*growing up*".

*"it was like I had a third child"* (Tania, p1, 55-56)

*"he saw me as some kind of mother figure"* (Lyn, 64-65)

*"it just gave me such a sense of relief (1) that (.) he was going to grow up"*  
(Zoe, 185-186)

Kris, who (re)presents Dan in these childlike terms, was hoping that the MFNV course would help him to 'grow up'. Later when they were separated and Dan had the children for weekends, Dan would rely on Kris whenever he felt unable to cope.

*"he wasn't growing up at all"* (Kris, 76)

*"[I] hoped that he would grow up a lot" (Kris, 143)*

*"so he LEARNED it (.) AND HE WOULD RING ME UP AND PANIC AND NOT COPE and I'd say oh OH SORRY I CAN'T HELP YOU I'M JUST GOING OUT (.) and um yeah (1) he got better at it and better at it" (Kris, 571-573)*

Kris presents the major factor contributing to Dan's eventually growing up as her own withdrawal from mothering him which gave him the space to learn what was required to be an independent adult. There is here an overlap with the 'strength' discourse (see p118) where the women are able to move away from the men's violence through steps they take quite independently themselves.

Many women constructed the men as passive, unassertive and fearful of others. Jenny, for example, speaks of the way Sam used to hide from visitors, including his own family, constructing him as fearful of contact with the outside world and dependent on her to manage this.

*"whenever any family came round (.) well he just used to hide away in the bedroom or (.) go into his shed and just lock himself away in the shed (.) yeah (.) and that was the same with his own family too (1) yeah (1) he used to let me (.) stay and entertain everybody while (.) he was um like in bed or you know go to the bedroom or um (.) lock himself away in the shed and that was that yeah (.) and when everybody was gone it was like um and then he would come out (.) sort of like time it right like when everybody was gonna leave and then he'd come out and say BYE" (Jenny, p14, 40-51)*

Many of the women used the passive, submissive child aspect of the 'dependent child' discourse when producing their partners' public persona and the bad tempered, tantrum-throwing aspect to produce their partners' private persona. Often the tantrum saved for the home front grew out of frustration engendered by their own passivity with others.

*"if a guy had (.) pissed schizo [laughs] pissed him off (.) um he'd take that out on me (.) it wasn't he'd take it out on a guy" (Liz, 62-63)*

*"he came home and he just called me a slut (.) for no reason he'd be ANGRY with someone at the market and like (.) he came home and he calls me a slut I mean I wasn't" (Lyn, 153-155)*

Lyn and Liz both articulate this feature. The only sphere where the men felt able to express themselves emotionally was at home, the only emotion they expressed was anger and the mode of expression was aggression.

### Function

#### **Explanation**

The women appeared to draw on this discourse to constitute and explain their exasperation with the nature of their relationship, in a way that would be immediately and easily understood by the interviewer, another woman, and others.

*"this clinging neediness" (Zoe, 210-211)*

Zoe too voices the oppressiveness of Zac's dependence on her. In her explanation of the best thing for her to come out of Zac's attendance at the MFNV programme, Zoe outlines the way he came to rely on her less.

*"his life was based around women (1) he didn't have many other male friends at the the time (2) and for me that would've been a huge relief but you know that he had another social network (.) outside of of just me" (Zoe, 179-182)*

*"he just gave me a sense of freedom that I wasn't his only confidante and I (.) I didn't have to be his counsellor as well as his partner and a friend and that was a HUGE relief (.) because I thought that was a very difficult situation to be in I couldn't (.) and I couldn't see myself continuing in that so that was a relief in that (.) I no longer had to be all and everything to him" (Zoe, 416-421)*

Liz tries to explain Phil's possessiveness by drawing on the frightened child element contained in the 'dependent child' discourse.

*"I don't know what it was about [his possessiveness] (1) AFRAID of what I don't know maybe it was being by himself" (Liz, 299-301)*

Liz, who has already constructed Phil as being extraordinarily possessive, considers he was fearful, possibly of being alone.



## Summary

The women employ a 'dependent child' discourse which constitutes the men as dependent, fearful, unable to manage their environment or to control themselves. Being depicted thus has the consequence for the men of being treated like a child by their partners and conversely for the women of being 'mothers' to their partners. This position allows the men to hide behind their 'mothers' and at the same time behave badly towards them. It also serves as another way in which the women become responsible for the men. Nonetheless, being constituted as a child does permit the possibility of growing up.

## The 'developmental' discourse

There is an increasing proliferation of the view that children who have grown up in households where violent behaviour is witnessed and/or experienced, are likely to behave violently themselves as adults. The developing child learns to behave violently from inhabiting an environment where violence is practised. Recent advertisements on television aimed at reducing 'domestic violence' depict this widespread view. The child is seen being subjected to violence and growing into the (male) adult who then inflicts violence on his own family. The advertisements are clearly conveying the view that 'family violence' is transmitted down the generations.

For the man positioned in this 'developmental' discourse there is an implication of inevitability that he will become a person who uses violence. He has little choice over his own behaviour and consequently cannot be held responsible for it (Jenkins, 1990). This subject views himself as having been wronged and is more likely to seek revenge than to seek to change himself. For the woman so positioned there is an inevitability that she becomes a person who submits to violence towards her. She too views herself as powerless to stop the violence.

The 'developmental' discourse is another more specific psychological discourse (see p124). It draws on concepts of psychology, in particular on developmental theory as opposed, for example, to drawing on the concepts of individual psychopathology or systems theory. There are instances of one or two of the women drawing on such a 'systems' discourse (see Zoe below) but this is not pervasive within the women's talk as the 'developmental' discourse is.

*"resolution of these things is a 2 way thing and it's not just an individual it's the whole family system" (Zoe, 493-494)*

All the women draw on the 'developmental' discourse in a variety of circumstances: when constructing their partners, when asked about the cause of their partners' violent behaviour; when explaining their own acceptance of their partners' violence, when pointing towards solutions and when representing their partners' justification for their violence.

### **Self construction / subject position**

The women constituted their partners as products of their developmental history. Zoe and Val both (re)present their partners' current behaviour in terms of how their behaviour was shaped as a child, particularly in relation to their failure to learn a connection between their behaviour and its consequences.

*"he could do no wrong and he was never challenged on his behaviour because (.) and he was also the youngest of in a family of 5 (.) um which meant that he was always protected and covered up (.) so he never experienced consequences for his behaviour [ ] his ability to grow up was (.) inhibited by that"* (Zoe, 106-111)

*"Ed you know (1) cos he's been like the only boy so whatever he's done he could never do no wrong"* (Val, 186-187)

Eve specifically evokes her partner's (Adam) father as a model of abusive behaviour and constructs Adam as a person who will inevitably be violent towards women.

*"he was from a VERY VERY VIOLENT his FATHER used to you know take pot shots at the kids (1) with a gun [ ] his father used to like (1) if the mutter mother didn't put enough BUTTER on the table or something like that (.) he used to beat her til she was nearly dead in front of the kids (.) and that's no joke THAT'S the sort of lifestyle he was from"* (Eve, 96-102)

*"he has abused every woman he has come across because he has SEEN it when he was a child all he ever saw was his father ABUSE women and his father still does it [ ] he's never seen anything better"* (Eve, 588-594)

Lyn and Val also construct their partners' current emotional state in terms of their experiences in their childhood.

*"he had a lot of built up anger from his childhood his parents (.) their relationship was (1) the same they used to chase each other round with knives and (2) yeah then he went into a foster home and that wasn't good for him and (2) then he had trouble at school" (Lyn, 82-85)*

*"I pushed him away once and he hit me (1) but I think he's got a real fear of being rejected himself (3) yeah (3) it's all got to do in the past" (Val, 295-297)*

While the 'developmental' discourse is drawn on to produce persons who are locked within their childhood development, the women principally employ the discourse as an explanatory device.

### **Function**

#### **Explanation**

The 'developmental' discourse is used primarily to explain what causes the men's violence. When asked directly

Interviewer: *"What caused the violence do you think?"*

every woman's response was expressed in 'developmental' terms. Some (for example, Eve, Jan, Liz, Lyn, Sue, Tania, Val, Zoe) accounted for their partners' violence by drawing on the concepts of modelling, reinforcement, practice and family systems. Others evoked specific circumstances which also contributed to their partners being treated in particular ways within their families. For example, being the only son (Val), being the youngest child, and having a mother who was over protective as a result of having been a victim of incest herself (Zoe). However, some of the women (Jan, Jenny, Lil, Tania) appear doubtful about their developmentally framed response.

*"I mean like you see on TV you (2) generation generation generation (.) you know um (1) just [ ] oh well I spose that does cause it but [laughs]" (Lil, 414-416)*

Lil clearly articulates the promulgation of the developmentally derived explanation and yet she herself seems uncommitted to it. She has followed her assertion with a series of qualifiers designed to raise doubt (*"just", "but"*), to weaken (*"I spose"*) and to signal reluctant acceptance (*"oh well"*). Similarly, Jan states that she thinks Dave's violent behaviour was learned by witnessing his parents' violence.

*"his family (2) he saw violence from his parents I think (3) he didn't I spose he didn't didn't know any better but (2) I don't know" (Jan, 99-100)*

She then voices one of the implications of describing the origins of Dave's violence in these terms - that Dave *"didn't know any better"*. A consequence of such a view is that Dave could not be held responsible for his behaviour. Jan attempts to undermine this implication of the 'developmental' discourse by inserting the softening *"I spose"*, and concluding with *"but"*, a 2 second pause and *"I don't know"*, evoking inconclusiveness, hesitancy and uncertainty, respectively.

Liz too explains her partner's violence in terms of circumstances within his own developmental history.

*"he's had a lot of (1) trouble in his childhood (.) I mean I've just found out recently he was abused and (1) his father was pretty abusive too so (1) I think that was mainly it then (.) yeah" (Liz, 85-87)*

When asked directly about what she thought caused Jack's abusive behaviour, Tania is uncertain and poses two possibilities - that Jack's abuse is innate (drawing on the 'naturally aggressive' man discourse) or that it is learned (drawing on the 'developmental' discourse). She orients towards the inconsistency of these two possibilities by articulating them with a degree of uncertainty and prefacing the statement with *"I don't know"*.

*"I don't know whether that's just (.) him or (3) you know just something he's learnt [ ] something he's picked up along the way" (Tania, p3, 37-39)*

The men's developmental history is not only offered as a response to direct questioning about the causes of the violence, the women also use it when pointing towards solutions. Because the violence was learned in their family of origin, then change can occur by teaching the men about the dynamics of family life and constructive ways of coping in them. Lyn, Val and Zoe typify this.

*"on those courses if they'd REALLY (.) TAUGHT if they if there if it was like a TEACHING thing if TEACHING how to (.) communicate maybe" (Lyn, 331-333)*

*"for them to to be taught [ ] more on the family [ ] if THEY LEARNT (.) to (1) what's more how to treat a family" (Val, 154-157)*

*"his background his family models of how how relationships were and how conflict was never resolved in constructive ways his his family were er emotionally inexpressive and they were exploders and he that was a really good model for him to become an explosive person himself " (Zoe, 98-102)*

Lyn and Val both express their view about learning and teaching strongly, speaking the words louder and with emphasis.

Two of the women (Val and Zoe) explain their submission to being treated violently by means of their own developmental history.

*"you see I I was (.) beaten up since I was a kid so it was like (1) I did the violence never bothered me" (Val, 69-70)*

*"and I'd grown up in a family where I wasn't accepted for who I was and as a result I had low self esteem and I didn't expect any more than that (1) PLUS I had a father who used to lash out who hit me physically and that was just part of my normality too so (.) so (.) it it felt very familiar and (1) and and in that sense we kind of suited each other [laughs]" (Zoe, 112-116)*

Val was already accustomed to physical violence and uses this to explain her lack of resistance to it. Likewise Zoe's (developmental) explanation of the causes of Zac's violence includes a statement about her own childhood circumstances to explain how their respective upbringings conspired to perpetrate, permit and hence perpetuate Zac's violent behaviour.

### **Justification**

Many of the women reported the men drawing on their position within the 'developmental' discourse to justify and excuse their violent behaviour. For example, in Kris's account, her partner, Dan, justified his violent behaviour by drawing on his childhood experiences.

*"he probably felt he didn't have any choice (.) um (.) he's always saying that he'd been um beaten up a lot as a kid and (.) and um that was why it was all happening and (.) and um (1) that I'd just have to get out of his way and not wind him up" (Kris, 111-114)*

Kris also alludes to the specific limitations imposed on Dan by so positioning himself and how this enabled him to shift responsibility onto Kris for his violent behaviour.

Lyn reports her partner Les's view of himself as having been unfairly wronged. Les embodied the vengeance felt as a consequence of placing himself within this discourse. He wanted to avenge his childhood suffering.

*"he said to me everybody that's hurt on me HE'S GOT A LIST (.) and he'll get them back" (Lyn, 86-87)*

### Summary

The 'developmental' discourse provides a means for the women to explain the cause of the men's violent behaviour in a way which is comprehensible and acceptable to others and in many instances to themselves. However, some do not seem completely committed to this view, particularly in relation to the implication that the men cannot therefore be held responsible for their violent behaviour. Some women also draw on the discourse to explain their own behaviour in terms of their developmental history. According to the women, the men themselves use their positioning within the discourse to justify their violence and to shift responsibility for it onto the women.

### The 'good father' construction

Another notable feature of some of the women's talk about their partners is their construction of the 'good father'. The 'good father' is used by few of the women and in limited circumstances. Only four (Eve, Jan, Jenny, Kris) of the ten women who had children actually constructed their partners as being 'good' fathers. The other women (re)presented the men as either abusing, ignoring or being incapable of relating to their children. When asked directly

Interviewer: *"what was the best thing you remember about the relationship?"*

these four women responded by (re)presenting their partners as good fathers. For these women, however, being a 'good father' seemed to constitute an extremely limited range of behaviours, mostly playing with the children for brief periods. Controlling the women's access to their own families (that is to their children's grandparents) and being physically violent to the women in front of the children did not seem to affect these women's view of their partner's status as a 'good father'. For example, Jenny (re)presents Sam as a good father even though Sam stopped his children from seeing their maternal grandparents and other extended family, even

though their daughter does not want to go on access visits to see him and will only talk to him at the gate when he collects her brother and even though Sam used to chase Jenny around the house and beat her up in the children's presence.

*"he's really good with the children"* (Jenny, p2, 10)

*"he's a really good dad"* (Jan, 78)

The construction of a 'good father' by these four women reveals a position which carries virtually no expectations or responsibilities with it, making it exceptionally easy to gain entry to this representation. This 'good father' neatly complements the mother constructed within the 'motherhood' discourse. A mother who is responsible for all the children's needs and wellbeing and consequently society's moral and "social sculptor" (Howe, 1989, p47) contrasts dramatically with a father who needs only to play with his children occasionally. Perhaps, as Chesler (1987) suggests, the expectation on fathers is simply to provide for their children, and anything extra, such as playing with them, automatically earns them the 'good father' appellation.

## **Conclusion**

In their talk, the women construct the men as persons positioned variously within the 'naturally aggressive man', 'dependent child' and 'developmental' discourses. According to the women the men also positioned themselves within the 'naturally aggressive man' and 'developmental', but not the 'dependent child', discourses. By constituting the men in these ways the women can account for the men's violent behaviour and the men are able to produce justification and vindication for it.

Almost all the women constituted the men as being naturally aggressive, particularly when they had already given up hope of change. Positioning the men within the 'naturally aggressive man' discourse had the effect of making change or non violence impossible. According to the women, it also functioned for the men as an excuse for their violent behaviour and hence as a way of avoiding responsibility for it and in some instances as a way of shifting responsibility for it onto their women partners. The women positioned the men as subject of a 'dependent child' discourse which had the effect of positioning themselves as 'mother' to the child. This could be regarded as an extension of the 'motherhood' discourse subject position for the women. The emotional dependence implied by the position permitted the men to hide behind the women and not learn how to manage their emotional and social lives themselves at the



same time as the position allowed them to throw tantrums directed at the 'mother' on whom they were dependent. An effect for the women of placing the men as subject of the discourse was to make the men their responsibility.

Another resource used by the women to explain the men's violence is the 'developmental' discourse which is a specific sub-discourse within the broader 'psychology' discourse. Despite producing a subject inconsistent with the subject of the 'naturally aggressive man' discourse the women used both as explanations for the men's violence on different occasions, orienting towards the incompatibility on occasions where they occurred together. This is an example of the flexible and 'inconsistent' deployment of language resources in our self constructions. The 'developmental' discourse offered more hope than the 'naturally aggressive man' discourse, as within the former, change was possible through teaching and learning, whereas within the latter, aggression being an essential and natural feature of men, hope is lost and change not possible. The women report that by locating themselves within the 'developmental' discourse the men were able to justify their violent behaviour and to shift responsibility for it to the women.

A few of the women construct their partners as 'good fathers' when explaining what was the best thing about the relationship. Despite the many behaviours outlined by the women elsewhere which would mitigate against calling someone a good father, these men are produced as 'good fathers' in contrast to the requirements and responsibilities ascribed to the 'mother' positioned within the 'motherhood' discourse.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Discourse Analysis: Hedges

In analysing the women's interviews I found it striking the extent to which the women used terms such as "*you know*" and "*sort of*", although I had not been particularly aware of their use of them during the interview. Yet when examining their texts it was clear that these forms were another discursive resource drawn on by the women in the construction of their stories and which contributed to its functional effects. I felt that any analysis of the women's talk would be incomplete without some consideration of their use of this particular linguistic form referred to as 'hedges' (Coates, 1993).

Hedges are a multi-functional linguistic feature which principally mark certainty or uncertainty about the statement under discussion (Holmes, 1987). Hedges are commonly used in everyday speech and comprise forms such as "*you know*", "*sort of*", "*I mean*", "*I think*", "*really*", "*yeah*", "*um*". The use of hedges is generally higher in contexts where self disclosure takes place and is consequently a characteristic of talk between women. In self disclosure the discloser is engaged in a process of self presentation that is acceptable to herself and to her audience (Holtgraves, 1990). Hedges serve to help manage this sensitive and complex business.

All of the women used hedges to varying degrees. For example, one woman (Sue) used "*you know*" on 223 occasions (i.e. an average of one "*you know*" every third line), "*yeah*" 75 times, "*sort of*" 55 times, "*well*" 8 times, "*really*" 48 times and "*um*" 153 times (i.e. an average of one "*um*" every fourth line), while another woman (Jenny) used "*you know*" on 51 occasions, "*yeah*" 253 times (i.e. an average of one "*yeah*" every third line), "*sort of*" 53 times, "*well*" 180 times (i.e. an average of one "*well*" every fourth line), "*really*" 83 times and "*um*" 253 times (i.e. an average of one "*um*" every third line). These women were not atypical. The hedges were used to perform a variety of functions: to elicit a response from the interviewer regarding the information they are disclosing; to evoke certainty and confidence in their assertion; to evoke uncertainty about their assertion; to signal the imminent disclosure of sensitive material and to soften the force of such disclosure. Although these different uses are dealt with in separate sections below, it is clear from the examples that any segment of talk can contain a variety of hedges which are performing different functions.

### To elicit response from interviewer

The encounter where these women's talk took place was a single-sex interview situation with the expectation of a high level of non-reciprocal self disclosure of extremely sensitive material. The situation also involved the understanding that the material conveyed would be made public, though anonymity would be preserved. Because the interviewer is not in a position where self disclosure is expected of her, this places the woman being interviewed in a difficult situation. She has agreed to and so is expected to talk about sensitive personal topics to someone she does not know. She is consequently uncertain how her disclosures will be received. In the process of negotiating her own presentation she is likely to attempt to elicit some feedback from the listener to gauge the impact she is having.

These women do seek some empathic indication from the interviewer as to the acceptability or appropriateness of their explanations. The women use hedges, particularly 'you know', in situations where they either wish to or assume they will elicit an empathic response from the interviewer. Jan and Kris use "you know" to this effect in the statements below.

*"That he'd come back the person that I'd first met (2) you know (2) spouse I was dreaming (2) you know men [both laugh]" (Jan, 269-270)*

In response to a question asking her what she was hoping for when Dave went on the MFNV programme, Jan replies minimally, assuming the broader meaning, which she alludes to with the first "you know", will be understood. Then she concludes with a one word statement, "men", which she prefaces with "you know", again assuming that I, the interviewer, will empathise. And indeed we both laugh in acknowledgement of the shared understanding.

When Kris describes what Dan was like when he came home from a MFNV session, she sets the scene and then reports with great emphasis what Dan said.

*"he'd tell me one or 2 of the little things that they'd done or something (1) and he'd sit there and we'd have a Milo or something and he would (.) and he would say oh YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT IT BAD WITH ME I'M a you know I'm really GOOD compared to blah blah blah you know" (Kris, 319-322)*

This is a feature of Dan's reaction to the group sessions that she has already mentioned in the interview. She breaks up her 'quote' with a "you know" as though pausing to attract an affirming response which she is confident she will get from the listener. The final "you know" acknowledges that there is a common understanding between speaker and listener and she need elaborate no more.

Val's talk illustrates the interactive nature of hedges and their role in saving the face of the talker. Early in the interview, I asked Val what was the best thing she could remember about the relationship.

Val: *"well this is going to sound really pathetic but (5) just having a (.) family (2) that's the best thing that (.) you know something that I always wanted was just having a family and (1) and not being you know on my own and (2) going out together and (1) holding hands and (3) just that really (2) and knowing that the kids had a father.*

Me: *Mm mm (1) that doesn't sound pathetic to me=*

Val: *=No well that was yeah that was about the only good thing I could say in that relationship [laughs] and and THAT'S A LOT" (Val, 30-37)*

Val alludes to the effect her response might have on me, the listener. She orients towards this and acknowledges her embarrassment about it with *"this is going to sound pathetic"*. She proceeds to mitigate the extent to which I might find her *"pathetic"* by weakening her response (*"having a family"*) with the preface *"just"*. She also seeks some indication from me as to where I stand by including me in a presumed shared understanding by using *"you know"*. This opens a space for me to say 'No I don't know' or to indicate assent. My reply reassures Val that her desire for a family was acceptable to me. So she then proceeds to affirm her statement with *"yeah"* and is now able to confidently assert that the thing she has just been undermining (*"having a family"*) is indeed very important to her.

### **To express certainty / uncertainty**

In many instances in response to a direct question asking for their opinion, hedges were used by the women to indicate confidence or to express uncertainty about what they are saying. For example, in response to the question *"what do you think his possessiveness was about?"*, Liz says:

*"I don't know I mean that's always you know you watch these documentaries and (.) they say the same thing and you wonder well you know what is it (.) what is it (1) I mean apparently his father was really really possessive (1) and very controlling too so um (.) I don't know (1) I don't know what it was about (1) AFRAID of what I don't know maybe it was being by himself and that he had someone to (.) control him (.) you know." (Liz, 296-302)*

Liz's uncertainty is enacted directly in her talk with "*I don't know*", but she then proceeds to provide an answer. She offers two possibilities but guards against identifying with the response too strongly by the repeated "*I don't know*"s, "*um*" and "*maybe*". She prefaces her opinions with "*I mean*" and the repeated "*you know*"s further highlight her uncertainty. However, Liz stresses the aspect of her opinion which she is sure is relevant (that is, the possessiveness) with "*really really*" to indicate her certainty about this.

### **To signal imminent disclosure of sensitive material and to soften its impact**

Hedges increase in frequency leading up to a particularly sensitive disclosure in an attempt to soften its force.

*"um later on (.) um (1) things were uncovered in his family um about (.) um in incest between his mother and (.) um another fam a family member when she was a a (.) when she was a adolescent and that affected his (.) mother's relationship with him which was to be totally protective of him (.) therefore he could do no wrong and he was never challenged on his behaviour"* (Zoe, 102-107)

For example, as Zoe is about to reveal some information about incest within Zac's family she is hesitant, repeating "*um*" 5 times and faltering with the words "*incest*" and "*family*". Yet once the revelation is out Zoe proceeds without any further use of hedges.

### **Conclusion**

While hedges are commonly used by people in talk, on analysis their use by the women was a noticeable feature of their talk. This can be accounted for by the sensitivity of the topic and the need for affirmation from the interviewer given that the self disclosure was not reciprocated. I have shown how the women used hedges in order to elicit a response from the interviewer and to signal the imminent disclosure of sensitive material while also softening its impact. The women's certainty or uncertainty about the assertion they are making is also enacted in their frequent use of hedges in their talk.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Discussion

This study has focused on the stories of eleven women whose (ex)partners were violent towards them and attended a MFNV programme while they were living together. It has analysed the texts of the women's talk for **what** they have said as well as for **how** they have said it. In making the women's stories public their experiences in common become evident. Firstly, there is a discussion of these shared features in the women's experiences as told by them, specifically concerning the MFNV programmes, and the implications these commonalities might have for women. Secondly, a discussion follows of the implications and consequences for the women of the ways they constitute their experience and their selves using the linguistic resources commonly available to them.

### Women's Views of MFNV Programmes

The study is not intended to be an evaluation of the MFNV programmes and it is not possible to draw firm conclusions regarding the programmes from this small sample. Nonetheless, some of the findings, particularly those which confirm findings from similar previous studies, can be taken as indicators.

#### **Completion rate**

The completion rate in this sample of 40% for Court directed is lower than usually reported of about 70% (Hamberger & Hastings, 1989). If compulsion by way of sanctions for Court directed men are effective in retaining men on programmes as Dominick (1995) suggests, then the lack of sanctions experienced by the Court directed non-completers in this sample may account for their low rate of completion. Conversely, the completion rate in this sample of 66% for non Court directed or self referred is higher than usually reported, for example 23% (Dominick, 1995). Possibly the threat of some sort of sanction from their partners (i.e. separation) for the self referred (conditional and 'voluntary') men in this sample had the effect of raising the completion rate. **Sanctions appear to be important in increasing the likelihood of completion of the programme.**

### Women's hopes

The men's attendance at a MFNV programme served to raise these women's hopes, as previously reported (e.g. Furness, 1993; Martin, 1994; Robertson et al., 1992). Conversely, as also previously found (e.g. Bowker, 1988; Dominick, 1995; Furness, 1993), after the men's attendance at a programme resulted in no significant changes in their behaviour, the women's consequent loss of hope assisted them in their decision to separate. The women considered separation to be the most effective way of stopping (or in some cases, only reducing) the violence. **Lack of change in their partners' behaviour after attendance at a MFNV programme may assist women to decide to leave the relationship.**

### Physical violence

For the majority of the women the reduction in physical violence was only temporary which is similar to findings in other studies (e.g. Dominick, 1995; Faulkner et al., 1992). Similarly, the reduction in violence was attributed to several causes by these women. These included: the MFNV programme; changes in themselves such that they would no longer allow their partner to hit them; and the men's fear of arrest and prosecution, initiated by their partner, acting as a deterrent. Dominick (1995) reported similar findings. **There are indications that at the time men are attending a MFNV programme physical violence generally reduces but only temporarily.**

### Psychological violence

The reports of the women in this study that their partners' reduction or cessation (albeit temporary) of physical violence was replaced by an increase in psychological violence, both its frequency and range of tactics, confirms previous findings (e.g. Pence & Paymar, 1993). While previous studies have noted men comparing themselves favourably with others in the group (Furness, 1993; Martin, 1994) and misuse of the 'time out' procedure (McMaster, 1992), for the majority of the women in this study these were major concerns and consistent sources of manipulation and psychological abuse.

Psychological violence is now included within the definition contained in the New Zealand Government policy on 'family violence' (Department of Social Welfare, 1996) which is used as the basis for respondents programmes under the DVA. This new recognition of psychological violence should help ensure that this group of women's concerns about the programmes' failure to address psychological violence are met. However, this remains to be seen.

**Attendance at a MFNV programme may produce increases in psychological violence with (temporary) reductions in physical violence. The programmes could**



address this persistent phenomenon and challenge the men on specific practices which they reportedly engage in.

### **Women's suggestions**

In relation to the women's suggestions about factors that they considered would improve the effectiveness of the MFNV programmes, many of these issues need to be addressed by the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (1995) (DVA). Standards for programmes for respondents to applications for protection under the DVA (the majority of whom will be men who have been violent to their partners and/or children) will hold for all those men who are so Court directed, but need not necessarily apply to self referred men (Department for Courts, 1996). However, in practice it is likely that Court directed and self referred will continue to attend the same programmes, so effectively the new standards for programmes will operate for all participants.

The view of the women in this study that the programmes should be longer has been partially addressed by the DVA as the recommended programme duration for respondents is 40 to 50 hours (i.e. 14 to 24 weeks). However, **most women thought the men required long term (a minimum of one year) contact and support from a structured programme or group because of the number of issues needing to be addressed.**

### **Men's personal issues from past**

The women's belief that the men need to address their own personal issues from their past is acknowledged elsewhere (e.g. Furness, 1993) and is contained in the goals for the DVA Respondents Programmes (Department for Courts, 1996). Principle #6 states:

*"Programmes may also deal with other associated issues such as past history of victimisation, but not before safety and the violent behaviour is stopped"*  
(Respondents Programmes, p9)

However, it goes on to state that such issues which require resolving but which are not related to violence *"fall[s] outside the focus of the Domestic Violence Act"* (p10). It appears unlikely, then, that these personal issues can be addressed in programmes owing to the size of the task they already have (i.e. ensuring safety and stopping violent behaviour). It remains the responsibility of the men themselves to address personal issues, perhaps by attending individual counselling. **Given the low programme completion rates and the effects of sanctions on completion, it is reasonable to assume that few men would voluntarily initiate and pursue further**

individual counselling, thereby leaving men's personal issues from their past largely unattended.

### **Support, information and accountability for women**

These women's wishes for support, information and accountability while their partners attend a MFNV / Stopping Violence programme need to be addressed by way of the programmes made available to applicants under the DVA, though again these services may not be available to women whose partners self refer. The support and information provided to the women may be particularly important in light of the finding that this is a decisive time for the women. **In determining the future of their relationship and in deciding whether the most successful way of ending the violence in their lives is to remove themselves from its source, the support offered to the women at this time may be crucial.**

### **Conclusion**

It is encouraging to note that many of the wishes and suggestions of these women have been encompassed in recent changes to the law. It remains for these changes to be implemented and for the wishes of these women to be addressed in practice. With the channels of communication open between facilitators of the applicants' (women's) and respondents' (men's) programmes, theoretically the voices of the women should be heard in ways which will be helpful in ensuring accountability, safety and optimum conditions for change.

### **Discourse analysis**

The women do not carefully formulate their discourse to produce deliberate and intended effects. They talk in ways that "come naturally". Nonetheless, their discursive practices do produce (unintended) effects which are variously restrictive and / or enabling for them and which in turn are constitutive of their reality. A discourse analysis of the women's accounts has clarified the discursive resources available to the women currently for the construction of the selves (their own selves and their partners' selves) who inhabited the experiences they are being asked to outline. Analysis of their use of particular discourses illuminates how these function not only to explain and justify specific behaviours and events but also to implicate the

women and the men, and all women and all men, unintentionally and without their understanding, in other practices and consequences.

When talking about their experiences the persons that the women construct and the discursive spaces that they occupy make available various possibilities for action, or non-action, for the women. The position within the 'oppression' discourse which the women occupied is utterly restraining and resistance is prevented. It is a discourse of non-resistance. The women did not place themselves within this space currently and only used it to construct themselves retrospectively within the situation of living with a man who was violent to them. The 'oppression' discourse functioned as a means of describing and explaining the position of the woman who endured that intolerable and untenable situation. Given the circumstances of the women's lives at the time, resistance was not only extremely difficult but it could have been dangerous.

It would be interesting to analyse the discursive resources used by women to construct themselves while they are still subject to those material conditions. If they were positioning themselves within the 'oppression' discourse this would render them trapped with no way out.

On the other hand, the 'motherhood' discourse offers a position with double-edged effects for the women which can be both limiting and enabling. Because the construction of 'motherhood' implicitly involves total responsibility for the children and the selflessness that this requires, mothers are constrained as selves who can act independently. On the other hand, however, 'motherhood' is revered, at least conceptually if not in practice. Any selfless action on behalf of the children is held to be dutiful, honourable and befitting a mother. Providing an action can be framed as being for the good of the children and this discourse provides the means to do that, the women can act legitimately. Positioning oneself within the 'motherhood' discourse permits the possibility for the women to act and resist their circumstances.

The women undoubtedly suffer from the effects of being positioned within the 'motherhood' discourse in terms of selflessness and the insatiable demands of primary responsibility for the children. The position enables responsibility to be accorded to the women while enabling the men to avoid parental responsibility. However, on the whole the women positioned themselves there in order to justify or provide the reason for actions which otherwise they might not have been able to execute. As such, the 'motherhood' discourse serves to enable the women to resist their oppression.

The 'strength' discourse positions its subject as an independent and capable agent who can act in her own best interests and stand up against abuse by drawing on her personal power. The discourse enables the expression of the ways in which the women came to re-position themselves from the subject of the 'oppression' discourse to their new and enduring position of strength. When used in combination with the sanctioning functions of the 'motherhood' discourse the women become effective and active. They resist, oppose and then remove themselves from

their oppressive conditions. However, a consequence of this position is for the women to assume responsibility for stopping the violence in their lives by removing themselves from it.

The women drew on a 'psychology' discourse in their construction of themselves both as 'sick' 'victims' and as 'strong' 'healthy' women having both restricting and enabling effects respectively for them. Their use of the 'psychology' discourse to construct the men, generally as having some psychological 'problem', had the effect of relieving the men of responsibility for their violent behaviour and limiting the possibilities for change.

The 'in love' discourse was not prevalent but it did function to explain the women's apparent tolerance of the men's violence. Being positioned as 'in love' had the disabling effect of making the violence permissible, whereas once the women moved out of the 'in love' position they were freed to act. In this way, the position available within the 'in love' discourse could be seen to support the 'oppression' discourse.

The discourses drawn on by the women enabled the construction of selves located within the material conditions of their lives which permitted variously confinement or movement. Despite the resistant action possible from within the 'motherhood' space, particularly in conjunction with the woman of 'strength', the 'motherhood' discourse provides the discursive basis for construction of women as selfless and totally responsible for children with the concomitant implicit construction of men as non-responsible. The 'psychology' discourse also provides a basis for constructing the men as not responsible, while contributing to the construction of women as both 'weak' and 'strong'. Even being positioned within the 'strength' discourse, which produces liberating consequences for the women, has the effect of maintaining responsibility for the women to end the violence.

**The discourses available to and used by the women tend to maintain the ideology of women's responsibility for children and for ending men's violence.**

Through the women's construction of men as 'naturally aggressive' the women are able to deflect any responsibility for the violence away from themselves by locating its cause within biology. However, this serves to also remove responsibility from the men. Reportedly, the men were able to use their position within the 'naturally aggressive man' discourse to shift responsibility onto the women for their violent behaviour.

The women's construction of the men as being like a 'dependent child' infantilises the men and implicitly positions the women as 'mother' in relation to their partners. Thus the woman's difficulty in leaving her partner can in part be understood in the context of her dual positioning within the 'motherhood' and 'dependent child' discourses. Her responsibility for her

child-partner binds her into a relationship, in the same way as her responsibility for her children, where leaving would be like desertion and a gross and inexcusable abandonment of her responsibilities. These subject positions conspire to render the women responsible for the men.

The 'developmental' discourse provides the linguistic basis for another construction of men as non-responsible. By positioning the man as subject of this discourse the woman inadvertently enables the man to justify his violent behaviour and to avoid being held accountable for it. However, there is the opportunity within this space for the occurrence of change and development through learning for the men.

Although the predominant construction of the men as fathers was of an inept and irresponsible parent, the construction by a few of the women of their partner as a 'good father' was notable in that it further maintained the position of men as non responsible.\* This construction, however, seemed more allied to the women's desire for a 'good father' than to the men's actual practice as a father.

The subject positions that are realised in the women's discourse perpetuate men's non responsibility for their violence and women's responsibility for the children and for ending the violence. Even the 'strength' discourse which offers resistance and liberation to the women maintains women constituted as responsible for ending the violence. Through their own talk, which is formulated from the discursive resources available to them, the women inadvertently reinforce the ideology of male dominance by constructing the men as non-responsible and themselves as responsible.

The women's articulation of their experience creates and strengthens their own reality in these terms. Simultaneously, for the recipients these accounts contribute to the production of the realities that they construct around such events. Thereby men's construction as non-responsible and women's as responsible becomes a discursive reality. Because of its realisation in discourse this view acquires the quality of being natural and essential and hence unchallengeable.

However, disruption of these prevailing discourses can occur by making explicit that which remains implicit and making these consequences contestable rather than assumed. For example, possibilities exist to directly challenge men's, and women's, talk about men as naturally aggressive. Social texts, such as recent advertisements on TV which are aimed at stopping the intergenerational transmission of violence, drawing on the 'developmental' discourse, contain the hidden implication that if brought up in the midst of violence it is inevitable that one will behave violently and hence cannot be held responsible for it. This consequence

could be overtly addressed within the text by challenging it and by highlighting another implication, also hidden, that if violent behaviours were learned then other non-violent behaviours can be learned too.

### **Limitations of the present study and Further research**

The present study involved eleven participants. It is not possible to be sure whether more and / or different women would have used the same discourses. While the results cannot be generalised to all women this was not the intention. Nonetheless, this group of eleven women who differed demographically, culturally and sub-culturally all drew similarly on the discourses identified. It would be worthwhile conducting analyses of the texts of other women talking about such experiences to identify similarities and / or differences in the ways they constitute themselves and their partners.

As the analysis was conducted by only one person, interpretation is limited to the subjectivity of the researcher and the various positions that constitute her own realities. This analysis focused on the discourses this researcher considered the women to be using. Again it is not possible to be sure whether an/other analyst(s) would have identified different patterns and different discourses which might have led to different conclusions. It would be useful in conducting research of this kind to work collaboratively with others in order to extend the range of subject positions from which the texts are viewed.

Further research could examine the texts generated by the following:

- other women in similar circumstances
- women in relationships with violent men
- men attending Stopping Violence programmes
- those who work with violent men (e.g. programme facilitators, counsellors)
- those implementing the Domestic Violence Act (1995) (e.g. lawyers, judges)
- psychological texts on the topic of men's violence to women.

Analysis of the discursive resources employed by these participants in these circumstances could clarify the effects produced by their use.



## **Conclusion**

Men's violence to women is a sizeable problem costing the country millions of dollars and generating enormous distress, suffering and death. Institutional and personal efforts directed at reducing the problem appear minimally successful thus far. If men and women are constituting themselves and being constituted in discourse in ways which maintain, reinforce and perpetuate the ideology of male dominance then change looks unlikely. However, attending to the functional effects of discourse might produce some indications as to where and how change might best be sought.



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Information Sheet**

#### **Who is the researcher?**

The researcher is Frances Towsey. Frances has worked as a counsellor for Relationship Services (formerly Marriage Guidance) for 6 years. As a counsellor Frances has been interested in the ways that men and women have attempted to address violence within their relationships. She is also completing her Masters degree in Psychology. For her thesis Frances would like to hear what women think about the Men for Non-Violence course that her partner attended. Frances is being supervised by Mandy Morgan.

#### **Where can she be contacted?**

Frances is available on phone (06) 377 0920. Mandy is available on phone (06) 350 4133.

#### **What is the study about?**

The aim of this study is to investigate what women think were the impact and effects of an education programme run by MFNV(NZ) on their ex-partners who completed it. Specifically, the study is interested in hearing from these women about what changes, if any, they experienced in the men's behaviour and in the quality of the relationship.

#### **What will participant(s) have to do?**

If you agree to take part in this study you would need to be available for an interview with the researcher. The interview would be arranged at a time and place suitable to you. The researcher tape records the interview. You have the right to turn off the audiotape at any time and may receive a copy of the audiotape if you wish.

#### **How much time will be involved?**

The interview will take one hour.

#### **What can the participant(s) expect from the researcher?**

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- refuse to answer any particular question and to withdraw from the study at any time
- ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation
- provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researchers. All information is collected anonymously and it will not be possible to identify you in any reports that are prepared from the study.
- be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

## APPENDIX B

### Schedule of Questions

1. What did you think about the study when you heard about it?  
What did you expect?  
What made you decide to take part in the study?
2. Would you be able to tell me a bit about your relationship with your ex-partner?  
How long were you together?  
How long have you been separated?  
Do you have any children?
3. What was the best thing you can remember?  
What happened the rest of the time in the relationship?
4. What happened that [name] went to a MFNV programme?  
What caused the violence do you think?  
How do you think that [name] saw it?
5. What did you already know about MFNV programmes?  
How?
6. What did you hope would change as a result of [name] going on the programme?  
What would you have liked for yourself?
7. What changed for you when [name] started the programme?  
How does that match up with what you wished would happen?
8. Did anyone else know about the violence?  
Did you talk about it with anyone?  
What did they think about it?  
What did they think about [name] going on the programme?

9. Do you know anyone else in a similar situation?  
How do they deal with it?  
What would you like to see them do?
10. What was [name] like before he went to a session?  
After he got home?  
What do you think happened at the sessions?  
How do you know?  
What would have helped you?
11. How did you want [name] to change?  
What were you hoping for?
12. What was the best thing about [name] going on the programme?
13. How would you be able to tell that the MFNV programme had worked for [name] ?  
What do you think [name] thought about the programme?
14. Who would you like to see go to MFNV programmes?
15. Would you recommend a MFNV programme to any of your women friends for their male partners?  
Why (not)?

## APPENDIX C

### Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask any further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is completely confidential.

I agree / do not agree to the interview being taped.

I understand I have the right to turn off the audiotape at any time.

I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out on the Information Sheet.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### Transcription Notation

[ ]	empty brackets signals that material has been omitted from the transcript
[stepson]	square brackets contain an explanation when clarification required
[inaudible]	indicates this speech was inaudible
[laughs]	indicates speaker laughs
(.)	a full stop in round brackets indicates a small pause less than a second
(2)	a number in round brackets indicates a pause in the speech in seconds, in this case a pause of 2 seconds
I am <u>not</u>	underlined words indicate emphases in the speech
I am NOT	words in capitals indicate they were spoken louder than the surrounding speech
=	this at the end of one and the beginning of another utterance indicates the absence of a gap between one speaker and another

See Parker (1992) and Potter & Wetherell (1987) and for a discussion on transcription conventions see Atkinson & Heritage (1984).

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