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Sadique, M. and Coakley, E.

Author post-print (accepted) deposited in CURVE September 2016

Original citation & hyperlink:

Goodman, S. and Walker, K. (2016) “Some I don’t remember and some I do”: Memory talk in accounts of intimate partner violence. . *Discourse Studies*, volume 18 (4): 375-392

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1461445616647884>

DOI 10.1177/1461445616647884

ISSN 1461-4456

ESSN 1461-7080

Publisher: Sage

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“Some I don’t remember and some I do”: Memory talk in accounts of intimate partner violence

Simon Goodman and Kate Walker

both Coventry University

Please address all correspondence to the first author at:

Work E-mail: S.Goodman@Coventry.ac.uk

Private E-mail: Simon.Goodman@yahoo.com

Office phone: +44(0)247 765 9515

Home phone: +44(0)247 626 3667

Correspondence Address:

Dr Simon Goodman

Centre for Research in Psychology, Behaviour and Achievement

Faculty of Health & Life Sciences

Coventry University

Priory Street

Coventry

CV1 5FB

UK

Short title: Memory talk in accounts of partner violence

Word count: 8980

File size: 66KB

Author Biographies:

Dr Simon Goodman is a Research Fellow at Coventry University. His research uses discursive psychology to address a number of issues including the discursive construction of asylum seekers and refugees. His work focuses on what is, and what is not, considered to be racist particularly with regard to asylum seeking. His other interests include the British public's understanding of income inequality, the ways in which the far right attempt to present their policies as acceptable and non-racist and political discourse.

Dr Kate Walker is a Research Associate at the Faculty Research Centre in Psychology, Behaviour, and Achievement (PBA) at Coventry University. Her particular research focus is related to desistance from intimate partner violence and the behavioural changes associated with this process. Her research includes the development and evaluation of primary and tertiary interventions for the prevention of violence and interpersonal aggression in adult and adolescent populations.

Acknowledgement:

We would like to thank Abigail Locke for her helpful comments on this paper.

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Abstract

This study is the first to address the ways in which male perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV) talk about memory in their reports of their IPV and how these are used to manage their accountability for the violence. Drawing on and developing the discursive psychological literature on talk about memory, which highlights how such talk is used to perform practical actions within interactions, a discourse analysis is conducted on interviews with six male perpetrators of recent, multiple incidents of IPV who were undergoing treatment. The analysis identified the varying ways in which memory was used: first claims of forgetting were used to avoid answering difficult and potentially incriminating questions; second claims of clear memories were used to position partners as problematic and responsible for violence; and third, claims about simultaneously remembering and forgetting were found. The implications of these strategies for managing identity and accountability are discussed.

Key words: Memory; IPV; Discursive Psychology; Discourse Analysis; Violence; Relationships; Accountability

Introduction

This paper is the first to address the previously unexplored ways in which talk about memory are used in accounts of intimate partner violence (IPV). It begins by highlighting the prevalence of IPV and the impact this behaviour has. The theoretical frameworks generated to explain men's use of violence towards female partners are then explored. This includes an examination of the relationship between memory and IPV. It is argued from a discursive psychological viewpoint that these theories fail to address the ways in which talk, including

talk about memory, performs social actions such as mitigating blame, which is particularly relevant in accounts of IPV.

Extent of Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) includes physical violence (e.g. pushing, slapping), psychological/emotional abuse, controlling behaviours (i.e. economic), and sexual abuse.

Both males and females perpetrate IPV, but the current study has chosen to focus on a sample of IPV males who have used violence against a female. IPV is the most common form of violence against women; it has been suggested that one in three women throughout the world (i.e., 30% of women worldwide) will experience physical and/or sexual violence by a partner or ex-partner (World Health Organization, 2013). Garcia-Moreno et al. (2006) reported that between 15% (in Japan) and 71% (in Ethiopia) of women aged 15-49 years reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives. In the US, three in ten women have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by a partner (Black et al., 2011). In the UK, according to the 2013/2014 Crime Survey for England and Wales (Office for National statistics 2015), 8.5% of women experienced IPV in the previous year (which is thought to be equivalent to around 1.4 million female victims). IPV has a severe impact on victims particularly in relation to their physical (e.g., cuts, bruises, broken bones), mental (e.g., PTSD, depression) and health (e.g., chronic pain syndrome, cardiovascular disease) wellbeing (Jordan et al., 2010).

Theoretical explanations for IPV

Several theories of IPV have been proposed over the years that offer different explanatory frameworks for conceptualising the use of violence in an intimate relationship, although it has been argued that these fail to encapsulate the complexity of all the variables associated with IPV (Bell and Naugle, 2008). Some of the most widely recognised theories include socio-cultural theories, i.e., feminist theory (Dobash and Dobash, 1977; Walker, 1984; Yllo,

1988), power theory (Straus, 1976; Straus, 1977) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1971; Bandura, 1973). Psychological perspectives in theories of IPV have focused on the various factors that affect the individual perpetrator (or the victim) such as psychopathology and personality (e.g., Dutton, 2006; Ehrensaft et al., 2006); attachment issues (e.g., Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Fraley and Shaver, 2000); anger/hostility (e.g., Baron et al., 2007; Holtzworth-Munroe and Rehman, 2000); self-esteem (e.g., Murphy et al., 2005; Papadakaki et al., 2009); and substance and alcohol abuse (e.g., Boles and Miotto, 2003; Fals-Stewart, 2003).

Researchers have also examined the relationship between memory and IPV and it has been suggested that men who admit to being violent against their partners are more likely than men who have never used violence, or those who had only used violence outside the family, to report life-time mental health symptoms such as concentration and memory problems (Logan et al., 2001a; Logan et al., 2001b). Indeed researchers have found that memory deficits in abusers have been associated with increased forgetfulness by IPV perpetrators in relation to some of the violent acts they have committed and memory lapses regarding the frequency of physical aggression they have used (Cohen et al., 1999). Other researchers have found that perpetrators of IPV show memory impairments in relation to both their working and long-term memory (e.g., Romero-Martínez and Moya-Albiol, 2013). These authors suggest that this could be related to brain injury and substance abuse in part for some; although they conclude these variables alone are not enough to explain these deficits found. Generally, it has been found that emotional memories are more often remembered with greater accuracy and vividness than events lacking an emotional component (Buchanan, 2007; Reisberg and Hertel, 2005). This is relevant in relation to using IPV as use of such behaviours are likely to be events associated with strong emotions (e.g., anger, Baron et al., 2007; self-control, Gover et al., 2011).

Discursive Psychological approach to IPV

Despite their differences, all of these explanations for IPV have in common two underlying assumptions. First is the idea that perpetrator's accounts of their violence can, to a varying extent, provide insights into what those men 'really' think and feel, for example that there is a genuine belief amongst IPV men about men's superiority over women (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; 1992). Second is the idea that psychological concepts that are relevant to IPV (for example self-control) can be viewed as relatively stable and enduring and as meaning the same thing to all those involved in understanding IPV. However, both of these assumptions have been challenged by Discursive Psychology (DP, Edwards & Potter, 1992) as this approach has been used to argue against both of these assumptions.

First, in DP, reports on cognitions are viewed not as a way of ascertaining what people really think, because their talk is always going to be performing some sort of social action. Given that talk about IPV is sensitive, due to the wide cultural norm which states that such behaviour is unacceptable, perpetrators of such acts need to be ready to explain and account for their actions in ways that may minimise their accountability and/or blameworthiness. Second, when talking about sensitive topics such as IPV psychological concepts may not always appear to be stable. For example Walker and Goodman (in press) analysed talk about self-control in perpetrators of IPV and demonstrated that talk about self-control was employed rhetorically as a way of managing perpetrators' accountability for their actions, so that levels of self-control were shown to vary, sometimes within a particular account so that men claimed almost simultaneously to have and to lack self-control. This means that rather than being stable and enduring, psychological states relevant to IPV can be expected to vary according to their function in interaction.

From a DP perspective then a very different approach to IPV is needed. Rather than attempting to infer what perpetrators of IPV ‘really’ think or feel, instead it is of much more use to understand the ways in which they talk about psychological concepts so that we can better understand them. As demonstrated above, research has investigated the relationship between memory and IPV, however this research shares the two assumptions that DP has effectively challenged. Therefore a DP approach to memory in talk about IPV is required so we can better understand what this talk about memory in relation to IPV is doing.

Discursive Psychology and memory

From its inception DP has focussed on the ways in which memory is used in talk with Edwards and Potter (1992, p. 74) claiming that memories occur ‘in discourse as pragmatically occasioned accomplishments’ so as to ‘attempt to construct an *acceptable, agreed or communicatively successful* version of what happened’ (1992, p. 75, emphasis in original). This means that reports of memories cannot be viewed as an accurate representation of what a speaker really remembers, but instead as interactional resources that may work to present the speaker in an acceptable way. From this perspective there is an interest ‘on what people do with their talk, rather than using discourse as a way of accessing what goes on in their minds. Remembering [is] recast as [something] that people do in their interactions with others: they produce versions of events, objects and people.’ (Horton-Salway, 2001, p. 153). To Edwards, memory is an ‘integral part of the interaction-oriented work done by talk’ (2006, p. 42) which means that talk about memory is designed to achieve pragmatic ends when used in conversation, memory therefore becomes ‘a way of accomplishing some activity in the present through invoking the past in an appropriate a skilled manner’ (Brown, Middleton, and Lightfoot, 2001, p. 125). A number of studies have addressed accounts of both remembering and its opposite, forgetting, demonstrating how both

of these are invoked to perform practical action (e.g., Coulter, 1985; Lynch and Bogen, 2005; McVittie et al., 2014; Potter, 1996; Tileaga, 2011).

While there is a body of DP literature addressing memory, no one has examined how this relates to IPV. The following DP studies however have looked at memory within a relationship context. Locke and Edwards (2003) addressed former American President Bill Clinton's talk regarding memory when giving testimony about his (scandalous) relationship with Monica Lewinsky. They demonstrate how Clinton fluctuates between claiming to have memory about certain events but not about others and that this difference relates to the different practical activities that Clinton is attending to. Locke and Edwards show how Clinton claims to remember events that present Lewinsky as being emotional and therefore problematic, but not able to remember if he took part in a potentially incriminating telephone conversation with her. From this they are able to conclude that a lack of memory can function 'in avoiding accountability for forgotten actions' (2003, p. 243).

Continuing with the theme of not remembering, Muntigl and Choi (2010) demonstrate that not remembering can be used to manage accountability and to avoid blame in some situation (such as courtroom settings) but that as a result speakers can also become accountable for not remembering, so that failing to remember can be responded to precisely as a strategy for avoiding blame. They go on to argue that by making a show of struggling to remember (such as 'I'm finding it hard to remember') speakers are able to avoid these negative connotations. In their analysis of couples' therapy they demonstrate that displays of not being able to remember allowed speakers to address 'epistemic, social/moral and rhetorical orientations' (Muntigl and Choi, 2010, p. 351). By epistemic orientations they show that speakers who claim not to be able to remember something must find other ways to present themselves as competent and appropriate conversationalist; by social/moral orientations they mean that speakers failing to remember must deal with the issues of

accountability that this causes; and by rhetorical orientations they demonstrate how speakers claiming not to remember have to deal with the potential that such claims will be oriented to as managing a stake in not answering. It is these types of orientations that are likely to be relevant in the talk of IPV perpetrators.

Together the discursive literature on talk about remembering and forgetting has demonstrated convincingly that talk about memory does little to tell us about what speakers really remember, but instead functions to achieve practical actions such as resisting blame. However, to date none of these studies have addressed the ways in which talk about memory is invoked in accounts of IPV, an issue where stake is likely to be high and perpetrators are likely to be managing their accountability. The purpose of this paper is to develop the DP understanding of talk about memory and specifically to introduce an understanding of talk about memory in an IPV context. The aim of this paper therefore is to address talk about memory in IPV perpetrators to understand what this talk is rhetorically designed to do.

Method

Participants

The current research was interested in the accounts of men who had perpetrated violence against an intimate female partner. Participants were therefore recruited from intervention programmes in England, specifically aimed at perpetrators of IPV, and were either self-referred to community programmes or court-mandated through Probation to attend. A specific and purposeful sample of six men were selected for this study, as they met the following criteria: (i) they self-reported having used physical and psychological violence against an intimate (as measured on the Revised Conflict Tactic Scale; (CTS2, Straus et al., 1996); (ii) they reported using physical and psychological violence on multiple occasions in the last year; and (iii) they were currently attending treatment for their IPV use. This

represents a small but specific sample, which is appropriate to support the claims made in the analysis. Four of the males attended community self-referred programmes and two of the males were court-mandated to treatment. The mean age of the participants was 34 years (SD = 5.06), with an age range of 26-41 years. The participants were all White British. None of the participants attended education post 18 years, with three of the participants leaving school at age 16 with no or very few qualifications. All participants were currently in an intimate relationship.

Procedure

Following Ethical clearance from both Coventry University's Research Ethics Committee and the National Offender Manager Service (NOMS), offenders were recruited from intervention groups run in the South, West and Midland regions in the UK. In total 40 semi-structured interviews were completed for a broader research project that focused on desistance from IPV (Walker et al., 2014). The transcripts from six participants were then selected based on the criteria stipulated above. All participants were given full information about the nature of the study, what was required and informed written consent was obtained from each participant. The males were invited to talk through their use of violence within their intimate relationships and so interview questions were developed and structured around a timeline that asked participants about their life when violence was a part of it and the periods when violence was not being used. Interviews were all completed on a one-to-one basis in a private room, at the centres where the men attended treatment. Given the sensitive nature of the research, confidentiality was ensured for all participants by removing any information that could potentially identify them or others in their accounts. Interviews were all digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim following an orthographic 'play script' format (see Gibson, 2010).

The data analysis method used in this study is discourse analysis (e.g., Edwards and Potter, 1992) in line with the DP perspective that frames the research. This means that rather than focussing on what the talk about memory tells us about what the IPV perpetrators may or may not remember the analysis deals with what this talk about memory accomplishes in the interaction. Given the aims of the study, the authors identified all references to memory (including remembering and forgetting) throughout the data corpus. These references were then analysed in more detail to identify what the talk about memory accomplished at that point in the interaction. The examples presented below represent exemplars of the different uses of talk about memory throughout rather than to equally represent all participants, although it should be noted that some participants used talk about memory in more than one of the different ways identified in the analysis. To maintain anonymity participants will be referred to as P1-P6 and any potential identifying information has been removed from the excerpts used.

Analysis

The analysis identified a range of ways in which talk about memory is used. The analysis is split into three sections. It is first shown how claims about a lack of memory can be used to aid the speaker in avoiding answering difficult questions about their use of violence. It is then shown that displays of clarity of memory also feature in the talk as a way of presenting accounts as detailed and accurate, particularly when the detail implicates the partner as blameworthy for the IPV. Finally, it is shown that within extracts claims can be made about both having and lacking memory, which further demonstrates how talk about memory is used by participants as a rhetorical device to help manage their accountability and identity within the interaction.

Lack of memory used to avoid answering questions

In this first extract P5 has been asked about his historical use of violence and whether he can describe his first incidence of using IPV. It can be seen that when pressed to give further details a lack of memory is invoked to allow vagueness in the response.

Extract One [P5]

1. I: OK, so if I go to your first serious relationship. Was there any use of violence of
2. abuse in that relationship?
3. P5: No
4. I: Nothing at all? No verbal, no
5. P5: No no, not that I remember. I mean it was a very very long time ago
6. I: Yes
7. P5: But I mean we had our arguments and tiffs but there was certainly no physical or
8. mental abuse that I was aware of at that time

The extract begins with the interviewer asking if there was violence in P5's first serious relationship (lines 1-2). This question is met with a very clear rejection of the implied suggestion ('no' line 2). The interviewer then probes for further details by attempting to pin him down (Matoesian, 2005) through two phrases. First 'nothing at all?' (line 4) implies doubt and allows for at least the possibility that some abusive behaviour may have occurred. Second 'no verbal, no' (line 4) provides the opportunity for P5 to admit to some problematic behaviour, in this case verbal abuse or another unsaid type of abuse following the second 'no'. However before the interviewer states this second potential abuse P5 again makes a clear and definite denial, this time by repeating no (line 5). In doing so, P5 is attempting to avoid the implication in the interviewer's question that he has a disposition to IPV.

What follows is of particular interest because this is where P5 claims not to be able to remember. This claim about not being able to remember allows him to make a believable

denial, but is also ambiguous enough to be able to give him room to backtrack if necessary, particularly as the context of the interview is one where he has been recruited as an IPV offender. This is therefore an example of using (lack of) memory to be ‘productively vague’ (Edwards and Potter, 1992). To support this claim and to manage his accountability for not being able to remember a potential significant and/or incriminating event P5 states first ‘I mean’ (line 5) which is both an honesty tag (Edwards and Fasulo, 2006) and an attempt to make the following statement that the events being described took place ‘a very very long time ago’ (line 5) appear self-evident. The repetition of ‘very’ serves to emphasise the truth of the claim. Drawing on a lack of memory regarding an event that took place some time ago represents an interpretative repertoire (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) which is an easily recognisable common sense notion, here used to present his lack of memory as understandable and realistic.

Although this claim is met with acceptance from the interviewer (line 6) P5 nevertheless adds clarification to his initial claim through the use of a concession (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999) that there were problems in the relationship although these problems did not include violence. Even this clarification however includes some hedging through the use of ‘that I was aware of’ (line 8) which pre-empts any potential difficulties he could find himself in for being able to remember some details of his relationship, but not those involving his use of violence. In sum, throughout this extract P5 is able to present a convincing account of non-violence in this relationship while also allowing flexibility if evidence of violence in this relationship were to be provided all through the use of claiming not to remember.

The next extract follows the same question that preceded extract one and also contains references to memory that allow for the participant to make a vague answer in relation to the use of violence.

Extract Two [P3]

1. P3: Well it started in my marriage
2. I: OK. So do you want to talk me through that
3. P3: Yeah. Right this is where it started, I tend to have to think real hard and forget that
4. and sort of like I don't want to think about it, so I just had it all out
5. I: Hmm
6. [23 lines omitted]
7. P3: then that's when I came back and that was the first time I ever done anything
8. I: And what did you do?
9. P3: I came back, I don't remember entirely but it was, I must have punched
10. her or something

After providing some context of where the violence began (line 1) and an invitation to elaborate from the interviewer (line 2), P3 accepts the invitation and begins to give his account (line 3). The account is preceded with some framing that presents it as difficult to talk about and the main way this is achieved is through talk about memory which, as in the previous extract, allows for vagueness in the account. There are three different aspects to this talk about memory: (i) he has to 'think real hard' (line 3), (ii) he may 'forget' (line 3) and (iii) that he 'doesn't want to think about it' (line 4). Claiming that he will 'think real hard' but that he may forget presents his memory of the events as limited. This provides P3 with the opportunity to be vague and to not fully answer the question. However, by claiming to be putting effort in to try to remember, while acknowledging the potential to forget, he manages his accountability for not being able to remember; it is not because he isn't trying that he is unable to remember.

At this point, the claim around vagueness works in a similar way to the previous extract. However a major difference is P3's claim that he doesn't want to think about what he

did. This claim, like claiming not to remember, allows him to avoid providing details of his violence while simultaneously acknowledging his guilt. The interview context requires him to acknowledge his use of IPV, but by claiming that he doesn't want to think about it he is also able to present himself as remorseful, and therefore having a positive identity, while also avoiding providing detail of his violence that could present him far more negatively. This all suggests that P3 is managing a troubled identity. Troubled identities have been defined as being both a negative identity, which Wetherell describes as 'not creditable' (1998, p. 398) and as being 'inconsistent with other identities that are claimed' (Taylor, 2005, p.254). Here P3 is meeting both definitions; an IPV perpetrator is a 'troubled' identity in itself and he is also attempting to present a creditable identity, despite being selected for interview precisely because of his (troubled) identity as an IPV perpetrator.

Following this the interviewer utters a continuer (line 5) after which P3 goes on to describe in some detail what he presents as his difficult circumstances (including money worries and working away from home) that preceded the violence. After the omitted lines he completes the story which ends with his account of his first use of violence (line 7). The interviewer then asks for some detail regarding what the violence was (line 8) and it is at this point that memory is referred to again. After repeating that he came back (line 9) he claims not to remember what happened in detail ('I don't remember entirely' line 9) which, as in the previous examples, allows him to be productively vague and to avoid providing detail regarding the violence. When he does give an example of the violence he's used, it is done in a very non-committal way so that initially he goes to say 'it was' (line 9) but then goes on to make a self-repair before stating what he 'must have' (line 9) done. This 'must have' allows him to keep a distance from the purported violence so that he's not fully presented as having agency for the actions and lessens the impact of the violence that is mentioned ('punched her' lines 9-10). The final 'or something' (line 10) allows further space for flexibility and hedging

which further adds to the overall vagueness of the account. Later in the same interview the same participant refers to a lack of memory following, again to avoid answering a question about specific episodes of violence. However the conversation then develops in a different way.

Extract Three [P3]

1. I : So, can you talk me through that history? Can you remember the first incident with
2. [name of partner]?
3. R :No, no nothing. That's really hard, she, [name of partner] would be able to tell you
4. straight away probably
5. I : Hmm
6. R :Ummm (pause) but I cannot at the moment, I cannot tell you the first incident but
7. when it you know started going again

The interviewer again requests specific information about his history of IPV. It is noteworthy that the interviewer explicitly asks about memory (line 1) when formulating the question, which could be an orientation to the earlier talk of (a lack of) memory in extract two. By directly asking if he can remember (line 1) the interviewer provides the opportunity for a simple denial of remembering, which is exactly what happens (line 3). The denial is then emphasised through the repetition of 'no' and the upgrading to 'nothing' (line 3). Next P3 claims that remembering is 'really hard' which mirrors his talk in extract two and again works to strengthen his claim not to be able to remember.

What happens next is of note because P3 then shifts to make a claim about his partner's memory, specifically stating that (unlike him) she would be able to remember the incident. Her memory is presented as very strong through the definite 'would be able' (line 3) and the 'straight away' (line 4) which is in direct contrast to his emphatic 'no' and claim that

for him remembering is difficult. The ‘probably’ (line 4) at the end of this claim, however softens what has just been said and introduces some hedging. This ‘probably’ could be evidence of backtracking because what he has just said could be problematic because the fact that she could remember (and so readily) could imply that he should also be able to have similar clarity of memory. This calls into question his accountability for not being able to remember and runs the risk of presenting his lack of memory as being a strategy for avoiding answering difficult questions. This is exactly the kind of ‘*dilemma of stake or interest*’ that Edwards and Potter (1992: 158, emphasis in original) refer to in their discourse action model. Following the interviewer’s continuer (line 5) P3 displays features of a dispreferred response (Pomerantz, 1984) in the form of the ‘ummm’ and the following pause. Dispreferred responses imply that some delicacy may be needed, which supports the claim that this talk is problematic. He doesn’t refer to his partner’s memory again, but instead works to manage his own accountability for failing to recall by stating that his lack of memory may be fluid (‘cannot at this moment’ line 6) and that while he cannot remember the specific incident he has been asked about, he can remember others.

The following extract also contains a reference to a lack of memory, but this works in a very different way from the previous extracts so instead of managing his own account this functions to present his partner as problematic and therefore to justify his use of violence.

Extract Four, [P6]

1. R :So I come back from work, she was ranting and raving over something, couldn’t even
2. remember what it is now, arguing, she ran upstairs so I went upstairs to see what she
3. was doing and she was drinking a bottle of vodka at the top of the stairs. I took it off
4. her and said you’ve had enough

This is P6's account of the events that led up to his extreme use of violence against his partner where he punched her. The account works to present her in a very negative light and as culpable for the violence used against her for 'ranting' (line 1) and excessive drinking (line 3). While many of the details of the event appear to be in place there is nevertheless an explicit claim that he 'couldn't even remember' (lines 1-2). This lack of memory is not about his own or others' speech, but is used to refer to her 'ranting and raving' (line 1). This functions to present his partner's behaviour as problematic and as typical of her (dispositional), as this is presented as yet one more example of her continuing unreasonable behaviour, and it is for this reason that it is presented as unmemorable. In this case therefore a lack of memory functions to emphasise the problematic, but typical nature of the partner who is presented as inviting the violence towards her.

Clarity of memory used to present an account as detailed/accurate

One participant, P2, makes many explicit references to having a clear memory throughout his accounts (that are much longer than the other participants') claiming, for example 'and I'll never forget that incident' and 'I'll never forget, the thing is burned into my memory' and the following extract that contains three claims of 'I remember' (lines 1, 7 and 18).

Extract Five [P2]

1. R: So anyway, yeah, I remember I tried having a discussion about how our sex life had
2. died, because I knew it was a very intimate part of our relationship
3. I: Hmm hmm
4. R: And she became evasive
5. I: Hmm hmm
6. R: Even a bit angry. I got angry back. Then when I was trying to be nice and rebuild the
7. relationship and I remember the day it finally ended

8. I: Hmm

9. R: I said to her look, we've had a really nice day today and she said, sort of. I said well

10. no, come on we've done nice things

11. I: Hmm hmm

12. R: You know, we're both trying, a bit late I said or something along those lines, I can't

13. remember exactly what she said and I said you know, I think we can get somewhere

14. here and she said well I don't and I said well then fuck off

15. I: Hmm

16. R: And meant it

The first use of 'I remember' comes in line 1. This functions to do two main things. First it emphasises the accuracy of the account that he is giving. This is a discursive technique common to this participant, as illustrated with the other examples of his claims of remembering. By claiming to remember, P2's accounts are worked up as being believable. This is in stark contrast with the examples in the previous section where claims of a lack of memory were used to avoid giving detailed answers to questions. The second thing this claim about clear memory does is to present him in a positive light ('I tried having a discussion' line 1) and his partner in a negative light ('she became evasive' line 4 and 'even a bit angry' line 6). This functions to present him as reasonable whereas his partner is unreasonable. This would suggest that claims about forgetting (such as those in the previous section) are a feature of accounts of negative behaviour whereas claims about remembering are a feature of positive behaviour. The next part of the extract repeats the same strategy with a claim about having clear memory ('and I remember' line 7) accompanying an account of him being reasonable (lines 9-10) where his partner is not (line 9). Claims about memory are therefore attending to issues around identity.

However despite P2's claim of having a clear memory, a lack of memory still feature in his account which demonstrates that talk about memory is not consistent and can be used flexibly. As part of the incident that he is claiming to remember clearly ('I remember' line 7) which includes both verbatim speech (e.g. 'I said to her look' line 9) and less accurate reported speech (e.g. 'a bit late I said or something along those lines' line 12) he also reports his partner's speech and it is here that he claims not to be able to 'remember exactly' (line 13). Unlike his own reported speech at this point there is no attempt to give any representation of what she said, which works to favour his version of events. After this he returns to reported speech both from him ('you know' line 13) and his partner ('well I don't' line 14). The shift from not reporting his partner's speech (at line 13) to returning to report it (at line 14) is noteworthy because again it is only her purportedly unreasonable talk that is fully reported, whereas her explanation is missing at line 13, and it is this that could contain her version of events. In this case then, talk about memory is again functioning to control which version of events are presented and favoured. Talk about memory is therefore used to do identity work and to manage whose version of events is presented. Rather than providing an insight into what P2 can or can't actually remember, instead his talk about memory provides the groundwork and justification ('well then' line 14) for the problematic and aggressive swearing (line 14) directed towards his partner.

In this extract memory is presented as clear so as to provide a detailed account that supports P2's version of events. However, even in this extract we see that the reports of memory vary according to their function, in this case favouring the speaker's account over his partner's. In the final section further examples of varying memory are explored.

Varying levels of memory within an extract

The following extract begins with the interviewer requesting specific details regarding P4's use of IPV. The response contains an explicit about having varying levels of recall.

Extract Six [P4]

1. I: So could you describe some of the incidents of physical violence that happened there
2. and up to the last incident
3. R: Hmm well there's actually, there's quite a lot I'm not going to lie to you
4. I: OK
5. R: Going through them all would be quite hard and some I don't remember and some I
6. do. Some were all her
7. I: Hmm hmm
8. R: And I was defending myself (laughs) and others it was actually all me
9. I: Hmm
10. R: You know
11. I: Could you pick out some perhaps key ones then and describe how they come about
12. and how they escalated and how you felt
13. R: Yeah hmm there was this one time...

The interviewer's question includes a request for a description of past events (lines 1-2) which requires the respondent to provide an account, drawing on his memory, thereby making him accountable for providing this description. P4 orients to this question as being problematic, by showing that his use of violence is extensive. The delicacy of this claim is signalled through the 'hmm' (line 3) and the following honesty phrases (Edwards and Fasulo, 2006) 'actually' (line 3) and 'I'm not going to lie to you' (line 3) and through the 'a lot' (line 3) being preceded by 'quite' (line 3). Together this suggests a dispreferred response

(Pomerantz, 1984) that is managed by shows of honesty, which work to present him in a positive light, and the downgrading term (quite) even though what is being said is clearly hearable as extremely bad. Rather than responding, the interviewer gives a continuer (line 4) which prompts P4 to use the extent of his violence ('them all' line 5) to prevent him from having to account for it all 'would be quite hard' (line 5).

Making a show of the difficulty of the interview situation is interesting, because all involved would expect a conversation about violence to be a topic that would always be difficult to discuss. Immediately after this work to avoid providing full detail he then makes a clear show of his varying memory (line 5) to further allow him to avoid fully answering the question. This is an unusual use of not remembering because in all the previous examples analysed above, the not remembering follows a specific request for information, however in this case P4 is pre-emptively claiming not to remember something on a general level; here he is claiming not to remember an entire event that he has not been directly prompted to talk about.

Next P4 goes on to directly (line 6) and indirectly (line 8) blame his partner for 'some' (line 6) of the violence but then places the blame on himself for 'others' (line 8) with the use of another honesty phrase ('actually' line 8). After continuers from both speakers (lines 9 and 10) the interview orients to P4's comments about varying memory by asking P4 to select specific examples of his use of violence (lines 11-12) including attempts to pin him down (Matoesian, 2005) following his previous turns in which he has attempted to avoid directly answering the question with any detail. This question is successful as P4 next goes on to describe an example (which is specified as 'one', suggesting that this is atypical) in great detail (line 13 and beyond the extract).

Discussion

This analysis has demonstrated the varying ways that talk about memory is used. It was first shown that a lack of memory was used to avoid answering a question; specifically a recognisable repertoire (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) of a lack of memory was used to avoid providing detail about incidents where the speaker had used violence against his partner. In one of the examples of this, by claiming not to be able to remember the speaker suggested that his partner would be able to, which could alert listeners to the possibility that he was claiming not to remember as a strategy for avoiding answering the question. However a lack of memory wasn't only used to avoid answering questions, so in extract four the speaker claiming not to remember what his partner was talking about functioned to present her as unreasonable.

The analysis has shown, however, that failure to remember is only one way that IPV men draw on memory as in extract five the reverse is seen as the speaker presented his own memory as extremely clear. This is in contrast with his partner's action that in his accounts are not remembered in detail, which was used as a warrant to criticise her and to justify his own problematic actions. The clearest evidence that talk about memory varies according to function comes in this and the final extract, where the speakers claim to remember *some* features and not others. In extract five this works to favour the speaker's version of events over his wife's and in extract six claims about a varying memory are again used in an attempt (albeit failed) to avoid giving details about his use of violence. This demonstrates that talk about memory orients to practical actions, in this case predominantly the avoidance of answering difficult questions but also the shifting of blame onto partners, rather than providing insights into what participants actually remember.

That talk about memory orients to practical action is to be expected, as this is in line with the DP approach to memory. However, these findings are novel in that they demonstrate the specific ways in which talk about memory is invoked in accounts of IPV. In terms of

Edwards and Potter's notion of memory being used to bring about a '*communicatively successful* version' (1992, p. 75, emphasis in original) of events; the speakers in this analysis can be seen to have achieved varied outcomes, some of which are more '*communicatively successful* versions' than others. The avoidance of answering potentially difficult questions regarding details of violence (e.g. extract one) and the shifting of blame onto partners (e.g. extract four) could be viewed as communicatively successful, as the individuals avoid associating themselves as being fully responsible for their use of violence. However, the claim in extract six about not being able to remember events that his partner would be able to remember fails to avoid providing details of violence, and so could be viewed as communicatively *unsuccessful* – the participant has not managed to disassociate himself away from the use of problematic violent behaviours.

What determines the communicative success or failure of talk about memory may be explained using Muntigl and Choi's notion of 'epistemic, social/moral and rhetorical orientations' (2010, p.351). In terms of epistemic orientations speakers who are claiming not to remember can be seen presenting themselves as compliant in the interview despite their lack of memory, so *all* the examples in this study include some talk of a lack of memory and these are *all* accompanied with displays of providing some relevant information. In terms of social/moral orientation many of the examples featured include an attempt to either avoid giving accounts of violence that could incriminate (extracts one, two and three, five and six) and/or position the speaker as less culpable for his actions than his partner (extracts four, five and six).

In terms of rhetorical orientations, participants can be seen to be managing their accountability for not remembering (see Coulter, 1985) usually by offering some memories. The rhetorical orientations of participants in this study can be seen as influenced directly by the interview context. Given that the data here was generated for a social science interview

there is an understanding that participants have perpetrated IPV and are expected to talk about this in the interview. Because of this expectation, participants are accountable for being able to remember at least some of their violent episodes which means that failure to provide accounts could be oriented to as an attempt to avoid answering questions. This may explain why in extract three the interviewer's question that explicitly referenced memory which opened up the option to claim not to remember ('can you remember') was met with a direct no. This may also explain why the interviewer's attempt to pin down the speaker in extract six was successful, following the speaker's claim that he could remember some, but not all, specific events. While these strategies are unique to the interview setting, similar contextual demands are to be expected in other settings, such as police interviews following arrest for IPV incidents and therapeutic sessions for perpetrators.

This shows that perpetrators' talk about memory is used to perform practical activities such as avoiding answering difficult questions which could highlight their problematic behaviours and attempting to shift blame away from themselves and onto their partners. This means that talk about memory is also attending to issues of (moral) identity (see Stokoe, 2003) because as the analysis demonstrates this talk is designed to present the perpetrators in as positive a way as possible (given the understanding that they have committed IPV). Ways in which moral identity is managed in the extracts include, but are not limited to, attempts to diminish culpability in the use of violence, e.g. 'there was certainly no physical or mental abuse that I was aware of' (extract one) and attempts to present partners as having a negative identity, e.g. 'she was ranging and raving over something, could even remember what it is now' (extract four).

The literature on memory and IPV has previously tended to focus on a biological perspective and how memory deficits e.g., executive-memory functioning may be related to brain dysfunction in IPV populations and could therefore contribute towards the propensity

for using IPV (Cohen et al., 1999; Romero-Martínez and Moya-Albiol, 2013). This type of research is therefore based on the assumption that memory is either impaired or not and that this is causally related to an individual's use of violence. Although there is some evidence of an association, for some individuals, between neurological memory dysfunction and use of IPV, findings to date cannot be interpreted as evidence that such dysfunctions can be generalised to explain all type of IPV. Taking a discursive psychological approach, the analysis of talk about memory demonstrates that memory should not be treated as a useful window into a person's past, but as something that is a construct that is negotiated in talk. The role of this construct varies depending on what the individual is trying to achieve. It has been demonstrated that the variation in talk about memory in the accounts of the men occurs because different talk about being able to remember (or not remember), do different types of rhetorical work to predominantly avoid answering difficult questions or to shift the blame onto partners. Such an approach therefore is not looking for evidence of causal relationships between memory and violence but how men use memory in their talk to manage their identity.

Conclusion

This paper is the first to investigate the ways in which memory is used in talk about IPV. By developing the DP understanding of talk about memory it has been possible to identify the varied ways in which perpetrators of IPV invoke talk about memory. These ways include claims not to be able to remember, which tend to work towards avoiding answering difficult questions that could draw attention to the seriousness of their violence and claims to not be able to remember clearly, which tend to work towards presenting partners in a negative light and as bearing some responsibility for the violence used against them. It has therefore been shown that talk about memory in accounts of IPV, rather than providing useful insight into

what they may or may not actually be able to remember, performs practical actions such as managing their accountability and identity that are relevant in interaction.

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