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**MEN AGAINST VIOLENCE: A POST-STRUCTURALIST CRITIQUE OF  
THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF STOPPING MEN'S  
VIOLENCE TO WOMEN IN AN APPLIED COMMUNITY SETTING**

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## ABSTRACT

This research project begins with a post-structuralist critique of the social science theoretical literature surrounding wife abuse. Within this most controversial area of the social sciences five discourses were found to be operating in and informing the field, between them affording a diverse array of theoretical accounts and intervention strategies. These underlying discursive resources are the Liberal humanist 'instrumental' position, the Romantic 'expressive tension' position, Tabula rasa 'learning' theory, Medical 'pathology' and the Structuralist 'social systemic' account. The history and implications of each discourse are discussed.

In a second study a participant observation strategy explored how the Manawatu Men Against Violence collective (MMAV), in the face of this diverse and conflicting field, work to stop men's violence in the community. Through participating in a MMAV 'Stopping Violence' programme, observations concerning the discursive content and structure to the programme were made. It was found through this exercise that MMAV employed four of the five discourses identified in the scientific literature and omitted one; 'pathology'. This was a strategic move on MMAV's part, enabling a variety of intervention strategies, dominated by a Liberal humanist construction of events, around which the remaining discourses were couched. The implications of this discursive structure to the programme are discussed.

A third study explored how the MMAV programme impacts upon participant's subjectivity. Semi-structured interviews prior to and following participation in a MMAV Stopping Violence programme recorded narratives of the men as they accounted for their violence, the violence of others in the community and described their intimate relationships. It was found that exposure to the discourses imparted by MMAV had had an impact upon the men's accounting practices as distinct shifts as well as consistencies in subject positionings were apparent in the post-course interview comparison. Results demonstrated that the men had interacted with the course material and that this had several effects upon their sense of agency. The implications of such shifts and continuities are discussed and recommendations for future research are made.

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