

An exploration of neglected themes in the development of domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK

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PhD by Publication

May 2019

Abstract

This thesis is based on a body of published work which critically examines the major influences on the development of domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK. The thesis explores how a series of evolving theoretical frameworks, social policy, and organisational contexts have influenced approaches to practice with perpetrators, and how programme effectiveness has been variously determined and assessed. The origins of the papers and the linking narrative developed from a sense of professional dissatisfaction that several important themes concerning programmes and the potential for them to engage more effectively with perpetrators have frequently been overlooked or marginalised in the research literature.

These themes concern the wider social contexts in which perpetrator programmes in the UK emerged, the explanations for men's violence and abuse which have variously prevailed, and the practices adopted in programmes as a consequence. They note the extent to which various protagonists including feminist activists, social policy professionals, academic researchers and probation and social work managers have often conceptualised perpetrator programmes as abstract entities. Consequently, this thesis addresses a number of important and original themes. It addresses and emphasises the importance of relationships between programme practitioner and participant, significantly acknowledging the emotional impact upon practitioners of undertaking complex work in an innovative and demanding area. It takes into account the significance of the wider social, structural and cultural circumstances in which programmes function. It also examines the neglected question of what desisting from domestic abuse might actually entail as well the rewards and challenges involved. It explores how men who have perpetrated violence and abuse might better be enabled to desist from this behaviour and live more positive lives and discusses the implications for programmes and for practice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction:

Aim of the PhD

This PhD thesis is based on a body of published work which critically examines the major influences on the development and functioning of perpetrator programmes in the United Kingdom for men who have been violent and abusive towards their partners. The narrative and accompanying publications are not directly concerned with dissecting the wide body of (still-contested) evidence as to the effectiveness of such programmes in achieving or contributing to the cessation or reduction of men's violence and abuse, (Bowen, 2011; Gondolf, 2012; Devaney and Lazenblatt, 2016). However, the issue of their effectiveness is nevertheless of central concern and is critically examined at various points within the overall text of the PhD. What is of more immediate concern here, is how the evolving theoretical frameworks, social policy and practical contexts, in which programmes have been developed, have influenced approaches to practice, and how programme effectiveness has been envisaged, determined and assessed.

The origins of this thesis lie in an increasing sense of personal and professional dissatisfaction with many of the practices and approaches adopted by perpetrator programmes in the UK throughout the decade in which the papers presented within this PhD thesis were written and published, 2006-16. The contextualising narrative and the papers explore a series of issues underpinning the reasons for this dissatisfaction. These issues concern many of the wider contextual factors surrounding programmes which formal positivist evaluations often overlook. They also relate to the prevailing theoretical frameworks, and the legal, social policy, organisational and practice contexts which have underpinned approaches to practice in the UK during much of this period. It is argued here, that these issues have restricted their potential for a fuller, and consequently more effective, engagement with many of those men who attend programmes, and thus safer outcomes for those partners and children affected by their violent and abusive behaviour.

The core theme which is addressed in the published papers and the contextualising narrative which links them, is that of how men who are violent and abusive to partners might best be engaged with in order to bring about a cessation of their violent and abusive behaviour. Also examined is whether the prevailing theoretical and policy contexts and

their effects upon practice in the majority of perpetrator programmes during the period the papers were written, restricted the possibilities of sustained behaviour and attitude change. In order to address this core theme more fully, and as is commonly the case with a PhD by publication, (Dunleavy, 2003; Guerin, 2016), a number of related issues and questions are addressed in the papers and in the wider narrative of the thesis. These include:

- the origins and development of perpetrator programmes in the UK;
- the significance of the contexts in which they emerged;
- the explanations for men's violence and abuse which have prevailed at various periods;
- the practices adopted by programmes as a result of a series of (often discordant and inconsistent), social policy and practical priorities;
- the extent to which various protagonists (including feminist activists, social policy professionals, academic researchers and probation and social work managers) have often conceptualised perpetrator programmes as abstract entities which overlook the significance of relationships between practitioner and participant, and have variously interpreted, either underestimating or overlooking, the importance of wider social, structural and cultural circumstances in which programmes function.

This thesis provides an original contribution to the field as it addresses a gap in knowledge by examining a number of neglected themes in the literature on perpetrator programmes. It explores the significance of the organisational contexts in which programmes exist. It examines the contextual and organisational challenges faced, as well as the emotions experienced by practitioners involved in their delivery, the impact of such challenges and emotions upon practitioners, and the potential consequences for their practice with perpetrators. Furthermore, and unlike the majority of existing evaluative literature on perpetrator programmes, which fails to take account of the male perpetrators' experience other than in a somewhat peremptory manner, the perceptions and experiences of men who have participated in programmes are both validated and valued, and critically considered in this PhD. As a consequence, original data is provided which illustrates the

various processes and practices, and the adoption of new values, beliefs and identities, by which men desist from formerly violent and abusive behaviour as they attempt to live their lives non-abusively and positively.

The papers themselves contribute to the overall body of the thesis as they explore a series of related themes which contribute to the wider overarching question of how the potential effectiveness of perpetrator programmes might be enhanced. These include:

- The significance of the theoretical, practice and policy contexts in which perpetrator programmes have developed;
- The development and refinement of theory and practice knowledge since their inception;
- The significance of the lived experience of programme practitioners and participants, that is to say the context in which programmes are 'realistically evaluated' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997);
- The question of how desistance is conceived of and constructed by men who have attended perpetrator programmes and the significance of this process for programme evaluation, practice and development;
- The impact of wider structural and organisational factors on programme development and functioning.

The narrative which follows charts the various contexts in which each of the four journal articles and one book chapter came to be written, and references the stages of the intellectual journey undertaken and the research conducted as part of this process. It also describes how the five publications demonstrate a coherent and related body of academic work based upon a wide range of relevant literature, research and theory, as well as drawing from a body of empirical enquiry in the form of three research studies. It concludes by critically discussing and assessing implications for policy, practice development and further research.

Use of language and terminology

It might be useful at this point to introduce the approach adopted in the presentation of the narrative which contextualises the thesis. I have found it helpful to structure various sections of the narrative around a first-person account of how the intellectual journey described below has developed. I have adopted this format to accommodate two purposes. The first is to acknowledge the importance of researchers locating themselves reflexively within the research process (Hertz 1997; Gilgun, 2008), a reflexivity which I argue below appears to be relatively absent in the evaluative literature discussed elsewhere in this text. Secondly, and by virtue of the fact that this PhD by publication consists of a series of research activities conducted and papers written over a period of 10 years, activities which were also influenced considerably by 'practice wisdom' (Samson, 2015) and by practitioners' voices, it seems equally appropriate to actively and reflexively employ the voice of this particular practitioner/researcher in theorising, undertaking and reflecting upon the wider body of study and research discussed below.

Domestic violence/abuse

As this thesis explores a series of issues relating to programmes for 'perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse', it is necessary to discuss at the outset the scope and nature of the behaviours under discussion and to identify some of the issues and complexities historically involved in defining, describing and explaining the phenomenon of 'domestic violence and abuse'.

The phrase 'domestic violence' has long been acknowledged as a problematic and somewhat inaccurate term (Hanmer and Maynard, 1987; Smith 1989; Mullender, 1996; Taylor-Browne, 2001; Harwin, 2006). Its various interpretations and definitions have had a considerable impact upon the way it has (often failed to be) recognised in law and on the development and enactment of policies to respond to it, (Burton, 2008; Bowen, 2011). The term 'domestic' in itself had historically restricted attention to behaviour occurring only between married couples within the context of the home. Until the passing of the Family Law Act (1996) in England and Wales, which introduced the concept of 'associated persons', it had excluded other forms of violent behaviour occurring within families in which older people and indeed children were its victims. It had also restricted the response

of police and criminal courts to intervene where physical violence was not immediately evident but where other forms of abusive behaviour were present. However, over the course of the past 30 years, public knowledge and understanding of the nature of what is meant by the terms domestic violence or domestic abuse has transformed this issue from that of a 'private trouble' to a 'public issue' (Mills, 1959). This is largely as a consequence of the sustained activities principally of women's activists and advocates, (Hague, 2001; Hague and Malos, 2005; Matczak et al, 2011).

A significant contribution to public understanding of the issue can be attributed to the work of Dobash and Dobash (1979) who charted the prevalence and nature of 'violence against wives' in its historical context. Citing examples from the USA and the UK, they examined the "numerous legal, political, economic and ideological supports for a husband's authority over his wife which included the approval of his use of physical force against her" (Dobash and Dobash, 1979, p. ix). Their analysis consistently identified behaviour which extended beyond the issue of men's physical violence and acknowledged a range of psychologically abusive behaviours involving threat, intimidation and control aimed primarily at women partners. In reconceptualising and redefining *wife beating* as transcending physical violence alone they also argued that such purposeful and coercive control of women in a domestic context was central to maintaining the patriarchal order of society, and that women's subordination in the home was symptomatic of their status in wider society.

In common with numerous other feminist and pro-feminist academics and commentators (Wasoff, 1982; Pahl, 1985; Smith, 1989; Hague and Wilson, 1996; Hearn, 1998), Dobash and Dobash also argued that this issue had been overlooked by traditional responses by police and other criminal justice agencies, and that violence by men against 'wives' (and subsequently partners and ex-partners) required to be criminally sanctioned. They argued further that violence could not be conclusively addressed by reductionist approaches which conceived of the phenomenon as a discrete physical act. Instead it had to be seen as incorporating various forms of abusive behaviour aimed at the punishment and subjugation of partners. The point to be emphasised at this juncture is that the 1979 Dobash study, coupled with the emergence in the UK and the USA during the 1980s, of feminist research on this issue, drew extensively on the personal experiences of survivors (Schechter, 1982; Maynard, 1985; Hanmer and Maynard, 1987; Hague et al, 1996). This knowledge was

significant in expanding the public perception of violence to include a wider pattern of behaviour or ‘tactics’ (Pence and Paymar, 1993) through which men oppressed and controlled women partners. The significance of this feminist analysis on programmes engaging with perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse is explored substantially in the wider text of this thesis.

This structural analysis of the nature and purpose of violence and abuse has had a major influence on the way in which domestic violence is perceived. A raft of legislation passed across the UK over the past thirty years reflects the development and refinement of knowledge of the nature and scope of domestic abuse in its many contexts. Bowen has noted however that variations of definition constitute an “ongoing problem” (Bowen, 2011, p.2) affecting not only the development of theories to explain the nature of violence and abuse, but also in facilitating and co-ordinating public intervention, (noting the tendency for example of criminal justice agencies to adopt definitions aligned with their own policies and practices).¹ While the ways in which law conceives of and responds to domestic abuse still “remains subject to critical scrutiny and animate academic, legislative and policy debate” (Burman and Brooks-Hay, 2018, p.68) the re-conceptualisation of the breadth of abusive behaviours has also become increasingly evident. In the wider UK context for example policy documents such as *Living Without Fear* (Cabinet Office, 1999) in England and Wales and in *Safer Lives: Changed Lives* in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2009) have utilised the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (UN 1993) in which violence is acknowledged thus:

¹ In England and Wales, Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act (2015) established a new offence of coercive or controlling behaviour in intimate or family relationships. Similarly in Scotland, which historically had adopted the term ‘abuse’ as opposed to ‘violence’ thereby acknowledging its many different forms, (Burman and Brooks-Hay, 2018), the Scottish Government has recently introduced the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act (2018) which has created a statutory offence of domestic abuse. Based substantially on the concept of coercive control (Stark, 2007) this legislation more accurately reflects the experiences of victims / survivors by taking into account the impact and the consequences upon them of all types of abusive behaviour. While this has been seen as a hugely positive and radical development, a number of authors have also noted the “problems and possibilities of translating a concept generated from clinical practice into legal practice” (Walklate et al, 2018, p.115). See also Burman and Brooks-Hay (2018), Tolmie (2018).

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

In 2013 in the UK a statutory non-government definition of domestic violence was agreed as follows:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling or coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This ... can encompass but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional ... abuse).

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

**This definition which is not a legal definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage and it is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.*

(Home Office, 2013, p.2)

Having established that violence encompasses a spectrum of abusive behaviours, it is worth observing in passing that the assumption that abuse is associated with physical violence only, is not uncommonly encountered among individuals referred to perpetrator programmes, (particularly where they have been referred by courts following an offence *related to physical violence*) – a point acknowledged in the text and presented papers in this thesis). However, the definitions of violence commonly employed within perpetrator programmes, many of them influenced by the Duluth Power and Control Model, (Pence and Paymar, 1993), and as prescribed for example by the Respect Accreditation Standard (2008; 2012), the Probation Service in England and Wales (ACOP, 1992; Mullender, 1996), the National Offender Management Service in England and Wales, the Caledonian System in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2016), all emphasise the systematic multi-faceted nature of abuse with which perpetrator programmes are concerned and with which the perpetrator is expected or urged to engage.

Hereafter, however, for the purposes of consistency the term 'domestic abuse' will be employed as far as possible throughout the narrative to describe violence and abuse in its various manifestations.

Perpetrator

The term 'perpetrator' is increasingly employed in the linking narrative and the presented papers to refer to the person (in the context of this thesis, a male perpetrator) who is inflicting the abuse on his (female) partner or ex-partner. A number of points need to be made here.

The first is that in the papers presented, the term 'domestic violence offender' is employed in three and 'domestic violence' in four of the five papers, both in the title and the text. This is justified on the basis that the individuals with whom the articles deal are being discussed in a criminal justice or probation context, and are aimed accordingly at a professional audience familiar with that nomenclature or terminology.

The second is that where the term 'perpetrator' is used, it is clear throughout the papers and the narrative that use of this term is employed in such a way that does not label the individual in a totalising, 'othering' manner as the expression 'batterer' commonly employed in most North American literature might be seen to do (e.g. Lehmann and Simmons, 2009). Neither does this term imply an (unhelpful) "victim-perpetrator dualism" (Featherstone et al, 2007, p.23). Throughout, the complexity of the individual 'perpetrator' and the need to engage with this complexity and to work holistically and in the context of the lived reality of (his) life is emphasised. The term is instead used for the purpose of brevity, as indeed is that of the term 'practitioner' which is employed variously to describe programme personnel coming from backgrounds in psychotherapy, probation, social work and elsewhere.

The types of programmes discussed throughout the thesis and in the papers refer to programmes aimed at *men* who perpetrate violence and abuse, and are confined to those which deal overtly with men who are violent and abusive to female partners or ex-partners. This is not to overlook the developing context in which LGBT violence (Donovan et al, 2006; McDonald et al, 2009; Scottish Government, 2009; Home Office, 2013) or female-to-male violence (Carney et al, 2007; Dempsey, 2007), are increasingly recognised as areas for

concern and the development of appropriate service provision, which may involve specific perpetrator programme development, but instead reflects the gendered nature of domestic abuse in which men predominate as perpetrators (UN, 1993; Council of Europe, 2011) and the types of programmes functioning, at least in the UK, at the time the studies were conducted and papers written.

Programme

Finally, the word 'programme' is used throughout the papers and the linking narrative, the use of which will be familiar to the professional and academic audiences at whom the papers were originally directed but which might merit some clarification here. This term refers usually to a series of structured interventions, most commonly occurring in group settings in which domestic abuse perpetrators, who may either be court-mandated or attending on a non-mandated or 'voluntary' capacity, are engaged with by programme practitioners or facilitators in relation to their violent and abusive behaviour towards partners (and, increasingly in the context of programme development), children. The aim of this activity is to contribute to the safety of women and children by enabling or supporting men to become accountable for their behaviour, and in the process cease or reduce their violence and abuse (a complex process elaborated on at various stages of the thesis). This process of accountability is likely to involve acknowledging the intentionality of their abusive behaviour towards others, primarily their partners, (whether they have been conscious of its intentionality or not) and the acquisition of new skills, values, attitudes and practices intended to achieve outcomes which involve desisting from violent and abusive behaviour. The terms 'accountability' and 'desistance' will not however be deconstructed further here for reasons which will become apparent in the papers and narrative which follow.

Structure of the narrative.

The remainder of the narrative is as follows:

- Chapter Two presents the published papers in the form of a critical narrative which locates them in their historical, theoretical and policy contexts and links them as a comprehensive record of a coherent body of published work submitted for a doctoral thesis.
- Chapter Three concludes with brief overview of the papers, the themes which link them, the implications arising from these and the contribution of these papers and the thesis as a whole to knowledge in this field.

Issues addressed in the papers: a brief overview

Paper 1:

Thinking Outside the Box: Looking Beyond Programme Integrity:

The experience of a Domestic Violence Offenders Programme²

In Paper 1, I explore the context in which one particular criminal justice social work agency attempted to establish consistency and continuity in its delivery of a perpetrator programme, and the numerous organisational, procedural and unevenly-integrated practice-related factors which impacted, usually negatively on a systemic delivery, thus providing a wide variation in the quality of programme experience for many of the perpetrators concerned. The paper notes several practitioners' observations of wide-ranging personal and social problems which impacted adversely upon the lives of the men they were dealing with, and of their difficulties in maintaining a degree of stability and equilibrium in communities undermined by substantial structural disadvantages. Several difficulties are also reported in providing appropriate levels of social work monitoring, supervision and support. The experience of working directly with a recently established

² Morran, D. (2006) Thinking Outside the Box: Looking Beyond Programme Integrity: The Experience of a Domestic Violence Offenders Programme. *British Journal of Community Justice*, 4 (1), pp. 7-18. See Appendix 1.

category of 'offender' on probation, namely the 'domestic violence perpetrator', further contributed to a range of professional challenges and personal emotions for the workers concerned.

Paper 2:

Firing up and Burning Out: The personal and professional impact of working in domestic violence offender programmes³

The significance of the impact of working with perpetrators on practitioners, which emerged during the course of this study, revealing the intensity which this work involved, led me to undertake a further exploration of the personal and professional impact upon practitioners of engaging in this innovative area of practice. Paper 2 presents the findings from a questionnaire completed by thirty practitioners involved in working in various perpetrator programmes throughout the UK. This paper also explores "other factors which may be at work" (Barnish, 2004, p.89) such as the appropriateness of training and preparedness for perpetrator programme work and the variable quality of support for workers from supervisors or managers, or indeed from the various organisations in which the practitioners worked. Participants referred to concerns about physical safety, emotional wellbeing, and the overall impact upon their motivation and commitment to continued involvement in such work. As in Paper 1, the extent to which working with perpetrators seemed quite unlike other practice in which many of the sample had previously been engaged, is consistently commented on.

Paper 3:

Re-education or recovery? Re-thinking some aspects of domestic violence perpetrator programmes⁴

The importance of agency context, and the impact upon practitioners of working with perpetrators, led me in turn to argue in Paper 3 of the need, when addressing the issue of

³ Morran, D. (2008) Firing up and Burning Out: The personal and professional impact of working in domestic violence offender programmes. *Probation Journal*, 55 (2), pp. 139-152. See Appendix 2.

⁴ Morran, D. (2011) Re-education or recovery? Re-thinking some aspects of domestic violence perpetrator programmes. *Probation Journal*, 58 (1), pp. 23-36. See Appendix 3.

the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes, to consider the social policy and practice contexts in which they were, and continue to be, developed and delivered. The Paper also considers how in the rapid implementation of programmes such as the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP), 'rolled out' by in England and Wales by the Probation Service in 2004, the complex realities and wider personal and structural problems in perpetrators' lives could frequently be marginalised or overlooked by a service besieged by a combination of factors. These included, various managerialist pre-occupations and priorities (McLaughlin et al, 2001; Mair, 2004), rigidly programmatic approaches to practice with an over-reliance on cognitive-behavioural approaches, (Merrington and Stanley, 2000; Gorman, 2001; Gadd, 2004) and a practitioner base which had experienced a steady process of de-professionalisation, throughout the 1990s (Smith, 2004).

Paper 4:

Programmes for Domestic Violence Perpetrators⁵

In this paper, which comprises a book chapter, the subject of risk is examined. The argument is put forward that perpetrator programmes (at least in the UK) were developed within a wider criminal justice policy context in which interventions with various offending groups were driven by a risk-focused approach to practice, the so-called *risk paradigm*, (Robinson, 2002, 2003; Webb, 2006; Parton 2006; Barry, 2007). The paper argues that while appropriate attention must be paid to risk assessment and management, this should not give rise to practitioners overlooking (once more) the wider contexts of perpetrators' lives, nor those other qualities and strengths which they may also possess; strengths and qualities which may need to be harnessed as an important assets in the process of desisting from violence and abuse.

⁵ Morran, D. (2016) Programmes for Domestic Violence Perpetrators. In: C. Trotter, G. McIvor and F. McNeill, eds. *Beyond the Risk Paradigm – Rethinking Practice in Criminal Justice*. London, Palgrave. See Appendix 4.

Paper 5:

Desisting from Domestic Abuse: Influences, Patterns and Processes in the Lives of Formerly Abusive Men⁶

Paper 5 explores the nature of that journey in the lives of a number of men who to various degrees and extents are desisting from violence and abuse. It examines not only what they learned from programmes, practitioners and fellow participants, but also of how they think, feel and act in their daily lives, beyond the setting of the programme itself, within the communities and networks they live in and engage with, and over considerable periods of time.

⁶ Morran, D. (2013) Desisting from Domestic Abuse: Influences, Patterns and Processes in the Lives of Formerly Abusive Men. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*. 52 (3), pp. 1-15. See Appendix 5.

Chapter 2: The papers in context

This chapter provides a narrative which links and locates the five published papers submitted as part of this PhD thesis in their historical, theoretical and policy contexts. It critically examines and discusses the literature and research relevant to the various papers, expanding upon the themes addressed therein and their relevance to the thesis as a whole. The narrative also:

- charts the development and progress of my thinking over the course of the PhD project, provides a critical reflection on the methods and methodologies relating to the studies undertaken;
- synthesises the key findings from the wider literature and from my own research;
- establishes the thesis as an integrated and coherent body of work which makes an original contribution to the literature concerning the development and implementation of domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK.

The rediscovery of domestic violence

While the origins of programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse are discussed elsewhere in the text of this thesis (principally in Papers 3 and 4) it is nevertheless useful to introduce this linking narrative by providing a fuller, more substantial account of their development. In so doing, it will reference the significance of the wider theoretical, policy and practice interests which have impacted upon and influenced their growth and implementation in the UK thus far.

Naming the problem: From 'battered women' to 'violent men'.

In their ground-breaking study '*Violence Against Wives*', Dobash and Dobash (1979) argued that despite considerable historical evidence of men's abuse and violence towards women, this issue had remained largely hidden in plain sight. It was widely known about but often rendered invisible through sustained resistance from men individually and collectively to publicly recognise the extent and nature of this problem. In exploring what they term its 'official rediscovery' in both the USA and the UK in the early 1970s, Dobash and Dobash (1992), subsequently examined the significance of the manner in which this 'rediscovered'

phenomenon was theorised and constructed. They noted that much of the so-called expert evidence proffered in the UK to the 1974 Parliamentary Select Committee on Violence in Marriage implied that violence and abuse was understood and essentially explained as a problem of individual pathology, confined mostly to dysfunctional, marginalised individuals or families. Indeed, some among this panel of experts, (many drawn from medical backgrounds), deliberated on why women 'found themselves' being beaten by men in their lives, inferring that they often brought it on themselves (Gayford, 1975; 1976).

The testimonies of ordinary women who had actually experienced violence at the hands of their partners were, significantly, overlooked by this Committee. Outside the confines of Parliament however, an emerging women's movement had begun to campaign for equal rights and for legal action against women's abuse and oppression by men (Hester, 2005). These activities and the sharing of personal experiences they generated, revealed and reaffirmed that violence against women by male partners, far from being an aberration, was in fact both commonplace and widespread. Women's activism and campaigning on this issue led to the gradual and piecemeal development throughout the 1970s and 1980s of refuges for women escaping violence, and to pressure for changes in legislation and policy. There also began during this period to be a perceptible shift in the way that the problem came to be reconceptualised; focusing on acknowledging and addressing the needs not only of 'battered women' but also on bringing the deeds of 'violent men' to public account, (Hester, 2005; Radford and Gill, 2006; Bowen, 2011).

Such a shift in attitudes and the consequent changes to professional and institutional practices they would necessarily entail was nevertheless frequently resisted. Contemporary research from the 1980s examining the activities of police, prosecution services and courts, for example, exposed often sluggish, sometimes unhelpful, and occasionally hostile responses towards women experiencing violence, (Pahl, 1981; Wasoff, 1982; Smith, 1989). Even where agencies appeared relatively sympathetic or disposed to act, there was often uncertainty as to the appropriateness of criminal sanctions leading to inconsistent interventions by police and prosecutors (Edwards, 1986; Hague and Wilson, 1996). Courts were ambivalent about how to sanction men; imposing a financial penalty might impact as much upon the woman and children as upon the man responsible, while

imprisoning him might simply create additional difficulties for the woman upon his release (Wasoff, 1982).

The responses of social services were equally ambivalent, revealing complacency about women who were being subjected to violence by their partners, victim-blaming attitudes towards women themselves, and even collusion with violent and abusive men on the part of social workers, (Maynard, 1985). Within the Probation Service, domestic violence had often been overlooked or its seriousness minimised, (Scourfield, 1998) with many probation officers seemingly perplexed about how, or even whether, to intervene with men known or suspected of being violent to partners, (Stelman, 1993; Fitch et al, 1994; Stelman et al, 1999).

Against this background of institutional ignorance, frequent ineptness, and some genuine confusion on the part of police, courts, social workers and other professionals, there was a growing sense of frustration that the cause or source of the violence, namely violent men, continued to remain largely 'invisible' (Eadie and Knight, 2002; Radford and Hester, 2006). They were neither confronted with their behaviour nor dealt with consistently after prosecution, leaving women vulnerable and unprotected (Mullender, 1996). It had also become increasingly evident throughout the 1980s, both in the USA and the UK, that women's shelter organisations were only able to offer a limited response to women experiencing violence. Organisations such as Women's Aid in the UK regularly found themselves encountering women who for various reasons, remained with, returned to, or else wanted 'help' for their partners, while in the USA, shelter organisations were being approached by men who apparently wished to end their abusive behaviour (Bowen, 2011). The need for more meaningful interventions with violent men themselves was becoming increasingly acknowledged and examples of innovative practice, principally those being developed in the USA around this same period, began to be explored (Jennings, 1987; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Bowen, 2011).

The origins of intervention programmes

In the United States, interventions and programmes for men who were violent to their partners, (normally referred to in most US literature as "batterers") had begun to flourish fairly rapidly during the early 1980s. A contemporary survey conducted by Pirog-Good and

Stets-Kealey (1985) had identified several hundred 'treatment' programmes for men who were violent to their partners. However, these "represented a broad array of therapeutic perspectives that varied in terms of whether the individual man, couple or family were the unit of intervention, and also the theoretical approach taken to addressing IPV (interpersonal violence) behaviours" (Bowen, 2011, p.78).

Examining the proliferation of US programmes during this same period, Dobash and Dobash particularly note the significance of the profound and powerful tendency in what they term 'the therapeutic society' to "conceive of most social problems in terms of individual traits and personalities requiring therapy" (1992, p.213). They also noted the influence of various protagonists of this therapeutic society, namely clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, clinical social workers, family therapists and "thousands of para-professional counsellors" (ibid, p.213) in seeking to explain the origins and nature of men's violence towards their partners and consequently the nature of the approaches to practice which were adopted. Within this "burgeoning industry associated with the *treatment* of men who physically abuse their partners" (ibid, p.236 [italics added]) particularly after violence had been defined as a 'clinical condition' (Schlesinger et al, 1982), the Dobashes highlight the practices of what they term 'traditional therapy'. This is where men's violence to partners is variously ascribed to particular traits, some of them pathological in origin, or more commonly to characteristics such as 'anti-social or pre-morbid' personalities occurring as a consequence of rejection and ill-treatment in childhood (Deschner, 1984). They reserve particular scorn for advocates of the 'family systems perspective' whose approach to treatment is to engage with the whole family, an approach which they dismiss as "an empty, usually gender-blind, conception of families and individuals" ... [which] ... makes a nonsense of the reality of family life and of the social processes associated with violence" (Dobash and Dobash, 1992, p.239).

These various therapeutically-oriented approaches are then compared to "pro-feminist programmes for violent men" (Dobash and Dobash, 1992, p.243). While many in the women's movement remained hostile, resistant, or sceptical about work with violent and abusive men, (Schechter, 1982; Horley, 1990; Scourfield, 1995; Hague and Malos, 2005), others had gradually, if warily, over the course of numerous heated debates and encounters, begun to establish working relationships with some of these pro-feminist

programmes, employing their own insights and experiences to shape programme principles, policies, practices and priorities. Significantly for pro-feminist programmes, men's violence is regarded as behaviour that is intentional; a 'tactic' (Pence and Paymar, 1986; 1993) which men employ to dominate and control women. This emphasis on the nature of violence as functional, as opposed to being symptomatic of personal or family dysfunction, radically distinguishes such programmes from traditional therapy or therapies. It is worthy of note also that programmes such as *Emerge* in Boston, founded in 1977, and that developed by Pence and Paymar in Duluth, Minnesota, purposively and deliberately described themselves as *educational* in orientation, a term which accorded with their theoretical orientation that violence and abuse was learned behaviour, but which arguably provided an ideological counterweight to those advocating more individualised therapeutic forms of intervention. However, it is important to note that this emphasis on the educational nature of the approach in fact oversimplified some of the processes and practices which these two emblematic pioneering programmes adopted.

An examination of the programme manuals of the *Domestic Abuse Intervention Program*, (DAIP) in Duluth (1983) and *Emerge* (2000) reveals in both a series of sessions involving activities aimed at men's own thoughts, feelings and beliefs, in which through the medium of group discussions, men address the 'myths and justifications' which support their violence and affect their behaviour as individual men. They are also encouraged to 'recognise their rigid, authoritarian beliefs and distortions' which underpin their use of violence and to 'conceive of different non-violent, more equal ways of behaving as a man' both in relationships and by implication in society. Despite the manual developed by Pence and Paymar (1986) being entitled 'Power and Control: Tactics of Men Who Batter – An *Educational Curriculum*' [italics added], it clearly includes and makes reference to a number of practices drawn more generally from cognitive-behavioural approaches such as "Taking Time-Outs/Cool Downs", "Recognising Anger Cues", and "Using Positive Self-Talk", (Pence and Paymar (1986, revised 1990).

It is this combination of educational and cognitive approaches informed by a feminist analysis of the wider function of men's violence, which comes to characterise the (still widely varying) development of 'psychoeducational programmes' (Gondolf, 2002; 2012) or 'pro-feminist cognitive behavioural programmes' (Bowen, 2011), which increasingly

proliferated in the USA. These subsequently influenced the principles and practices adopted by the first two perpetrator programmes established in 1989 in the UK, namely *CHANGE* in Central Scotland and the Domestic Violence Intervention Project (*DVIP*) in London (Dobash et al, 2000; Bowen, 2011; Phillips et al, 2013)

The Duluth Model

The emergence of perpetrator programmes in the UK in the late 1980s and early 1990s coincided with an upsurge of interest within the Probation Service in England and Wales (and Criminal Justice Social Work Services in Scotland) in the development of group-work programmes aimed at various types of offending behaviour, particularly in the wake of what is commonly termed the ‘what works?’ movement, (Scourfield and Dobash, 1999; Gadd, 2004; Mair, 2004; Gorman et al, 2006; Bowen, 2011). This movement had been strongly influenced by a number of, mostly Canadian, psychologists such as Ross and Gendreau (1980), Gendreau and Ross (1987), Andrews and Bonta (1998). Their research had concluded that in order to maximise effectiveness, approaches aimed at reducing or eliminating offending should concentrate *inter alia* on several dysfunctional cognitive processes or ‘deficits’ (Ross and Fabiano, 1981) such as ‘impulsiveness’ and ‘ego-centricity’ which many offenders, i.e. *male* offenders (see McIvor, 2004), seemed to exhibit.

Over the following decade the Probation Service would go on to become the major provider of programmes for domestic violence perpetrators in England and Wales (Bowen, 2011). It is necessary therefore when addressing questions regarding the practices which they employed in working with domestic violence perpetrators to acknowledge the contemporary policy context in which these cognitive-behavioural approaches and programmes were embraced by the Probation Service in England and Wales during this period. It is highly pertinent to acknowledge also for example the numerous organisational issues which offending programmes run by the Probation Service were encountering. These included inconsistent patterns of programme management and delivery, insufficient, inadequate, or poorly understood training and problems of resources (Raynor and Vanstone, 1997; Underdown, 1998). Such issues invariably overlapped and impacted upon those perpetrator programmes adopted as ‘Pathfinders’ (Eadie and Knight 2002; Bowen,

2011) by the Probation Service, with inevitable consequences on their functioning and their potential effectiveness.

The emergence of cognitive behaviouralism

The extent to which the Probation Service had enthusiastically embraced cognitive behaviouralism had in fact from the outset given rise to a considerable amount of disquiet and concern during the period of offender programme development and implementation, (Hedderman et al, 1997; Merrington and Stanley, 2000). George Mair in particular, a former Home Office researcher and recognised authority on probation practice, and subsequently an academic and self-confessed 'critical friend' of the Probation Service (Mair, 2004), was highly sceptical regarding the ambition of the Probation Service to establish a nationwide core of programmes based exclusively on cognitive behavioural approaches. He observed, for example, that the raft of "early What Works conferences seemed ... akin to an evangelical revivalist movement – we were being asked to buy into cognitive behaviouralism as an article of faith" (Mair, 2004, p.16). This sentiment was shared by Gorman (2001) who had similarly referred to the quasi-religious enthusiasm for such programmes as constituting the 'Holy Grail', at least as far as those in Probation management was concerned.

Mair (2004) argued forcefully that the reason why the Probation Service had 'bought into' cognitive behaviouralism in the manner that it did was pragmatic rather than evidence-based. Successive Conservative governments had deployed, (and according to Mair, had misrepresented) over the course of two decades, the findings of US academic Robert Martinson's meta-analysis of a broad range of interventions with various types of offender which had pronounced negatively on their effectiveness in reducing offending behaviour, resulting in the claim that 'nothing works' (Martinson, 1974). This accusation had been politically employed to undermine and attack the liberal rehabilitative ideal (Raynor, 1985) formerly embraced by the Probation Service in its approach to working with offenders. As a consequence the ability of the Probation Service to argue its position to the Home Office and to present counter-arguments and proffer evidence of its ability to reduce re-offending had been subordinated by other 'expert' voices, principally those of the 'psy-disciplines' (Rose 1996; Kendall 2004) represented by those such as the Canadian psychologists alluded

to earlier. In particular, however, it was the *over-reliance* of this one approach, and the influence which psychological experts were subsequently to have on the accreditation of programmes, *including perpetrator programmes*, via the inauguration of the Joint Accreditation Panel in 1999 tasked with their oversight and approval, which was the cause of deeper consternation.

The theories and approaches championed by the cognitive psychologists excluded those voices which proffered alternative arguments as to why people became involved in, and continued, to offend. They overlooked those explanations and approaches which engaged with the “reality of the social lives of offenders and the communities in which they live” (Bottoms et al, 2001, p.238), focusing on and prioritising issues which were “light years from the messy complex realities of everyday probation work” (Mair, 2000, p.269). Nevertheless their enthusiastic embrace by policy makers and Probation management arguably intensified in April 2001 with the creation of a new centralised National Probation Service, subject to the scrutiny of a New Labour government, preoccupied with the principles and demands of New Public Management (Clarke and Newman, 1997), and its attendant preoccupations of being ‘evidence-based’ and the achievement of ‘targets’ (Mair, 2004; Burke, 2005; Gregory, 2006; Gorman et al, 2006; Burke and Collett, 2012).

It is significant also to note that the cognitive ‘turn’ with its neo-liberal emphasis on individual choice and personal responsibility (Ferguson, 2008; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009) somewhat paradoxically coincided with the arguments advanced by various feminist and pro-feminist activists especially in the USA (Hart 1993; Adams, 1998) but also echoed in the UK (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Gadd, 2004). These arguments underpinned one of the fundamental principles of pro-feminist perpetrator programmes, namely that men who perpetrated violence and abuse against their partners did so *by choice* and were to be held personally responsible and accountable for their actions. This is not to suggest that others are responsible for the violent and abusive behaviour which male perpetrators inflict upon their partners. It is merely to acknowledge that men who do so may live lives in which the ‘messy complex realities’ which Mair (2000) refers to, are prevalent, and that these complexities cannot be excluded from theoretical and practical considerations as to the various factors which might exacerbate men’s abusive behaviour. Nor can they be

disregarded by those who work with perpetrators if any meaningful engagement aimed at sustainable changes in behaviour and attitudes are to take place.

While the Duluth Programme undoubtedly had a significant influence on perpetrator programmes developed in the UK in both the statutory and voluntary sectors, (Scourfield and Dobash, (1999), Gadd, 2004; Bowen, 2011; Kelly and Westmarland, 2013) it is perhaps more difficult to ascertain what this actually meant for day-to-day practice on the ground. A survey carried out in the UK by Scourfield and Dobash of 23 emerging projects working with perpetrators (most of them in the non-statutory sector) noted that “the majority of programmes in this sample report that they use techniques which can *broadly be categorised as cognitive behavioural*” (Scourfield and Dobash , 1999, p.136) [italics added]. However, the authors note, as does Bowen, the various difficulties in establishing precisely what these techniques and approaches entailed, concluding that in practice there was likely to be “considerable conceptual overlap between the pro-feminist programmes cast in the Duluth mould, and the few cognitive behavioural programmes that persist as typically both include components of each other, with the emphasis on the role of socio-cultural factors varying accordingly” (Bowen, 2011, p.94). This observation is given further credence in a study conducted by Phillips et al (2013) which included a series of in-depth interviews with many of the ‘pioneers’ directly involved in programme development in the UK (in which this present author participated) and where a considerable amount of flexibility, adaptability and borrowing aspects of practice from one another, and from other sources, is freely acknowledged.

The degree to which the efficacy or adequacy of the application of the cognitive-behavioural practices were sufficient to engage with the complexities of working with domestic violence perpetrators however was subject to sceptical criticism. Gadd and Jefferson who define themselves as ‘psychosocial criminologists’ have stated for example that the “conception of what it is to be a person ... in existing theories of crime ... is woefully inadequate” (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007, p.1). Like Mair, Gadd had earlier argued that the “pro-feminist cognitive-behavioural model” (Gadd, 2004, p.174) which had become the standard approach to working with perpetrators (within probation) had “less to do with evidence-led policy than with the cognitive behavioural discourse’s capacity to ‘patch over’ the tensions” (ibid, p.174) of a series of interrelated interests. These interests included, as

discussed above, the emerging salience of a feminist analysis of men's violence to women, the various interests of the criminal justice system, not least the desire in some elements of probation to redeem itself by adhering to the 'what works' movement and its reliance, as suggested above an *over-reliance*, (Mair, 2004; Smith, 2004; Kendall, 2004) on cognitive behavioural approaches, and their elevation to near cult status (Gorman, 2001). These alliances favouring cognitive behavioural interventions averted the attention of policy makers, social researchers, and as Papers 1 and 2 of this thesis illustrate, that of many of those involved in the development, management and practical delivery of programmes, away from thinking about violent men's wider issues and problems as well as their own needs. "The narrow focus on the immediate outcomes of interventions has meant that few research studies have focused on either *the meaning violence holds for perpetrators* or the biographically rooted connections between abusive behaviour and violent masculinities" (Gadd, 2004, p.174) [italics added].

It is also important to add that cognitive behavioural programmes aimed at offenders more generally met another function. They provided for the Probation Service the ability to 'roll-out' a series of manualised, theoretically easy-to-apply interventions which rendered them amenable to delivery by a workforce whose 'professional-therapeutic' approach had been jettisoned and replaced by a 'punishment administrative' ethos (May, 1994). The Probation Service's professional training in 1998 had, courtesy of the Conservative Government under the stewardship of Home Secretary Michael Howard, seen the disappearance of a social work value base and the rehabilitative orientation (Raynor 1985) which had previously influenced practice, (Smith, 2004). It is with a number of issues such as these, the organisational contexts in which practice is undertaken, the messy complexities of practice and (later in the thesis in Paper 5) the meaning that violence and abuse holds for perpetrators themselves, and what it requires to desist from these violence and abuse, that the wider body of enquiry in this PhD thesis is concerned.

Reflexivity: the position of personal and professional experience in the research process

At this point, it is appropriate to introduce some background information as to my own involvement in the wider processes being discussed in this thesis in order to recognise and acknowledge the significance of my personal and professional biography in informing both

my research interests, and the methodologies and specific methods I have adopted in pursuing these. Consequently, and drawing on feminist approaches to social research, (e.g. Stanley and Wise, 1983, 1993; Hertz, 1997; Letherby, 2003; Skinner et al, 2005), I shall briefly describe how my personal and professional experiences, firstly as a practising social worker and subsequently as an academic, have informed the development of these interests as I have reflected upon and written about a series of theoretical, policy, and practice issues relating to domestic violence perpetrator programmes.

Qualifying as a social worker in the 1970s, I worked in a range of statutory settings, which increasingly involved practice with young and adult male offending service users. Latterly this included a period of two years as a social worker in a men's prison, an experience which had a significant impact upon me both personally and professionally, and during which I became acutely aware of the significance of the gendered nature of this institution. Sim (1994, p.101) has noted that most criminological literature has tended to "concentrate on men as prisoners rather than *prisoners as men*" [italics in original], and in this respect, my experience of working in the prison environment afforded me valuable insights into how prison managers, officers and prisoners positioned themselves as *men* (Crawley, 2009), and how the institution as a whole, staff and prisoners alike, commonly viewed women. Routinely the partners and mothers of the men's children were expected to conform to a sense of expectations based on men's entitlement, e.g. to expect regular visits, delivery of gifts such as designer footwear, and, importantly appropriate behaviour as wives/partners and mothers (Codd, 2004).

With regard to the impact of imprisonment on men themselves, Yvonne Jewkes has observed from her research on prisons, that in order for men to survive the experience of imprisonment in a "climate of mortification and brutality" (Jewkes, 2005, p.46) they must be able to construct a public identity, a 'mask' which allows them to fit in with the wider macho culture which prevails. However, they must also be able to maintain "an interior (and usually non-macho) sense of self" (ibid, p.46). Jewkes adds that efforts to sustain the public mask often crumble in the presence of outsiders (such as researchers). While as a social worker I was not an outsider in the sense which Jewkes describes, my outsider/insider role (Fine, 1994) as a social worker nevertheless brought me regularly into one-to-one contact with men at moments of anxiety, crisis, or in the midst of personal and

family problems when their exterior shell crumbled or fractured to expose a more vulnerable self beneath. These observations and experiences, and my reflections upon the ways in which traditional masculinities were enacted, involved a growing recognition of the part that narratives concerning 'appropriate' masculinity had played in my own socialisation (Connell, 1995; Pease, 2002). They also led me sometime later to comment in a contemporary practitioners' newsletter, *Working With Men*, that the attitudes of many of the men I encountered in prison, officers and prisoners alike, seemed entrenched in traditional oppressive values concerning women's 'place' (Morran, 1995, p.8).

Furthermore, and in contrast to the excessive displays of manliness and public toughness which Jewkes had noted, my own experiences of observing men as prisoners suggested that their lives were more commonly characterised by a pervading sense of fear and insecurity, and a sense also of being "at war with themselves, most of them losing badly" (Morran, 1999, p.2).

This interest in 'troubling' and 'troubled' men continued after I left the prison when I worked for some years with men attempting to resettle in their 'communities' following custodial sentences in prisons and young offender institutions. In 1989 I obtained the post of joint-co-ordinator of the first court-mandated group-work programme for male domestic abuse perpetrators in the UK where I practised until 1996. Here I jointly developed the 'CHANGE Programme' for men who perpetrated violence and abuse against their partners, worked directly with men on the programme for several years, developed experience as a trainer and consultant in this, then relatively innovative field, and co-authored a practitioner's manual (Morran and Wilson, 1997). I left 'CHANGE' when funding expired in 1996, and commenced my current university post as a lecturer in social work. As with my experience of working with men in prison, my dealings with in excess of one hundred men on programmes over a period of several years, caused me to reflect upon the nature and purpose of men's power, and of what seemed often to underlie, generate and sustain their violent and abusive behaviour.

These experiences led me to harbour considerable doubts as to the extent to which many of these men resembled the powerful exemplars of patriarchy which early advocates of pro-feminist perpetrator programmes such as Pence and Paymar (1983) and Stordeur and

Stille (1989) claimed. Instead, they were, as other still gender-informed but more therapeutically-oriented commentator/practitioners had argued (Sonkin et al, 1985; Dutton, 1995b, 1999), not infrequently victims of their own biographies, and from backgrounds often characterised by abuse and neglect (Aymer, 2008). My doubts were compounded by a developing body of research which concluded that men who attended perpetrator programmes constituted a heterogeneous population. Within this population, some commentators considered it was possible to determine various types or typologies of perpetrator whose violent and abusive behaviours varied according to frequency, or severity, and as a consequence of particular factors in their personalities, psychological dispositions and personal histories (Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994; Gilchrist et al, 2003; Rivett, 2006; Aymer, 2008; Johnson, 2008). This research clearly implied that if such a heterogeneous population was to be engaged with meaningfully, then interventions would require to take these differences into account, both in their analysis of the underlying reasons and motivations behind men's violent and abusive behaviour, and, inevitably, in their approaches to practice (Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan, 2004). This literature and the consequences for perpetrator programme practice is explored in greater detail below.

A further concern whose germination developed out of personal and professional experience, related to *how* practice was actually carried out with men on programmes. More specifically, given the rapid incursion of sections of the Social Work and Probation workforce into a complex and contested field of work in a hitherto overlooked (Stelman 1993), and frequently avoided, area (Scourfield, 1998), I was curious as to how well practitioners were prepared for, or supported, in working in perpetrator programmes. I was pre-occupied also with how it affected them professionally and personally, and how, in turn, their experiences might impact either positively or negatively upon their practice. This issue seemed notable by its absence in the contemporary literature and research relating to domestic violence perpetrator programmes and their effectiveness.

I was particularly interested also in the lack of attention being paid to the more existential question of what the wider aims and objectives of engaging with men on perpetrator programmes were. The *Principles* for practice being successively developed and refined by

Respect (1995; 2000; 2004)⁷, stipulated that a primary aim of perpetrator programmes, as part of a co-ordinated response to violence against women, should be the safety and protection of women and children. While this is an entirely appropriate aim, these guiding *Principles*, and indeed the *Respect Standards* which succeeded them (2008; 2011) were silent however on the matter of *how* men should be engaged with to achieve this end, other than suggesting that practitioners should “invite men to take responsibility to stop using violence and learn non-violent ways of relating with others” (Respect, 2008, p.39). There was no reflective commentary nor recommendations as to whether any rehabilitative aims might be appropriate nor indeed to what rehabilitative practices might actually entail, and, significantly, to what supposedly rehabilitated men might look, act, think and sound like.

These issues and recurring concerns therefore underpinned and helped shape each of the questions which are pursued and the themes addressed in the research studies and publications discussed below, and in the linking narrative of this PhD thesis as a whole.

Background context of Papers 1 and 2

The following section provides a brief description of the circumstances and context in which the study discussed in Paper 1 was initiated and undertaken. In reprising some of the salient themes which emerged from the study, I will illustrate how these further informed and influenced my thinking and were taken forward in the research study which resulted in Paper 2. Thereafter, I will synthesise some of the consistent findings from both studies, locating them within a wider theoretical context as they apply to the field of perpetrator programmes.

Paper 1

In Paper 1, I explore the context in which one particular criminal justice social work agency attempted to establish consistency and continuity in its delivery of a perpetrator programme. I also consider the numerous organisational, procedural and unevenly-

⁷ Respect is a UK membership association for domestic violence programmes and associated support services. Respect’s key focus is on increasing the safety of those experiencing domestic violence through promoting effective interventions with perpetrators. For more information see <http://www.respect.uk.net>

integrated practice-related factors which impacted, usually negatively, on a systemic delivery, thus providing a wide variation in the quality of programme experience for many of the perpetrators concerned. The paper notes several practitioners' observations of wide-ranging personal and social problems which impacted adversely upon the lives of the men they were dealing with, and of their difficulties in maintaining a degree of stability and equilibrium in communities undermined by substantial structural disadvantages. Several difficulties are also reported in providing appropriate levels of social work monitoring, supervision and support. The experience of working directly with a recently-established category of 'offender' on probation, namely the 'domestic violence perpetrator' further contributed to a range of professional challenges and personal emotions for the workers concerned.

Paper 2

The significance of the impact of working with perpetrators on practitioners, which emerged during the course of the first study, revealing the intensity which this work involved, led to me undertake a further exploration of the personal and professional impact upon practitioners of engaging in this innovative area of practice. Paper 2 presents the findings from a questionnaire completed by thirty practitioners involved in working in various perpetrator programmes throughout the UK. This paper also explores "other factors which may be at work" (Barnish, 2004, p.89), i.e. factors not otherwise addressed in literature pertaining to perpetrator programmes and their effectiveness, such as the appropriateness of training and preparedness for perpetrator programme work, the variable quality of support for programme staff from supervisors or managers, or indeed from the various organisations in which the practitioners worked. Participants also referred to concerns about physical safety, emotional wellbeing, and the overall impact upon their motivation and commitment to continued involvement in such work. As in Paper 1, the extent to which working with perpetrators seemed quite unlike other practice in which many of the practitioners had previously been engaged, is consistently commented on. The paper also noted that female and male practitioners appeared to derive different meanings from their practice with men they had worked with on programmes.

Origins of the first study: 'Thinking outside the box'.

Social work academics are encouraged to maintain active links to professional practice (Scottish Social Services Council, 2016). My particular interests as a practitioner-turned-academic meant that I had remained in regular contact with numerous perpetrator programme practitioners across the UK, including various Criminal Justice Social Work managers and practitioners in agencies in Scotland. One such authority had recently been involved in the delivery of a programme for domestic violence perpetrators and I was aware that while a number of key agency personnel had initially enthusiastically embraced this process, they had subsequently encountered numerous tensions, challenges and difficulties in practice. I had responded to occasional queries from the project leader concerning some of these issues. This subsequently led to a series of meetings with managers and practitioners directly involved with the programme, as a result of which it was agreed that I would carry out a study addressing and examining some of the issues the agency had encountered in the implementation and delivery of the programme.

As the paper infers, it was evident from the discussions which preceded the study that management's over-riding interest was whether the programme 'worked'. It is worthy of note at this point, that there had been no engagement, for example, with other institutions such as police or courts to provide even a basic measure of whether men on the programme had been subject to concurrent or subsequent police call-out or charge. While an attempt had been made to create a role for 'partner workers' their remit was very limited in terms of being able to provide partner feedback. There was therefore, despite a commitment to developing this initiative, a noticeable vagueness as to what the term 'worked' actually meant, or how it might be measured or defined, (a theme addressed in greater depth below later in this linking narrative). I was also becoming increasingly aware, during these same discussions, of the complexity of establishing by what criteria specific initiatives can be said to 'work' and of the considerable difficulties involved in attempting to implement or replicate positivist 'scientific' experimental or quasi-experimental designs in social settings (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Gondolf, 2002, 2012; Smith, 2004), an awareness which expanded considerably as I became involved in conducting the study itself. Additionally, I acknowledged that my skills and interests were substantially those of a practitioner rather than those of a researcher in the field of evaluation, and not least that

the study was something which was being embarked upon on a somewhat opportunistic (and unfunded) basis.

For these pragmatic reasons, and the gradual recognition on the agency's part, for example, that any outcome-focused research would involve a much more substantial, and expensive, enterprise, it was agreed that a small-scale study more concerned with issues of *process* rather than *outcome* might be appropriate, exploring what factors might need to be in place across the organisation to maximise the possibility of successive cohorts of the perpetrator programmes being delivered as consistently as possible. This issue of process as it concerns various elements of practice in work with perpetrators, which is introduced and discussed throughout Paper 1, is one which continues to be developed and explored in the subsequent research studies described below and across this thesis as a whole.

A proposal was subsequently prepared and presented to members of senior management responsible for Criminal Justice Social Work Services in the organisation concerned. Entitled *Maximising the Effectiveness of Domestic Violence Offender Programmes at Pre- and Post-Programme Stages* the study was aimed at serving two sets of interests, principally mine as an interested practitioner/researcher and those of the organisation concerned, or at least those managers and practitioners who were most centrally involved with the delivery of the programme.

The decision to explore a considerably neglected area in the literature on programmes thus far, namely how these practitioners reflected upon and 'made sense' of their experiences (Seidman, 2006) in this relatively recent field of practice with men, validated, as the Paper argues, the adoption of a qualitative, interpretative methodological approach (Silverman, 1993) involving a series of in-depth interviews. Space was also given over in the interviews themselves to allow participants the opportunity to comment further on other issues and contribute their own insights if they wished to do so, (Dingwall, 1997; Mason, 2002; Gilbert, 2008). The study therefore consisted of a series of face-to-face interviews with a relatively small purposively selected sample (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) consisting of the manager and five core workers from the Practice Development Unit (PDU), that is, those most closely involved with the oversight and provision of the programme, all of whom had been involved in delivering at least two

programme cohorts. I also interviewed a further group of ten social workers from local Area Teams who had experience of delivering at least one cohort of the programme in conjunction with a PDU co-worker. A fuller discussion of the study is set out in Paper 1: *Thinking Outside the Box: Looking Beyond Programme Integrity: The experience of a Domestic Violence Offenders Programme* (see Appendix 1).

Reflection on the first study

My own motivation in undertaking this study was intended at the time to be pragmatic, guided in part by my own interests (and skills) while aiming also to offer some constructive feedback to the organisation concerning the implementation and functioning of the perpetrator programme thus far. In retrospect however, and in revisiting the study and the resulting Paper, it seems all too apparent that the phenomena which principally drove and engaged my interests as a novice researcher, both during the study and thereafter, and which are substantially addressed in Paper 1 (and which along with other subjective experiences are subsequently explored in greater detail in Paper 2) concerned a number of other issues which extended beyond the implementation and functioning of the programme itself. These included the “complicated one-to-one work ... [as well as] ... two other key aspects of effectiveness – the staff who run programmes and the organisational framework in which staff and programme operate” (Mair, 2004, p.270), all of which are highly relevant (if frequently overlooked) issues regarding the evaluation, and overall effectiveness of, any given project. In addition to organisational factors such as these, the interviews had also vividly illustrated the emotional impact of working with domestic violence perpetrators, the numerous personal and social problems experienced by men referred to programmes, practitioners’ frustrations concerning the comparatively limited time-frame in which work with men was carried out, and the limited supportive networks or services available for them thereafter in the communities in which they lived.

Significance of the organisational context

One of the most notable findings which had emerged from the interviews discussed in Paper 1 was the extent to which organisationally contingent and contextual factors had impacted upon the consistency with which practitioners were able to engage with men, frequently undermining possibilities for a more co-ordinated and more meaningful

practice. While the interviews addressed issues specific to one particular setting, and while as such their generalisability is compromised (Silverman, 2013), they nevertheless graphically illustrate, (to quote one of the respondents in Paper 1 itself), that there was a lot of 'stuff going on' for the practitioners as well the men they worked with. They underline the fact that the potential for any intervention to be more or less effective, as the article argues and as is commented in the wider literature concerned with evaluative studies in 'real world' contexts (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Smith, 1987; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Robson, 2011), is substantially dependent on the environmental, organisational, cultural, policy and practice contexts in which it is delivered. The relevance of factors such as these, and the need for them to be acknowledged and included in any 'realistic evaluation' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), is especially important to bear in mind when one considers the substantial constraints which were impacting upon the implementation of various offender programmes, including domestic violence perpetrator programmes, during this same period.

A series of studies and reports produced, for example, when the Probation Service in England and Wales was embarking on the systematic introduction of a number of 'Pathfinder' projects into practice in the wake of the 'what works' initiative (Mair, 2004), noted several recurring obstacles and difficulties which were being encountered along the way (Home Office, 1998; Underdown, 1998; Falshaw et al, 2003). These included: inconsistencies in training and preparation across the Pathfinders; different degrees of readiness by some staff, and reticence or resistance by others, to commit to training or to innovative work practices; variation in the quality of supervision and support from management; inadequate staffing and insufficient resources, (a somewhat inevitable finding); and, according to Hollin et al (2002), a lack of clear guidelines for staff leading to fluctuations in practice which undermined the principle of 'programme integrity' (i.e. stability or consistency of programme delivery).

An evaluation of one of the very early cognitive-behavioural group-work initiatives with young (male) offenders, the *STOP* programme in mid-Glamorgan in Wales, by Raynor and Vanstone (1997) *had* however paid attention to the role of various 'human factors' at work in programme implementation and delivery. The authors noted for example that while early results had been encouraging in terms of demonstrating a reduction in recidivism (as

measured by reconviction rates), the *STOP* programme had produced less successful outcomes as far as successive cohorts of the programmes were concerned. Significantly, the researchers observed that the initially encouraging findings might well be attributable in part to the programme having been delivered by an enthusiastic core group of practitioners who appeared more committed to engaging with participants than many of their colleagues who subsequently followed in their wake. This resonates with one of the findings to emerge from the study discussed in Paper 1, specifically that a number of core practitioners seemed more committed to, and more confident in, their practice following the recently introduced perpetrator programme than many of their colleagues across the authority.

A study which had focused on the organisational and occupational cultures existing in two early pilots of perpetrator programmes prior to the development of a National Probation Service in 2001, an event which in itself created a sense of inconsistency and lack of confidence among many of its workforce (Mair, 2004), was that carried out by Eadie and Knight (2002). They observed that there was an ambivalence among many probation officers particularly among many male staff and especially the predominantly male managers, towards the pro-feminist orientation of the Duluth-influenced programmes observed in the study, and that there were considerable fluctuations over time in relation to enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the Duluth Model. Eadie and Knight comment that although those initiating “the pioneering phase of any new initiative are likely to uphold the values which reflect ... [that initiative] ... what is not so straightforward is the *transferability of values*, as opposed to knowledge and skills, across the wider organisation and among the probation staff who will be running the programmes” (Eadie and Knight, 2002, p.177) [italics added]. In short, the enthusiasm and commitment which some staff may have towards the initiative may be susceptible to depreciation over time. Suggesting also that there may have been sections within the agency which resisted or embraced engagement with the perpetrator programmes, the authors then pointedly observe that the majority of the workers involved in the pioneering programmes they studied were women or gay/bisexual men. They then pose, and leave hanging, the question of whether (presumably heterosexual) male probation officers “have not been socialised with the same belief system” (ibid, p.177) as men who appear on programmes. As such, they are

presumably less likely to become involved in work which challenges some of these beliefs either as they impact upon themselves or on men referred to programmes.

The experiences of the practitioners working in the perpetrator programme discussed in Paper 1 clearly exposes some of the same issues as those observed more generally in studies on offender interventions (e.g. Underdown, 1998; Hollin et al, 2002; Eadie and Knight, 2002). Namely, inconsistencies of training, lack of clarity as to procedures and practice, concerns about generating or exacerbating rather than reducing risk, occasional confusion as to the *aims* of practice, and variations in approaches to supervision and orientations to practice. As such it is difficult to see how factors such as these can be overlooked in any evaluation seeking to determine whether and why any given programme might be more or less effective.

Gondolf (2002) had, for example, observed in relation to his four-year study of four US perpetrator programmes that practical, contextual and organisational factors frequently had a destabilising and therefore negative impact on their potential effectiveness. Hollin, commenting on programmes being developed for offender populations more generally in the UK as part of the 'what works' initiative, made a comparable point regarding a series of organisational and practice-related factors which give rise to what he terms 'programme drift' (a gradual shift away from the intended aims of a particular programme and programme 'non-compliance', where staff "*for reasons of their own ... [elect] ... to change or omit parts of the programme*" (Hollin, 1995, p.196) [italics added]. These factors, he argued, disrupt and undermine the principle of 'programme integrity', i.e. organisational attempts to ensure that "the programme is conducted in practice as intended in theory and design" (ibid, p.196) thereby impacting negatively on the programme's overall effectiveness.

Inconsistencies such as these in organisational structures, practices and procedures led eventually to separate attempts to maximise standardised models of practice via the Pathfinder Projects created by the Home Office to be delivered by the Probation Service. As far as perpetrator programmes are concerned, they were subsequently accredited as the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) and Community Domestic Abuse Programme (CDVP) and, in the non-statutory sector, by the successive *Statements of*

Principles and Minimum Standards successively developed by Respect (1995; 2000; 2004). The importance of maximising consistency in the delivery of programmes is clearly important especially given the pressure upon organisations to be able to systematically deliver, and have evaluated, practice that is ‘evidence-based’, one of the explicit goals of the ‘what works’ initiative. Significantly however, this attention to standardised organisational procedures and systemic concerns failed to sufficiently acknowledge the issue of the nature and quality of the relationships which practitioners might have with perpetrators, and the importance of these relationships for meaningful (and arguably more effective) engagement, practice and potential outcomes for men perpetrating domestic violence and abuse.

The origins of Paper 2

If organisational factors and their potential to affect the quality of the ‘programme experience’ for men attending programmes had been the most resonant finding to emerge from the interviews discussed in Paper 1, the theme of the personal and emotional impact upon practitioners of working in this innovative area had also come across as an important issue.

Historically, attention had been paid to the importance of the nature and quality of the practitioner/client relationship in therapeutic and relationship-based practices more generally (Truax and Carkhuff, 1967; Assay and Lambert, 1999). Pawson and Tilley (1997) had also argued that questions concerning the significance of the relationship between practitioner and client/service users constitute a major element of the wider ‘mechanism’ by which any intervention should be ‘realistically’ evaluated. Issues such as these had nevertheless been considerably overlooked or marginalised in the wider literature concerning interventions with offenders in general (Burnett, 2004), and, it is being argued in this thesis, singularly absent in the literature and research relating to domestic violence perpetrator programmes.

Certainly, the literature on the effectiveness of programmes aimed at general offending populations had consistently overlooked the “messy complex realities of everyday probation work” (Mair, 2004, p.269). However, throughout the period during which perpetrator programmes were emerging in the UK, the prevailing systemic literature and

research on the theme of 'what works?' with offending populations (e.g. Andrews, 1995; McGuire and Priestley, 1995; Ross et al, 1988) was gradually being augmented by renewed attention to the importance of the quality of the relationship between practitioners and service users/clients, and to the question of *who works?* That is, *how* practice with service users is affected by the qualities, skills, values and principles which practitioners bring to this task, (e.g. Assay and Lambert, 1999; Rex, 1999; Trotter, 2000, 2007.) Interestingly, qualitative questions such as these were also being revisited by several criminological theorists and commentators as something of a counterweight to the correctional concerns and systematic priorities of the 'what works' initiative which were impacting upon day-to-day professional practice with offenders (Gorman et al, 2006; Gregory, 2006). 'Psychosocial criminologists', such as Gadd and Jefferson (2007), as well as a number of criminal justice policy and practice commentators and researchers (Mair, 2004; Smith, 2006), for example, were arguing that attempts to engage meaningfully with the aim of promoting or maximising desistance could not overlook the subjective, emotional 'inner lives' of people involved in offending, and the meaning which that offending had, or the purpose it served, in their lives.

Where attention is paid to factors such as these, (as is the case in Paper 1 of this thesis), practitioners' comments suggest that there are a considerable number of challenges and dilemmas in undertaking work with perpetrators of domestic abuse. Their observations concerning the personal and emotional impact of engaging in this activity reveal, for example, that it seemed substantially different from their experiences of working with other offending clients. In this innovative area of practice it was apparent that some of the sample struggled to articulate whether the purpose of the work was to challenge men, to support them, or both, and how to separate men's responsibility for their abusive behaviour from those other destabilising factors in their lives which also needed addressing. Practitioners also expressed concerns that the comparatively short period of time men attended programmes, during which many of them presented with a range of other complex problems and needs, seemed inadequate for them to be able to focus on or generate any sustainable change in their behaviour or attitudes as regards abuse in their relationships.

As a practitioner turned academic, concerned to address issues of practice, it is important to emphasise that the process of clarifying or establishing a methodological standpoint was inevitably one which was evolving somewhat pragmatically. Findings such as these discussed above and in the paper however, confirmed for me the significance of accessing in-depth, reflections by which practitioners constructed and 'made sense' of their everyday practice, (Seidman, 2006; Robson, 2011; Silverman, 2013). They uncovered a number of themes and issues which more positivist approaches to programme evaluation (see e.g. Smith, 1987, 2004; Harper and Chitty, 2005) could not reveal or expose, such as practitioners' recognition that the fear with which men approached programmes, often presented as aggression or intransigence (Morran, 2006, p.9). The study therefore represents an original contribution to knowledge by exploring an area overlooked in the wider literature and research on perpetrator programmes. That is to say it is concerned with issues of process and not just outcomes (crucially important though these are), of what it might be like to work in the field of perpetrator programmes, of the significance of these experiences, and how they might impact upon the varying nature for both practitioner and perpetrator of the 'programme experience' itself, with implications as to their functioning, including ultimately their effectiveness.

These personal and interpersonal aspects of practice revealed in Paper 1, the emotional aspects of working in this area, the various motivations for engaging in, expectations of, and aspirations about, perpetrator work, also resonated with discussions in which I had personally participated at various *National Practitioner Network* (NPN) meetings. In their historical overview of the development of domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK, Phillips et al (2013, p.8) record these meetings as providing a "crucial space for practitioners to discuss, debate, and reflect upon practice and innovations". This combination of personal and professional experience, of reflection and emotion, and the various questions they raised, led me to further examine the meanings which practitioners attributed to the complexities of practice they encountered in this innovative and challenging field, by undertaking the research study discussed below in Paper 2.

Stimulated therefore by discussions at the NPN, and opportunistically drawing on the concept of *bricolage* (Maxwell, 2012), by which researchers are encouraged to utilise whatever appropriate tools they may bring to the task, I proceeded to develop a

questionnaire aimed at fellow practitioners working with perpetrators of domestic abuse, which asked about their experiences of working in this field and how it impacted upon various aspects of their lives. I distributed this questionnaire at an NPN meeting in Autumn, 2006, and subsequently utilised the online *Respect Newsletter* to advertise and seek further participants, obtaining a total of thirty completed questionnaires over several weeks. Paper 2: *Firing up and Burning Out: The personal and professional impact of working in domestic violence offender programmes* sets out the findings arising from this study in detail (see Appendix 2).

Reflection on methodology

The research studies discussed in both of the papers referred to above were undertaken in large part as a consequence of questions and concerns arising from my own professional experiences and reflections regarding this developing area of practice. It should also be noted once more that they are indicative of an evolving awareness of methodological approaches to the research process and were significantly influenced by an intention to explore aspects of practice and their implications for engaging effectively with perpetrators which were otherwise excluded from or overlooked in the literature and research relating to this field.

The study discussed in Paper 2, for example, as in the case of the first study, was also undertaken on an unfunded and unsupervised basis, where through my professional involvement in this area, and using a network of professional colleagues and contacts, (Mason, 2002) I was able to access a what I considered to be a respectable number of thirty practitioners with an average of about four years' experience of working in programmes. It is to be regretted in retrospect that, due to reasons of time and resources, a more substantial study was not able to be operationalised (an intention implied in the Paper), as qualitative in-depth interviews clearly had the potential to uncover a vein of rich material (Mason, 2002; Seidman, 2006; Bryman, 2008; Silverman, 2013). Nevertheless, the findings which these questionnaires produced still shed substantial light on the impact upon practitioners, their emotions, and indeed on their practice, of working in the emerging field of perpetrator programmes, suggesting that in this instance a self-completed questionnaire was an appropriate method to employ.

Burgess (1984), for example, had long argued that in field research, each method has its own strengths and weaknesses and that researchers ought to be flexible, and approach both substantive and theoretical problems with whichever range of methods are appropriate for that purpose. Bryman points out that in fact both methods, i.e. interviews and questionnaires, can be “very similar methods of social research” (Bryman, 2001, p.129). He suggests also that questionnaires can in fact have a number of advantages over the structured interview. These include being cheaper to administer, as in the case of the present study, that they can be distributed speedily, and are amenable to a sample which is quite widespread geographically (as in the present study which drew in over 30 responses from various parts of the UK and Ireland). He also argues that the physical absence of an interviewer, as was the case here, can reduce any bias which she/he may bring to the discussion. Furthermore, there may be distinct advantages in situations where the subject matter being discussed might reveal the interviewee in a less favourable light than they might wish, and where they might tend to avoid or prevaricate on subject matter which arouses feelings of discomfort. This could certainly be said to apply to much of the data generated in Paper 2 as in the many instances where practitioners referred to emotions such as vulnerability, anger or rage or, as far as some of the male respondents were concerned, feelings of identification with aspects of the men they routinely encountered on programmes.

Synthesising the findings: Papers 1 and 2

The significance of taking into account various elements of systemic approaches to practice with perpetrators such as court sanctioning of men for programme non-compliance, (Gondolf, 2002) or liaison with services for women partners and children (Burton et al, 1989; Respect, 1995, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2011; Gondolf, 2002, 2012; Kelly and Westmarland, 2015) have been influential over 25 years in shaping developments with regard to the policy and governance of perpetrator programmes. However, as has been argued, the human and emotional factors involved in such complex work, the impact on those who carry it out, the nature of the organisations in which they operate, and the “social conditions which pre-exist and endure through programmes” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.70), have too often been excluded, or overlooked, both in the wider literature concerning practice with people involved in offending more generally (Eadie and Knight, 2002), and certainly in the

literature relating to domestic violence perpetrator programmes. While neither the studies discussed in Papers 1 and 2 are presented as *evaluative studies per se*, the human factors discussed in both, explore themes which have a substantial bearing on, and are highly relevant to, questions of programme functioning (and therefore it is argued here, to their overall effectiveness), constituting as they do important contributory aspects of the wider systems in which they are embedded. Given the fact that their significance is being considered as part of this thesis, it is important therefore to address the question of why factors such as these may have tended to be overlooked or marginalised in the evaluative literature and research.

Relationship-based practice

As alluded to above there has been a longstanding social work literature on the importance of the skills, attitudes, approaches and values which practitioners such as social workers bring to their practice, and of the need to establish positive relationships with service users, (Rogers, 1951; Biestek, 1957; Hollis, 1972; Coulshed and Orme, 1998; Trevithick, 2005; Wilson et al, 2008; Thompson, 2009). Similarly, attention has been paid within criminal justice literature to the nature of the relationships which probation officers should seek to establish, and of the importance of these relationships for engaging meaningfully with their clients (Foren and Bailey, 1968; Monger, 1972; Bottoms and McWilliams, 1979; Rex, 1999; Trotter, 2000, 2007; Gregory, 2006; McNeill, 2006; McNeill and Weaver, 2011).

However as far as the Probation Service is concerned, a number of authors (Raynor, 1993; Barry, 2000; Burke, 2005; Gorman et al, 2006; Burke and Collett, 2012) have commented on the decline of the significance accorded to relationship-based practice from the 1990s onwards, and on the shift in the value base of the organisation (Robinson, 2001; 2003) as the Service veered steadily towards an organisational culture in which the principles of 'correctionalism' (Smith, 2006), 'governmentality' (Robinson, 2003), and 'technicality' (Jamous and Peloille, 1970), became increasingly prevalent. This latter term refers to a culture which favours and prioritises everyday practices which can be prescribed and subjected to routine procedures. Such priorities and concerns stand in contrast to so-called 'indeterminate' practices such as those based on specialist knowledge, practice wisdom

(Samson, 2015) and the 'professional judgement' which had hitherto characterised probation practice on the ground (Robinson, 2003).

David Smith, a former probation officer and subsequently an authoritative academic and commentator on probation training, policy and practice, had also observed that these technical processes and their attendant concerns of "probation practitioners prioritising actuarial assessment of risk and the *management* of offenders" (Smith, 2006, p.361) [italics added] replaced the attention which had previously been paid to the complex 'inner experiences' of those with whom probation officers worked. In short, it is quite evident from some of the contemporary literature discussed that the technical concerns and priorities of 'New Public Management' (Clarke and Newman, 1997) had clearly impacted upon the ethos of the Probation Service during the same period in which it was becoming the major provider of programmes for domestic violence perpetrators in the UK (Gadd, 2004; Bowen, 2011).

Perhaps not surprisingly in a climate such as this there had been something of a dearth of research into the various emotional processes which not only impacted upon practitioners themselves but which they also brought into their practice. Knight has commented on the extent to which both the academic discipline of criminology and the various organisations involved in wider criminal justice practices had excluded the subjective, emotional factors which often lie at the heart of much criminal or criminalised behaviour, observing as recently as 2014 that "there has been little written about how criminal justice practitioners actually manage and use their emotions in their work" (Knight, 2014, p.4). She consolidates this argument by noting that in fact "the behaviourists of the 1950s who began the ongoing developments around cognitive behavioural psychology that remain relevant to the work of the probation service today were *suspicious* of emotions" (ibid, p.22) [italics added].

The two studies discussed respectively in Papers 1 and 2 refer, in the first instance, to a sample of Scottish Criminal Justice Social Workers, and in the second to a sample of practitioners from across the UK, the majority of whom were in fact probation officers. It is reasonable to deduce therefore, that despite there being less of an emphasis on 'technical' practices in Scotland (McIvor, 2004), that the practitioners in *both* studies were operating in a climate in which attention to the emotional demands generated by practising

in what was at the time an innovative and challenging field, was overlooked and poorly understood. Other contemporary research which had looked at the demands of social work practice more generally, and of the fears and anxieties commonly experienced by practitioners in their day-to-day practice had confirmed that social workers' emotions, and managers' recognition of these emotions, were "insufficiently acknowledged in the social work environment" (Dwyer, 2007, p.40). In this vein, it is perhaps even more striking to note Knight's insistence, several years after the first and second papers were published (in 2006 and 2008 respectively), that while the administrative roles, routines and practices of criminal justice practitioners are aspects of the criminal justice system which are visible, the underground emotional work, i.e. "the importance of recognising emotions [in practice] have continued to remain largely suppressed, invisible and unacknowledged" (Knight, 2014, p.4). It is also striking that an even more recent substantial text which aims to address and understand the importance of recognising emotions in social work practice begins by referencing the continuing "level of resistance and lethargy to the role of emotions in social work practice, and how emotions impact on the relationships, decisions and actions of social workers and service users" (Ingram, 2015, p.1).

Knight's (2014) research study addressed the question of how a sample of probation officers (many of them women) involved in working mostly with sexual or violent offenders went about the process of maintaining and sustaining what she terms 'emotional literacy', namely utilising "the skills that criminal justice practitioners ... use in understanding their own emotions and working effectively and appropriately with the emotions of offenders" (Knight, 2014, p.7). She argues that these skills and values associated with 'emotional literacy' need to be valued and recognised by other colleagues, and by managers, in order to survive the rigours and demands of everyday practice. However, it is evident from the sample both in her research, and indeed from the earlier studies by the present author and discussed in Papers 1 and 2, that the level of recognition of the impact of this work and support for workers varied widely. Indeed, it was often absent in the first place.

With regard to work with domestic violence perpetrators, an earlier piece of research in which Knight had also been involved (Eadie and Knight, 2002) had examined changes observed in the occupational culture as staff in two early probation projects adapted or responded to this innovative activity. It was noted, for example, that many male

practitioners seemed markedly ambivalent about engaging in work with perpetrators, were uncomfortable with the feminist analysis of violence underpinning much of the work at that time, and reluctant also to place much value or emphasis on their own emotional experiences or needs as practitioners. It is also noticeable that in a service in which men predominated at the management level, if less so at practitioner level where women were becoming more prevalent (Home Office, 2004; Annison et al, 2008), that female probation officers especially, discussed feeling unsupported, disclosing that they found their male colleagues uncomfortable with speaking about or recognising emotions, and the potential impact of these emotions either upon themselves or on their (female) colleagues' practice (Knight, 2014). This finding resonated strongly with the observations and reflections by female, and indeed some male practitioners, in the study by the present author discussed in Paper 2 (Morran, 2008). Indeed, the overlap between the findings in both Morran's study and Knight's study conducted some years later in 2014 is considerable.

In each of these studies (Morran, 2008; Knight, 2014), for example, respondents frequently complained of feeling isolated in their workplace and of experiencing a lack of support from their male managers and colleagues. Female practitioners in Paper 2 and in Knight also commonly reported feelings of being attacked due to their gender. Some saw this work as more challenging than work with sex offenders because of the levels of misogyny they witnessed in men they worked with, (Morran, 2008, p.144; Knight, 2014, p.53). They constantly found themselves having to suppress and mask their own feelings "in order to sustain the outward countenance" (Hochschild, 1983, p.7) necessary when working with challenging and demanding clients such as domestic violence perpetrators, not always successfully.

Women practitioners reported experiencing 'anger' about men's misogyny, of feeling 'under attack' due to their gender, and of feeling 'vulnerable' in undertaking this work, often in circumstances where they considered that their male colleagues were "not always sensitive to this or willing to 'back up' the female workers' position" (Knight, 2014, p.55). These observations endorse those of many of the women in the study discussed in Paper 2, where several respondents equally expressed concerns around physical and emotional safety, and which raised "extreme feelings of fear, rage, hate and confusion" (Morran, 2008, p.146) for at least one of my sample. The impact upon social workers when they "are

the recipients of anger and hatred ... can make them feel terrible and can be very eroding” (Dwyer, 2007, p.53), and the consequences therefore for a meaningful engagement with men who generate or stimulate such emotions in practitioners are obviously damaging and counter productive.

The reflections and experiences of male practitioners are also addressed in Paper 2, and as with women in the sample their experiences made them more aware of the extent to which violence and abuse was observable in their everyday lives. Some saw their involvement in this type of work as a sometimes painful, sometimes exhilarating process of personal and emotional awakening. It could also raise particular questions about men’s sense of themselves. Several of the men struggled at times however to identify how they differentiated themselves from those men they worked with, experiencing a lack of clear boundaries between what they saw as ‘normal’ male aggressive behaviour and abuse, and the more overt violence of the perpetrators. This created further confusion as to what they were expected to model, and ultimately of how they compared themselves to the men they were working with, suggesting that this is an issue which would clearly merit further research. This question of what practitioners expect men to achieve as opposed to what they are expected to *desist from* (see Turnell and Edwards, 1999) was unfortunately not addressed in this paper. However, further reflection on this issue led to the questions at the core of the interviews conducted in Paper 5, which examine the processes and practices by which desistance from violence and abusive behaviour is constructed, enacted and achieved by men involved in this process.

What also emerged from the reflections of the male practitioners in this study (Paper2) was that, with a few isolated exceptions, in the agencies in which they practised, particularly within the Probation sector, their male colleagues and managers, were clearly ambivalent about becoming involved in working with perpetrators. Consequently, the more ‘engaged’ practitioners were operating in environments in which recognition of the importance of acknowledging emotions and their impact upon routine practice was often resisted and ignored (Ingram, 2015).

Both male and female respondents in Paper 2 also commented on the variable quality of the supervision which they received from managers. Formal supervision, the process in

which practitioners are enabled to reflect upon their practice and its effects, allows them a space where difficult experiences can be discussed and reflected upon, (Wilson et al, 2008), and helps “to make the unbearable bearable” (Ferguson, 2011, p.199). This approach to supervision, rather than the routine monitoring of practice and achievement of outcomes and targets in which ‘technicality’ is favoured and prioritised (Robinson, 2003), is an essential part of recognising the personal and professional effects on practitioners of practice, particularly with challenging clients such as domestic violence perpetrators. When such supervision is not available routinely, or where it is unsatisfactory, and where workers feel isolated (Morran, 2008; Knight, 2014), then a number of negative consequences are likely for both practitioners and clients and the relationships they have with each other. Dwyer (2007, p.52) notes that when managers do recognise and respect the demanding practices in which practitioners are engaged then workers’ “creativity and coping is enhanced”. David Howe equally stresses the importance of meaningful supervision so that social workers can remain “self-aware (and) emotionally attuned thereby enabling them to maintain a positive accepting ... [if challenging] ... relationship with service users” (Howe, 2008, p.187).

This is precisely the quality of the relationships which workers need to be supported to sustain when maintaining a positive, if still challenging and questioning, relationship with men who appear on perpetrator programmes. Hair (2012) has observed that where practitioners are unable to have opportunities to explore their emotions in supervision they often experience high levels of stress. What is also likely to occur in the absence of such endorsement, support and meaningful supervision, is the antithesis of a positive therapeutic engagement, resulting for example in processes of ‘transference’ (Murdin, 2010) of these negative feelings whereby practitioners direct “unexamined feelings of anger, disgust or fear towards particular offenders” (Knight, 2014, p.65). As such, they are likely to find that “their practice is contaminated or at least strongly affected by these feelings albeit at the unconscious level” (ibid, p.65).

Angry, fearful, unsupported workers in ambivalent, male-dominated organisations (at the level of management) who routinely deal with resentful, difficult, fearful and frequently frightening men are likely, consciously or unconsciously, to reproduce some of these tensions in their everyday work. Discussing the damaging impact which factors such as

these can have upon practice, Howe (2008, p.182) observes that “agencies that come across as anxious, defensive or hostile, *alienate* service users” [italics added]. He goes on to argue that matters are made worse where social workers are perceived as impersonal, bureaucratically preoccupied, performance-driven, or judgemental and punitive, or where supervision prioritises a rational-technical approach (Gorman et al, 2006; Beddoe, 2010), as many of the respondents in Paper 2 reported. Where this occurs, Howe argues that service users are likely to ‘resist engaging’ and in the process may feel that they are being ‘abandoned’, as a consequence of which they may become ‘resentful, frightened or angry’. Moreover, in circumstance such as these, organisations are unlikely to provide interventions which are *effective*. Such a description of ‘service users’ who are resistant to engaging with practitioners aptly describes many of the men discussed by practitioners in Papers 1 and 2. Coincidentally, Howe’s reference to the experience of feeling ‘abandoned’ is likely to resonate with the feelings of abandonment which many men who perpetrate violence and abuse have expressed as being as a core fear behind their controlling behaviour, (Gadd, 2004), while the emotions presented of being ‘resentful, frightened or angry’ resemble the challenging and somewhat toxic combination of attitudes and behaviours with which many men on programmes confront practitioners.

In the light of the critique laid at programmes in Papers 1 and 2 that the programme experience for participants has been substantially overlooked, and consequently the likelihood that they will either engage and benefit from it or reject it, it is particularly appropriate to pay much more attention to the significance of the learning environment afforded by programmes, and to the nature of the therapeutic relationship which participants in programmes see as useful. Interviewing a sample of nine men who had successfully completed a perpetrator’s programme and 10 practitioners, Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006, p.144) reported that “the single most important factor in the [change process] was the emotionally safe treatment environment ... that was created through respect ... and support from the other group members and the facilitators”. In a similar vein, Contrino et al (2007) obtained data from 74 male clients who had completed a 26-week Duluth Model group intervention. They were particularly interested in the issue of men’s compliance with the programme and found that in order for men to become more than merely passive recipients, they needed to be able to make sense of programme

material as it applied to their lives. Active engagement, as opposed to passive compliance, was dependent on the element of connection with programme staff which in turn also facilitated retention of and ability to apply learning from the programme. These findings, and the significance of the group environment, are echoed in a more recent study by Roy et al concerned with exploring the “possible influence of the group’s dimensions on engagement” (Roy et al, 2013, p.1801). Significantly this is an issue which they note remains “neglected in research into IPV [interpersonal violence] programmes” (ibid, p.1802).

In conclusion, the quality of the relationships and of the inter-relationships which probation officers, and social workers have with the men on programmes in unsupportive, resistant environments is likely to be substantially and negatively affected. This undermines the experience both of working in, or attending a perpetrator programme, once more reducing their potential to be effective in engaging with such men or of impacting positively upon their attitudes and behaviour to themselves and others.

Contribution to knowledge

The significance of the theme of emotional impact, its potential to influence or even contaminate professional engagement with perpetrators or other challenging service users, emerged from the interviews in Paper 1. This theme was addressed more substantially in Paper 2 (revealing also the extent to which the experience of being involved in working with perpetrators can seep into one’s personal life). These findings underline the importance of the practitioner/perpetrator relationship and the significant function it plays in any meaningful, and hence more effective, engagement with men on programmes. It is noteworthy that the studies discussed in Papers 1 and 2, and the themes they address, were published in 2006 and 2008 respectively. In this context it is somewhat concerning to note that in an investigation conducted several years later into the emotional impact of practice upon probation officers, Charlotte Knight notes that “questions about the extent to which emotions govern and direct the practice of criminal justice workers remain largely unexplored” (Knight, 2014, p.13).

While the terms ‘firing up’ and ‘burning out’ in the title of the article in Paper 2 represented the sometimes conflicting and conflicted emotions experienced by the sample of practitioners concerned, they were equally, emotions which I myself had experienced and

with which I still wrestled at the time. This latter experience of 'burnout' although beginning to emerge in some of the wider criminal justice literature not long after I had conducted my own study (Tewkesbury and Higgins, 2006; Collins et al, 2009), as well as the need to recognise the 'underground emotional work' (Layder, 2004) in which practitioners are routinely engaged in working with people who offend are issues which remain still substantially overlooked.

A decade prior to Knight's research study, Mary Barnish had conducted a literature review on 'domestic violence' commissioned by HM Inspectorate of Probation just as the Probation Service in England and Wales was about to embark on a substantial initiative involving the systematic development of domestic violence perpetrator programmes. On examining the evaluative research studies on perpetrator programmes then extant, Barnish made a number of observations concerning "several unexplored themes in the evaluative research and literature on perpetrator programmes" (Barnish, 2004, p.92). These involved a series of systemic or contextual factors which potentially impacted on programme completion rates. The significance of completion of programmes being important in terms of successful outcome, is noted elsewhere by a number of other commentators (e.g. Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Bowen, 2011, Gondolf, 2012). Other unexplored themes included the nature and quality of relationships between practitioners and participants, the style and approach of practitioners, as well, notably, as the personal and social circumstances and issues which exist for men outside the programme, including the availability (or lack of) support following programme attendance or completion. Themes such as these, the systemic and contextual factors which impacted upon programme completion, the quality of relationships, the personal and social circumstances in the outside lives of those attending programmes, are in fact precisely the issues which are examined in Papers 1 and 2. These address important aspects of practice which at the time of their publication were otherwise underexplored and unacknowledged. In doing so, both papers and the issues they address make an original contribution to an emerging and complex field of social work and probation activity.

In addition to the journal article above (Paper 2), a truncated version of the findings was published in the *Respect Journal* in October 2008, and presented at two National Practitioner Network events in 2009 in the UK and in Ireland respectively, once again

reflecting the importance to practitioners of the medium of the NPN. More recently, in October 2017, these studies and their findings were presented to an audience of European practitioners and academics at the 4th Annual Conference of the Working with Perpetrators European Network (WWP-EN) in Krakow, Poland. During the period 2016-17, I was also a member of the WWP-EN *Standards for programmes working with perpetrators of domestic violence programmes* working group. Recognition of these findings now inform the standards: “B:5 (Values) practitioners need support and supervision to understand the effects of working with violence on providers” (WWP-EN, 2017, p. 15) and “Understand processes of change and the personal, interpersonal, social and structural factors which might support or inhibit such change” (WWP-EN, 2017, p. 15).

Categorising perpetrators: Typologies.

Papers 1 and 2 note the significance of the organisational culture and context, the emotional impact of engaging in this innovative field, and the potential of both to impact, frequently adversely, upon practice. They also reveal that practitioners were clearly aware that the somewhat formulaic approach to practice as exemplified by the Duluth Model programme was unlikely to be able to address the often complex personal and social circumstances and background factors in the lives of men referred to perpetrator programmes.

Although the Duluth Model had, from the 1980s onwards, become the most salient and influential upon perpetrator programme development in the UK (Bowen, 2011), and the USA and Canada (Eckhardt et al, 2013), debates as to the nature and causes of men’s violence and abuse had certainly not abated. As suggested in the introductory chapter of this thesis there had been longstanding and largely unresolved arguments and conflicting theories (Bowen, 2011; Gondolf, 2012; Devaney and Lazenblatt, 2016) as to ‘the causes’ of interpersonal violence, and consequently of how it should be responded to. The two dominant standpoints have been characterised as the ‘family violence perspective’ (Bowen, 2011) and the ‘feminist perspective’, which acknowledges the gendered nature of many forms of oppression by men against women (Skinner et al, 2005). Latterly, the feminist perspective has increasingly evolved to become the ‘Violence Against Women’ perspective, (Council of Europe, 2011; Burman and Brooks-Hay, 2018).

Two major critiques were aimed at Duluth and the ‘pro-feminist programmes’ the Model endorsed. The first was based on a body of research which argued that the centrality of gender as the underlying cause of violence was inaccurate or at the very least, hugely overstated. One of the most sustained critiques of the feminist perspective emanated from the work of Murray Straus in the USA. From the 1970s onwards, Straus along with various colleagues (Straus et al, 1980) had sought to explain partner violence by measuring the extent to which *physical violence* occurred within relationships by use of what is referred to as the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979, subsequently revised), (CTS2, Straus et al, 1996). Based on self-report questionnaires the CTS examined a range of purely physical acts which were subsequently defined and categorised accordingly.⁸ Straus and Gelles (1990) subsequently concluded from the findings of a US survey of family violence which drew on the CTS that 50% of violence in relationships could be classified as ‘mutual’. Subsequent surveys have similarly continued to argue that women frequently use violence against their partners, not only in self-defence, and that they often do so more severely than men (Magdol et al, 1998). Gender cannot therefore, according to findings such as these, satisfactorily explain the phenomenon of partner-violence.

The CTS and the methodology it employs of quantifying and categorising *violent acts* has however been subject to a number of criticisms by a range of commentators (e.g. Dobash et al, 1992; Stark, 2007) principally on the basis that scales such as the CTS focus narrowly on violence as purely physical and ignore the significance of the context in which men and women’s (physical and non-physical) violence is used. They also discount the fact that men’s violence is much more prevalent, the extent to which men’s violence causes greater harm and injury, and the degree to which it results in fear on the part of women who experience it. These factors are not as evident when men report themselves to be ‘victims’ of assault by their female partners (see also Gadd et al, 2001).

This debate has more recently been taken up in the UK following further research into the statistical prevalence of partner violence by Archer (2000) and Dixon et al (2012), and has continued to be waged, often quite heatedly. Dixon et al (2012) for example have argued

⁸ E.g. physical assault (minor) ‘threw something’; physical assault (severe), ‘choked’, ‘slammed partner against a wall’; psychological aggression (severe), ‘destroyed something belonging to my partner’, etc.

that many pro-feminist programmes in the UK, particularly those affiliated to, or accredited by *Respect* are driven by feminist 'ideology' rather than by 'scientific empiricism', an accusation which *Respect* has strongly refuted (Debonnaire and Todd, 2012). While such debates continue, with little indication that they are likely to be resolved (Devaney and Lazenblatt, 2016), their impact upon practice in the UK does not appear to have resulted in the polarised stances adopted the USA. There something of a 'turf war' seems to exist between psychotherapeutically informed approaches on the one hand, and those who favour the more educational and cognitively oriented feminist model on the other (Lehmann and Simmons, 2009). Instead there is widespread acknowledgement among a number of UK commentators, (Gadd, 2004; Morran, 2011; Bowen, 2011; Kelly and Westmarland, 2015) that at the practical level, and despite the limitations of the feminist theoretical model, for example to account for violence perpetrated by women against male partners, or LGBT violence, (Gadd, 2001; Rivett, 2006; Bowen, 2011) 'the feminist ideology' (as exemplified by the Duluth Model) has been "the single most influential theory in relation to the development of intervention programmes" (Bowen, 2011, p.58).

The second critique levelled against the Duluth Model is that it has tended towards a reification of men who appear on perpetrator programmes as comprising a homogenous population (Hunnicut, 2009). In order, therefore, to more fully understand some of the reasons behind domestic violence perpetration, it is necessary to consider a range of factors beyond the 'false universalism' associated with patriarchy (Hunnicut, 2009), and acknowledge the considerable array of wider psychological, personal and interpersonal issues in perpetrators' lives and backgrounds (Dutton, 1995a, 1995b; Collier, 1998; Gadd, 2004; Corvo, 2006; Dutton and Corvo, 2006; Hunnicutt, 2009).

A substantial body of research into the psychological characteristics of perpetrators has for example been concerned with identifying and establishing whether there can be said to be different *types* of perpetrator (e.g. Holtzworth Munroe and Stuart, 1994). Research on typologies has resulted in accusations from those favouring pro-feminist approaches that this again perpetuates the 'myth' that interpersonal violence has its roots in some underlying addiction or psychology (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Kimmel, 2002). However, others such as Kelly and Johnson (2008) and Ehrensaft et al (2008) in the USA, and Bowen (2011) in the UK, have countered that the resulting knowledge from categorising the

profiles of different groups of perpetrator “may have important clinical implications if there is a therapeutic aim of rehabilitation groups for IPV perpetrators ... [this might enable] ... programme developers to tailor content to meet the needs of particular groups of offenders” (Bowen, 201, p.15), ‘matching’ particular perpetrators to more appropriately tailored programmes. This ought to improve the potential both for programme effectiveness, and the reduction of risk to partners/survivors, (Cavanaugh and Gelles, 2005; Ehrensaft et al, 2008; Kelly and Johnson, 2008).

The typological literature has also tended to focus specifically on men’s actions, in contrast to theories concentrated upon ‘women’, ‘families’ or ‘family systems’, as the source of the problem. “Men’s violence ...” according to Hotaling and Sugarman (1986, p.20) “... is *men’s* behaviour. As such it is not surprising that the more fruitful efforts to explain this behaviour [should] focus on male characteristics” [italics in the original]. This need to focus upon men and their behaviour was also recognised by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) who state that, “recent evidence suggests that, when one is trying to understand husband-to-wife violence, studies examining the husband are likely to be the most productive line of enquiry” (Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994, p.476).

The most enduring model of ‘batterer typology’ emerged from a literature review carried out by these same authors, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, in 1994, which proposed that there were three dimensions which distinguished batterer subtypes. These concern the severity of marital violence, the generality of violence (to include others than their spouse) and the presence of psychopathology/personality disorder.

Located across these three dimensions of violence they then proposed three different subtypes of batterer. The first is the ‘family-only’ batterer whose use of physical violence is ‘non-severe’ (in comparison), and is restricted to family members; they comprise about 50% of batterers in the general population. The second category, ‘dysphoric/borderline’ batterers are likely to engage in ‘moderate to severe’ abuse which may also include psychological and sexual abuse. Their violence is substantially family-only although some are also likely to be involved in the perpetration of extra-family violence. This group is dysphoric (i.e. generally uneasy about many aspects of life), distressed and often volatile;

alcohol and drug abuse problems are not uncommon. They are likely to account for approximately 25% of samples of batterers in the general population.

The third category Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart term 'generally violent, anti-social'. These men's violence is likely to be moderate to severe, to include psychological and sexual abuse, and they are also likely to engage in violence more generally in their lives. They may well also have drug and/or alcohol problems, and some may also evidence behaviour associated with psychopathy or personality disorder. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) also identified that across these typologies there are clustered various *distal* or historical factors, which violent and abusive men experience in early childhood, such as parental neglect, or being exposed to violence in the family of origin, resulting in recurring experiences of trauma. Other *proximal* factors occur, emerge, or are exhibited during adulthood, and include insecure or avoidant attachment issues, alcohol problems, impulsive behaviour, and problematic social skills.

Several studies have since concurred with the general findings and typologies identified by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (e.g. Langhinrischen-Rohling et al, 2000; Waltz et al, 2000). A review by Dixon and Browne (2003) identified 12 studies which largely confirmed the three-fold typology proposed by Holtzworth and Munroe (1994), commenting on the heterogeneity of the batterer population. Dixon and Browne's review notably included samples of both 'court-mandated' perpetrators and perpetrators who attended programmes 'voluntarily' and suggested some consistent distinctions between them. Court-mandated samples consisted of 38% 'family-only', 36% 'generally violent' and 24% 'borderline dysphoric' perpetrators. As far as voluntary (i.e. non-court mandated) programmes were concerned 59% were 'family-only', 23% generally violent/antisocial and 16% borderline/dysphoric. This might be taken to suggest for example that court-mandated programmes may be dealing with men who bring a range of 'generally violent' and 'dysphoric' problems with them compared to those less likely to have been involved with the criminal justice system.

A particularly apt study inasmuch as it focuses *only* on men referred to court-mandated programmes in the UK was that carried out by Johnson et al (2006) which applied Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) typology to a sample of 230 men who had either

been ordered by courts or otherwise assessed as suitable to attend a probation based 'Domestic Violence Probation Programme'. The study concludes by acknowledging that "consistent with previous research ... domestic violence offenders are not a homogenous group ... [and that the study] ... reports a larger proportion of generally violent/antisocial type and a smaller proportion of family-only offenders in court-referred-for-treatment samples of domestically violent men" (Johnson, 2006, p.1282). What appears therefore to be evident, and as others were confirming around this same period (Gondolf, 2004; Barnish, 2004; Bowen, 2011), is that perpetrators on programmes have frequently experienced a wide range of problematic factors in their backgrounds. These cannot be dissociated from, and may well be associated with, their violent and abusive behaviour.

It has been consistently established for example that the most salient factor which distinguishes partner-violent from nonviolent men is a history of having witnessed or experienced violence in one's family of origin (Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986; Saunders, 1993; Holtzworth-Munroe et al, 1997; Schumacher et al, 2001; Gilchrist et al, 2003). In addition to factors such as these and while domestic violence occurs across all social groups, research studies also suggest (Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986; Saunders, 1993) that there is a significant association between low educational achievement, unemployment, low income (Gilchrist et al, 2003) and the risk of perpetrating violence against a partner. It has also been observed that men who drop out of programmes have tended to be younger, to be less educated, unemployed, to be unmarried, and/or without children, (Gondolf and Foster, 1991).

Grusznski and Carillo (1991) and Daly et al (2001) recorded that men who drank problematically were generally less likely to engage with programmes. In a study examining 'batterer characteristics and completion' which involved interviews with 85 men attending two local batterer treatment programmes in South Carolina, Dalton (2001) found that that "as a group the respondents in this study were beset by multiple problems. Twenty of the 85 were unemployed or employed part-time. Half had some indication of alcohol or drug abuse symptoms. Most had a record of prior arrest (63.5%), twenty-two men (34%) had a prior arrest for domestic violence" (Dalton, 2001, p.1235). Very few maintained any connection with the programme after the mandatory treatment was concluded. It is also

well documented that men who do not complete programmes are more likely to re-offend than those who do (Bowen et al, 2008).

The range of personal and interpersonal problems, high levels of psychopathology, and the tendencies towards generally violent and anti-social behaviour exhibited by a substantial proportion of men, as in the Johnson et al (2006) study therefore present considerable challenges. The complexity of these issues was likely to pose particular difficulties for the programmes principally concerned with addressing cognitive-skills-development and acquisition such as those which initially introduced into the Probation Service (Barnish, 2004), as well as the subsequently accredited *Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme* (IDAP) (Bowen, 2011).

Those family-only perpetrators who exhibited few manifestations of psychopathology, whose violence was unlikely to escalate over time, and who were noted to be the most remorseful were arguably, for reasons discussed above, less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system in the first instance (Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994; Bowen, 2011). However, the group described as 'dysphoric/borderline' who engage in medium to severe abuse (described as "borderline" by Johnson et al, 2006, p.282) and who constituted 28% of their sample, scored highly on a number of scales depicting alcohol problems, widespread experience of severe physical and sexual abuse during childhood, and many possessed low levels of self-esteem while exhibiting very high levels of anger.

Many were also "predominantly fearful in their attachment style" (Johnson et al, 2006, p.1282). Problematic attachment styles have emerged as a consistent feature in the lives of many perpetrators of domestic abuse. Hamberger and Hastings (1986), Saunders (1992), Dutton et al (1994), Stosny, (1995), and Babcock et al (2000), found that perpetrators were likely to exhibit insecure rather than secure attachment styles. Comparing samples of partner-violent men versus non-violent men, Dutton (1995a; 1995b; 1999), Holtzworth-Munroe et al (1997), Tweed and Dutton (1998) and Fonagy (1999) all concluded that the former presented attachment styles characterised by insecurity and disorganisation, that they were fearful of abandonment and emotionally dependent upon their partners. Discussing such anxious and pre-occupied patterns of attachment in adulthood more generally, Howe vividly describes the impact of these upon intimate relationships:

“Declarations of undying love and feelings of possessiveness are as likely as outbursts of mistrust and jealous anger. Both are driven by the need to be loved, reassured and never *abandoned*” (Howe, 2011, p.140) [italics added]. This resonates strongly with the critique by Gadd (2004) concerning the theoretical basis of the Duluth Model, and its lack of recognition of the centrality of men’s *fear of abandonment* as a recurring factor behind the violence of many perpetrators of violence against their partners, an argument which seeks not to condone but to understand this behaviour.

A further important contribution to the literature on typologies is the model more recently developed by Johnson (2008). He suggested that there were a number of significant differences to be found among the motivating factors behind, and types of violent/abusive perpetration enacted, depending on the methodological approaches employed. Studies which drew on large ‘community samples’ (e.g. crime surveys), differed considerably from violence observed within and among populations more likely to be engaging directly with services such as women shelters and the police. Importantly, in view of the polarised binary feminist vs. gender-neutral debates as to the nature of inter-personal violence, Johnson suggested that there were four categories in which violence was likely either to be gender-neutral or gender-differentiated, and where in the latter, men’s violence was more likely to prevail. These are:

1. Situational couple violence: This is likely to occur when routine conflict between partners develops into physical violence, is generally, though not always non-severe, and does not involve controlling behaviour. It is unlikely to escalate. This type of violence is gender-symmetrical and can be perpetrated by either partner.
2. Intimate terrorism: This behaviour is primarily about the control of one partner by the other; the perpetrator is almost always male. Numerous controlling tactics such as those described by Pence and Paymar (1993) are evident. The violence is more serious, and more likely to escalate over the course of time.
3. Violent resistance: This occurs when the person who is the victim of the intimate terrorist retaliates. However, this violence is about defence of self; it is not about establishing (or re-establishing control).

4. Mutual violent control: This Johnson notes to be a rare and still-poorly-theorised phenomenon in which both partners use violent behaviour to control the other and in which the primary purpose seems to be about control.

Despite these successive studies which have focused upon and sought to provide a more psychologically-informed understanding of the perpetration of domestic abuse by some men towards their partners, they have failed to make any substantial impact upon practice, certainly as far as the UK is concerned (Gadd, 2004; Morran, 2011; Bowen, 2011).⁹

With regards to the typological research in particular however, it has been argued that the tendency within the discipline of psychology to continually refine and further sub-divide men into categorical sub-types has made it very difficult to test the relevance of these models in actual practice, (Dixon and Browne; 2003; Bowen, 2011). More recent commentators (Devaney and Lazenblatt, 2016) have also noted the considerable complexities in terms of assessment and resources involved in applying typologically-based interventions to practice on any large-scale basis. This is of particular importance for the nature of provision in the UK given that the largest provider of programmes has been the Probation Service in England and Wales. This Service had also been subjected to the various organisational, professional and contextual restrictions discussed above. At the time therefore that the Probation Service was about to commit to a large scale roll-out of the Duluth-informed Integrated Domestic Abuse Programmes (IDAP) it was quite clear according to contemporary commentators (Barnish, 2004), and indeed as some earlier US studies had long concluded, (Healey et al, 1998; Heckert and Gondolf, 2004), the “one size fits all approach of many perpetrator programmes may be inappropriate and counterproductive. Different treatment needs may also explain the limited success demonstrated by standardised perpetrator programmes” (Barnish, 2004, p.51). Despite this emerging body of evidence, there was considerable political pressure upon the Probation Service to ‘deliver results’, and the Duluth-influenced Integrated Domestic Abuse

⁹ Several commentators have been vociferous in their criticism that this has been due in considerable measure to the power of feminist political activism particularly in the USA (Babcock et al, 2007; Dutton and Corvo, 2007; Lehmann and Simmons, 2009) and to a lesser extent in the UK (Dixon et al, 2012; Archer et al, 2012; Bates et al, 2017).

Programme (IDAP) was duly approved by the Joint Prison/Probation Accreditation Panel in 2003 and rolled out nationally across the Probation Service in 2006.

The origins of Paper 3

The themes discussed above as they emerged from both Papers 1 and 2 vividly demonstrate the impact of the culture of an organisation on its practitioners. They explore and reveal the nature of practitioners' experience of working in this developing field of work. They also reveal the often unacknowledged, unrecognised and unexplored emotional aspects of working with perpetrators, and the potential of such emotions to influence or tarnish professional practice. Finally, they highlight the lack of attention paid, and the practical difficulties involved in addressing meaningfully the complex factors in the lives of many of the men referred to programmes. All of these themes combined therefore to form the basis of the critique of programmes advanced in the third paper submitted as part of this thesis (see Appendix 3: *Re-education or recovery? Re-thinking some aspects of domestic violence perpetrator programmes*).

Commentary on Paper 3

This article charts the development and recent provision of perpetrator programmes in the UK, suggesting that there has been an over-emphasis on systems of delivery with less concern given to "the perspective and approach ... the relationship between practitioner and service users, including the importance of strength-based approaches, and the evidence from desistance research which focuses on behaviour change processes generally" (Morran, 2011, p.26). Noting the relevance of McNeill's 'desistance paradigm' (McNeill, 2006), the article explores the skills and values by which programme practitioners may address denial and create "the space for motivation, engagement and connection" (Morran, 2011, p.29), arguing that the 'perpetrator' needs to be considered more holistically than is currently the case, particularly within the context of professionalised probation practice.

Consideration is also given to how desistance-associated factors of maturity and social bonds (Maruna, 2001) might be (re)conceptualised in relation to men commonly appearing

on perpetrator programmes, and of how behaviour change is accomplished. The point is forcefully made that the narratives of men who are/have been violent and/or abusive have routinely been held to be dubious or evasive. While such evasiveness does need to be recognised and acknowledged, the dangers of failing to listen are significant. The argument is advanced that by listening to men's own complex lives, practitioners can enhance their interventions, as this provides "insight and understanding of hitherto unexplored territory ... [allowing] ... us opportunities to work at a more holistic level ... with someone who is not simply or simplistically a 'perpetrator' but a person" (Morran, 2011, p.33). The findings from this study and the arguments made lead conclusively to the necessity of engaging with men constructively, from a position which acknowledges men's strengths as well as the risks they present to others and to themselves, a theme substantially developed below in Paper 4.

Influence of Paper 3 on further research interests

Paper 3 emphasises the importance of listening to men who perpetrate abuse in order to enhance interventions which engage with them. Scott (2004) states that the majority of investigations into perpetrator programmes outcomes focus only on violence reduction as an outcome and, important though this is, that little attention has been given to the active ingredients of change which might be involved in becoming non-violent. At the time of the publication of this paper, I had begun reflecting further on wider criminological literature on desistance from offending, and of what the processes and practices of desistance might actually entail as far as men who were or had been perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse were concerned. As a consequence, I had initiated a study involving a series of in-depth interviews with men who had 'successfully completed' domestic abuse programmes and were negotiating various processes and practices of desistance from violence and abuse. This study and its findings are addressed later in Paper 5. It comprises the third research study which revisits a recurring theme in this PhD thesis, namely the need to attend to the voices associated with the various personal processes and experiences of practitioner and perpetrator alike, voices which are often overlooked in addressing questions of programme effectiveness and outcomes.

The origins of Paper 4

Before proceeding to the reflection on the methodology and the findings from the study of desisting men in Paper 5 however, it might be appropriate to introduce the most recently completed publication which contributes to the PhD thesis at this juncture and to do so out of sequence in terms of its date of publication. This is because Paper 4 usefully links the suggestion made previously in Paper 3 that there is a need, as far as perpetrator programmes are concerned, to “re-appraise the evidence and rebuild the base” (Morran, 2011, p.27). It also offers some examples of orientations to practice which have emerged sometimes as a reaction to the ‘one-size-fits-all approach’ which Barnish observed earlier. While, as will be seen, the critique draws on the experiences of experienced practitioners and other informed commentators to argue for a constructive, strengths-based approach to practice, it also revisits the argument put forward in Paper 3 that systemic preoccupations and priorities have often overridden those concerned with the importance of relationship-based practice. In Paper 4 however, these systemic priorities and preoccupations are those of approaches to rehabilitative practices based primarily on risk assessment and management; the ‘risk paradigm’.

This term is used here to describe the processes through which, in so-called ‘risk societies’ such as the USA and the UK, described and critiqued by Beck (1992) and Giddens (1992) in which the State is seen as being no longer able to fulfil its modernist ambitions of overcoming and or eradicating problems such as crime, there has been an encroaching preoccupation with management and control instead. As far as criminal justice practices are concerned, this has ushered in a gradual erosion of the rehabilitative ideals which previously, for example, underpinned much probation practice in England and Wales, though an erosion less evident in Scotland (McIvor, 2004; McNeill and Whyte, 2007). Martinson’s alleged 1974 conclusion that ‘nothing works’, referred to earlier in this narrative, impacted upon this rehabilitative ideal and presented the Probation Service with a crisis of confidence, which, as is argued above, it resisted by aligning itself to the principles associated with the ‘What Works’ movement (Mair, 2004). Significantly, one of these included the ‘risk principle’ (Andrews and Bonta, 1998) which required that risk be assessed and applied systematically so that high-risk offenders such as sexual and (generally) violent offenders should receive more intensive forms of intervention than their less ‘risky’, less

seriously offending counterparts. However, in the sceptical political climate in which ‘What Works’ initiatives were implemented, and even as cognitive behavioural approaches were finding some favour, the preoccupation with the management of offenders was taking hold in England and Wales (Gorman et al, 2006), as the establishment of the National Offenders *Management Service* in 2004 illustrates [italics added].

In the text edited by Trotter et al (2016) in which Paper 4 appears, there are two schools of thought as to the degree to which the risk paradigm impacted upon everyday practice. On the one hand, contributors such as Robinson (2016) suggest that risk assessment was usefully being promoted as an integral part of effective practice, and that the increasing sophistication with which risk assessment processes were being adopted was seen (by many managers and practitioners) as adding to the legitimacy of the Service’s practice. Other contributors (e.g. Trotter, 2016; McNeill, 2016) argue however, that when risk discourses and associated practices prevail, they can have the effect of undermining “attempts to promote positive changes in the lives of those subject to supervision” (McNeill, 2016, p.143). They may also, by virtue of focusing on risky past behaviour to the exclusion of a potentially more positive present or future, as an earlier study into offenders’ experiences of supervision noted (Farrall, 2002), serve somewhat paradoxically to enhance the possibilities for disenchantment and disengagement. This increases the risk of alienation and contributes to the risk of further offending. Paper 4: *Programmes for Domestic Violence Perpetrators* comments and reflects upon the potential significance of the risk paradigm for practice with perpetrators of domestic violence perpetrators (see Appendix 4).

Measuring effectiveness: issues in perpetrator programme evaluation

The implicit question underlying the themes addressed in each of the four papers discussed above is that of whether programmes ‘work’ (and of what the term ‘work’ might actually entail). In addressing this issue, it is important first of all to note that as a number of commentators have consistently acknowledged (Gondolf, 2002, 2004, 2012; Bowen et al, 2002; Bowen, 2011; Kelly and Westmarland, 2015), the methodological processes involved in evaluating perpetrator programmes, and determining what constitutes an effective outcome, how this is measured or defined, and by whom, are far from straightforward. Moreover, there continues to be disagreement internationally as to their effectiveness,

(Kelly and Westmarland, 2013). Perhaps because of, or possibly despite, the contested status of perpetrator programmes, there is an extensive body of outcome-focused studies concerned with the evaluation of their effectiveness, although most relate to the United States, and to a somewhat lesser degree within the UK. While the section which follows is not intended to provide an extensive investigation or analysis of these studies, particularly in view of Kelly and Westmarland's (2013) summary as to the inconclusive nature of the evidence, it is still considered necessary to discuss some of the various methodological problems which those engaged in their evaluation are likely to encounter and which inevitably impact upon their findings and conclusions.

A number of early evaluative studies, conducted particularly as perpetrator programmes were beginning to gain traction in the USA (and subsequently in the UK), were limited in scope and scale. US studies, for example, by Tolman and Bennett, (1990), Davis and Taylor, (1999) relied on data provided principally by programme participants but not their partners nor ex-partners, and had adopted a 'non-experimental' approach to their samples which examined outcomes only for those perpetrators assigned to programmes. The lack of any control groups in such research prevented robust conclusions being drawn as they could not comment either on the effectiveness of alternative interventions or sanctions, nor indeed, as noted in the literature review by Barnish in the UK, as to "whether or what other factors may be at work" (Barnish, 2004, p.89). This literature review also observed *inter alia* that some of these earlier studies were poorly designed, or had been conducted by those directly involved in the perpetrator programme concerned (e.g. Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989) or more peripherally involved with their establishment, as with the UK study by Dobash et al (1996a; 1996b; 1999; 2000). Consequently, the conclusions they reached could be perceived as lacking in objectivity. Despite this critique however, other commentators on programme evaluation (e.g. Bowen et al, 2002) have noted that given the considerable practical limitations on the funding and scale of research projects, particularly in the UK context, it is often difficult to find 'independent' researchers for smaller-scale projects.

Findings from two early British studies have also been critiqued *inter alia* on the grounds of sample size. A study by Burton et al (1989) which 'had contact' over the course of two years with 351 men referred to the Domestic Violence Intervention Programme (DVIP) in

London, was considerably hampered by factors of attrition common to perpetrator programmes (Gondolf, 2012). Of this total of 351 men fewer than half participated in any one part of the evaluative process and only 31 men participated in the final stage of the evaluation. While partner reports from this study suggested a 'cessation' of violence among 27% of these men who had stayed in the programme, with others having reduced their violence 'a little' (35%) or 'a lot' (53%), there was a lack of follow-up data from this small sample size which might have shed some light on the extent to which any changes in behaviour had been sustained over any period of time. A study by Skyner and Waters (1999) into the programme run by Cheshire Probation Service was also subject to the critique that the sample of 10 participants in the study was too small to be considered meaningful, as well as the fact that that findings were limited to self-reports by men and were thus not verifiable, and that once again there was no follow-up data available (Barnish, 2004).

Commenting on the evaluation of offending programmes more generally, particularly those in the USA and Canada, Andrews and Bonta (1995) have suggested that the most common design is the adoption of a 'pre-test/post-test' approach. However, this is also problematic given that these produce no comparative data, as it is difficult to establish the efficacy of the treatment, as compared to another intervention or sanction. Bowen et al (2002, p.229) have noted that "the vast majority of batterer treatment evaluations have been conducted using a quasi-experimental design". These approaches draw evidence from a control group referred to a perpetrator programme, and a comparison group, usually those subjected to other types of intervention, criminal justice sentence or sanction (e.g. Dobash et al, 1996a, 1996b, 1999; Bennett and Williams, 2001). The limitations of studies such as these, as commented on, for example, by Mullender and Burton (2001a) specifically in relation to the Dobash et al's 1996 study, and by other commentators in relation to quasi-experimental perpetrator programme studies more generally, (Barnish, 2004; Gondolf, 2002, 2004, 2012), is the fact that control and comparison groups are likely to differ on a range of personal factors rendering them eligible or appropriate for one type intervention and not the other. In short, they were likely to comprise quite different types of individuals with different histories of violence and disparities in other aspects of their personal backgrounds and circumstances. This further illustrates some of the difficulties

encountered in attempting to apply scientific approaches to 'realistic' or 'real world' evaluations (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Robson, 2011). Quasi-experimental designs have also sought to examine outcome factors, principally rates of re-assault, by comparing the data of those who *complete* perpetrator programmes with those who *drop out* or *fail to complete*. According to Cunningham et al (1998) and Bowen et al (2002), defining the term 'completion' is in itself inconsistent and replete with difficulties. Additionally there may be other issues present in the circumstances of completers which are overlooked, or not accounted for, as a result of which completers may be less 'prone' to re-assault than those who fail to engage and drop-out, (Daly et al, 2001; Dalton, 2001; Gondolf, 2002).

In seeking to overcome these challenges, it has been argued that there is a need to adhere to a more classical 'experimental' approach, described as being 'the gold standard of evaluation, (Dunford, 2000) which is drawn from positivist or medical models of research. Given that the populations to be compared are similar along a range of characteristics, such as age, backgrounds, offending history and so on, then theoretically it should be possible to conclude that differences in outcome can be related to 'the programme'. This would involve the random assignment of perpetrators to 'treatment vs. non-treatment' conditions. One such study by Bennett and Williams (2001) noted a reduction in violence and other abusive behaviour between those randomly assigned to programmes, those assigned to other forms of intervention, or indeed to 'no treatment', which could be attributable to the, or more accurately, a 'programme factor'. As Bennett and Williams (2001) themselves observed however, and as Gondolf (2002; 2004; 2012) has consistently noted, there exist numerous technical and ethical issues which beset such experimental evaluations when attempts are made to apply such designs to social subjects, not least in the field of offending behaviour and particularly as far as domestic violence is concerned (Gondolf, 2012).

Aspects of the legal and criminal justice systems are immediately likely to intrude upon any 'scientific principles'. Particular subjects in the first instance may be legally represented by those who favour another form of disposal as opposed to the ignominy of a perpetrator programme. Courts may be resistant to and overturn random allocation for a range of reasons or circumstances as they pertain to the case at hand. There may be problems with the standardisation of 'treatment' even among those referred to programmes where other

aspects of supervision might vary and where a 'suppression effect' (e.g. surveillance and monitoring) might override any 'treatment effect'. The ethical issues involved are also considerable particularly as they relate to the safety or potential safety of the partner or ex-partner concerned who may be persuaded that programmes provide a 'solution' to the perpetrator's behaviour. It has been argued more recently that positivist scientific neutrality may be difficult to achieve or sustain where programme providers compete with other protagonists to 'promote' the effectiveness of 'their product'.¹⁰ Finally, professional factors such as admission or compliance criteria might quickly impact upon inappropriate randomised referrals, and the requirement of a programme to be accountable to women victim/survivors, enshrined in many but not all programme standards in both the USA and the UK, are likely to override random allocation to a perpetrators' programme or an alternative.

Gondolf, who is arguably one of the foremost experts in the field of perpetrator programmes and their evaluation has also frequently commented (2002; 2004; 2012) on the fact that even to the extent that 'experimental' evaluations can be approximated, there are a number of other questions which cannot be excluded in attempting to determine whether a programme 'works'. Programmes constitute a "very complex entity" (Gondolf, 2002, p.34) which may routinely include or adopt a wide range of practices including individual assessments, orientation sessions, additional counselling or support, and linkages to other aspects of the wider system of which the programme may be part. All of these exist in tandem with, and are difficult to extricate from, the processes which take place in group-work or counselling settings, which are supposedly the "main focus of most evaluations" (ibid, p.34). Therefore, the group-work or counselling cannot, as with a scientific or medical model of before-and-after evaluation, be likened to a pill whose efficacy can be scientifically assessed.

Gondolf also stresses the need to pay attention to the question of the wider context in which a programme exists. For Gondolf these contexts tend to focus on wider systemic factors, an issue which places him at odds with those, such as Dutton and Corvo (2007) or

¹⁰ See Gondolf (2012) for a discussion of the various Batterer Intervention Program (BIP) strategies adopted in the USA in order to survive in a competitive, often-commercially driven, 'evidence-based' market.

Lehmann and Simmons (2009), who are more concerned with addressing and assessing the therapeutic aspects of 'counselling approaches' with perpetrators in order to achieve what they argue are likely to be more effective outcomes. However, for Gondolf, programme compliance is likely to be enhanced by police and prosecution practices, or routine court follow-up; weak or strong outcomes cannot therefore be attributed solely to 'programme counselling' but must also take these wider contextual issues into account. A further complicating factor relating to the real-life contexts in which programmes exist is that programme evaluations often try to capture the essence of something which is actually dynamic and evolving. That is to say that programmes do not remain static but continually develop and adapt as new research is absorbed, new knowledge acquired and innovations piloted, as a range of US and UK research literature has continually confirmed (Scourfield and Dobash, 1999; Eadie and Knight, 2002; Bilby and Hatcher, 2004; Respect, 2004, 2008, 2012; Lehmann and Simmons, 2009; Bowen, 2011; Kelly and Westmarland, 2013; Phillips et al, 2013; Hughes, 2017).

One of the most significant methodological problems involved in programme evaluation, however, is to determine what the outcome which defines 'success' or 'effectiveness' should be and how that outcome ought to be measured (Babcock and La Taillade, 2000; Gondolf, 2002). Gondolf asks for example whether the outcome should focus on re-assaults, other aspects of abusive behaviour, sexist attitudes, or all of these, and whether a successful outcome requires "the total cessation of violence or merely a reduction in the abuse?" (Gondolf, 2002, p.36). As far as court-ordered programmes are concerned "the jurisdiction of most courts is limited to re-assault. The programs are not about making troubled or anti-social and violent men into 'nice guys'" (ibid, p.36).

Others have, as Gondolf (2012) acknowledges, discussed the importance of widening the criteria by which success, progress, or effectiveness should be assessed. This will depend on the degree and quality and extent of information which is to be measured and assessed and whether it is obtained for example by self-report by perpetrators, or other sources. Given the extent to which perpetrators have been observed to under-report the extent and nature of their violence and abusive behaviour, (Jouriles and O'Leary, 1985; Heckert and Gondolf, 1999; Dobash et al, 2000) every effort should be made, as in the study by Dobash et al (1999), to seek the input of men's partners. Such an approach also provides new

insights as to the constellation of factors which women experience as abusive. The most recent UK programme evaluation (Kelly and Westmarland, 2015), for example, extends definitions of 'success' to include factors such as "expanded 'space for action' by women which restores their voice and ability to make choices whilst improving their well-being ... [and provides] ... for children, safer healthier childhoods in which they feel heard and cared about" (Kelly and Westmarland, 2015, p.7) as well as positive changes in the attitudes and behaviours of men.

A further methodological concern relates to the question of whether a successful outcome is to be measured over weeks, months or years. It is important that studies determining the efficacy of an intervention include follow-up contacts in order to establish the extent to which abuse and violence has recurred, reduced or even ceased. It is recommended that these follow-up aspects of studies "should be as long as possible" (Bowen et al, 2002, p.231). Acknowledging the extent to which longitudinal information which follows perpetrators' progress post-programmes has often been recognised as being somewhat insubstantial (a consequence not merely of design but of limited resources allocated to smaller-scale studies), Gondolf addresses this factor in the design of his 2002 study which tracked a cohort of (at the outset 840) men attending perpetrator programmes and their partners (481 at the outset) over a period of four years, the most substantial length of programme follow-up in evaluative research in the field thus far.

The publication which synthesises Gondolf's study, *Batterer Intervention Systems: Issues, Outcomes and Recommendations* (2002) concludes with a chapter notably entitled, *Conclusion: The System Matters*. Paper 2 of this thesis acknowledges the significance of this major piece of research and the extent to which it provided a positive counter-argument to the more sceptical findings, and the hostile accusations and arguments levelled against programmes, echoing Martinson (1974), that 'nothing works' as far as perpetrator programmes were concerned. In a section which notes the limitations of his study however Gondolf observes (2002, p.205) that, "our evaluation does have its own limitations and qualifications. We know very little about which aspects of the counselling are most influential- what it is about counselling that works". He adds however, "our study did consider the men's reports on what they had learned and used from the programmes, and the majority pointed to violence interruption techniques" (ibid, p.205). In the language of

perpetrator programmes, this implies that men learned mostly from a series of tools or exercises such as recognising ‘triggers’ or taking ‘Time-Outs’ in situations which they associate with the likelihood of becoming emotionally volatile and/or physically abusive. In view of the fact that these comments include those men tracked over the longevity of the study they seem somewhat ‘mechanistic’ or reductive. However, Gondolf then comments, “According to the *women*, a portion of the men also changed their attitudes and outlooks. However, we do not know what in the curriculum, group process, counsellor’s style, and counsellor’s gender or race affected the outcomes” (ibid, p.205) [italics added].

The fact that the *men* did not comment on changes in their ‘attitudes and outlooks’, it is not clear whether this is a consequence of the methodology, and the somewhat disappointing outcome that the most they seemed to have learned was a behavioural technique, was worrying. The choice not to take Time Out could well have alarming consequences for partners and children. It also seemed insufficiently satisfactory as a learning outcome from programmes aimed more widely at men’s attitudes and beliefs. On reflecting on this finding, it seemed important to be able to obtain more information from men about what they might have taken from programmes which had helped them to refrain from violence and abuse over the course of time. If men’s accounts were inherently unreliable, or as in the case of the Gondolf (2002) study, somewhat minimal, it appeared highly relevant to attempt to gain further access to data such as this, and that it might be appropriate to do so by speaking with and hearing from men who *had* changed their behaviour and also their ‘attitudes and outlooks’.

The intention to do so led to the study discussed in Paper 5 which specifically addresses the question of how and why men who were formerly violent and abusive now desist from such behaviour. The study additionally considers whether as part of this process, it might also be feasible for programmes to help turn ‘troubled or anti-social and violent men’ into ‘nice guys’. Rather than dismiss this concept as Gondolf appears to do, it seemed particularly apt to pay attention to such a possible outcome given that women and children may well continue to live with or have longstanding contact with these men as partners, ex-partners or fathers. It is also of considerable relevance to the men themselves, and probably very important, if they are to be motivated towards developing a newer way of thinking and

behaving which does not forget the past but which provides for, and sustains, a more positive and accountable present – and future.

Desisting from domestic abuse: literature pertaining to the study

In addressing factors relating to past, present, and future, the study discussed in Paper 5 is concerned with examining whether the emergent literature and research on desistance from offending might usefully be applied to the experiences and observations of men who have been formerly violent and abusive in their relationships. The following section provides a brief overview of particular aspects and examples of desistance literature and research which were influential in shaping this study.

Despite the fact that there has been a longstanding interest in the question of why people offend, the related question of why or how people might *stop* offending has been described as something of an enigma; a rather neglected area in the field of criminology, (Bottoms et al, 2004; Farrall and Calverley, 2006). Its resurgence over the last two decades evolved partly out of longitudinal research such as US National Youth Survey in the 1970s, and the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development in the UK which examined patterns in the life course of young people between the ages of 8 and 15 years. While many in the latter study became involved in offending, what was also noticeable was the fact that the majority subsequently ceased to offend as they moved through adolescence into adulthood (Farrall and Calverley, 2006). The question of why, how and in what circumstances people cease offending or other forms of problematic behaviour has become the central concern of the now substantial body of research on desistance, (e.g. Burnett, 1992; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Maruna, 2001; Farrall, 2002; McNeill, 2003; 2004). This resurgence of interest in desistance also coincided with the sense of renewed optimism in the field of rehabilitation generated by the ‘What Works’ movement (Mair, 2004) or ‘initiative’ (Farrall and Calverley, 2006) in both the USA and the UK. This injected a “new lease of life into probation, and the search for models of effective practice recommenced” (Farrall and Maruna, 2004, p.360).

One of the most consistently recurring findings in the desistance literature as far as younger men and women are concerned has been the tendency of many people to stop offending around the period they embark on significant partnerships or relationships, (Shover, 1983; Warr, 1998; Jamieson et al, 1999), although it has been acknowledged that desistance

seemed related more to the *quality* of the partnership than its existence *per se* (Laub et al, 2003; Bottoms et al, 2004). Attention has also focused on the significance attached to parenthood and its association with desistance (Leibrich, 1993; Jamieson et al, 1999). The apparent simplicity of this model has been called into question as for example by Knight et al (1977) whose research as part of the Cambridge Study in Delinquency Development found no significant differences between married and unmarried sample groups. Uggen (2000) has suggested however that the possible influence of life events such as these seem also to be impacted differently according to age, and that employment, cohabitation or becoming a parent may hold different meanings and have a closer association with desistance for those in their mid-twenties and over, rather than for younger offenders.

As far as older, male, offenders are concerned, studies drawn from longitudinal data have examined the concept of 'criminal careers' from the perspective of those involved in offending (Shover, 1983; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Graham and Bowling, 1995), and on the various social practices and processes which seem to be correlated with patterns of desistance. Attention has been paid for example to the importance of the acquisition and meaning of work or employment in relation to the cessation of offending (Meisenhelder, 1977; Sampson and Laub, 1993) Subsequent studies have argued that employment does not in itself preclude opportunities for offending, and may even provide opportunities to do so, (see e.g. Ditton, 1997). There is, nevertheless, a considerable body of research which points to the significance of work, and its connection with wellbeing, personal stability and identity, particularly as far as men are concerned (Connell, 1995; Willis, 1997; Collinson and Hearn, 1996), which would lend support to its importance in enhancing the possibilities of desistance.

While much desistance research (frequently conducted by those with backgrounds in criminology or criminal justice) has been concerned with socially observable or tangible factors such as employment, marriage or parenthood (Farrall and Calverley, 2006), these social constructs also create the potential for shifts and changes in the identities and priorities of the individuals concerned. Desistance is therefore better understood as involving both social context *and* its meaning for the individuals concerned, (Burnett, 1992; Farrall and Bowling, 1999; Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2004). It is the significance that an individual attaches to factors such as employment, a relationship, or becoming a parent,

which, coupled with a sense of efficacy that change is feasible (Burnett, 1992) that seem to be core motivational factors as s/he embarks upon (and is able to sustain) the challenges and demands as well as the potential rewards of desistance (Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2003; 2004).

Moffitt (1993) has suggested that in understanding the processes involved in desistance it is useful to compare the offending trajectories and histories of 'adolescent-limited' offenders with 'life-course persistent' offenders. As the terms imply, the former tend to begin and end offending within the life-stages normally associated with adolescence, whereas the latter frequently begin offending very early in life and persist in offending well into mid-life or beyond. There are substantial differences therefore in the processes involved in exiting from offending for each of these groups. Adolescent-limited offenders are likely, as Matza (1964) argued, to 'drift' away from crime as they commence early adulthood and enter into more or less conventional patterns of relationships, jobs and social networks.

Life-course persistent offenders, however, seem much more immersed in patterns and networks of offending. The personal and social obstacles which they face in breaking away from long-entrenched patterns of behaviour seem formidable. They may have previously embarked upon numerous attempts to change without success, resulting in feelings of hopelessness and a lack of agency associated with these adverse experiences (Burnett, 1992, 2002; Maruna, 2001). What is required from this group, therefore, appears to be involve nothing less than a 'radical re-organisation of self' (Farrall and Calverley, 2006) in order that they become either 'resettled', reintegrated', 'rehabilitated' or 'reformed'. However, as Farrall and Calverley observe, "All of these 're' words imply that this group of people are in some way 're'turned (another 're' word) to some state that previously they had occupied. However, the 'reintegrated' were probably never fully 'integrated' in the first place and the 'reformed often need to form themselves completely afresh. Often, it would appear that these people have had to create themselves and their lives anew." (Farrall and Calverley, 2006, p.xii).

Various comments and observations from a number of practitioners interviewed and discussed in Paper 1 suggest that many of the men they were dealing with seemed

entrenched in self-destructive behaviour as well as behaviour which was harmful to others. They seemed similarly entrenched in their attitudes and restricted to living in communities, and associating with personal networks which were largely unsupportive in terms of enabling them to behave and act radically differently as men, or to 'create themselves and their lives anew'. While many of these men were attending programmes as a consequence of offences which related to their use of violence and abuse in relationships, other aspects of their lives, which for some also included involvement in other forms of illegal or offending behaviour, seemed not dissimilar from those of the working class 'persistent thieves' studied by Shover (1996). Their life choices, for example, in either desiring or securing stable employment, seemed restricted in both structural and personal identity terms by norms pertaining to (heterosexual) masculinity in their communities or networks. In short, they seemed to be 'stuck', and rather than feeling powerful or in control, were in fact often quite powerless over wider structural factors, such as unemployment and poverty, which life had imposed upon them (Faludi, 1999; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007).

The experiences of individuals who are 'stuck' in terms of feeling powerless over their lives is one of the major themes to emerge from research conducted by Maruna (2001). Maruna's study of 55 men and 10 women, 30 of whom he subsequently classified as 'desisting' from, and 20 'persisting' in, criminal behaviour, provides an illuminating insight into the stories or self-narratives which desisters and persisters tell about themselves. Firstly, the use of the term desister by no means suggests that the person in question has completely abstained from any type of offending. Maruna states that "the majority of ex-offenders with whom [he] came into contact with during fieldwork ... fell somewhere in between committed offending and committed desisting" (Maruna, 2001, p.49). He also vividly describes the numerous challenges to remaining crime-free in the working-class areas of Liverpool in which the majority of his sample lived, and which "may be unique even among inner city areas for its lack of adequate employment opportunities" (ibid, p.65). What emerges powerfully is the extent to which the persisters experience powerlessness over their lives and how they account for their inability to extract themselves from these difficulties, and from their inevitable involvement in various forms of offending or problematic behaviour, explaining or justifying their lives by way of what Maruna terms "a condemnation script ... [through which they are] ... doomed to deviance" (ibid, p.74). The

desisters by contrast, with similar offending histories and living in the same areas as the persisters therefore have a “lot to explain” (ibid, p.85) in order to account for their ability and resilience to ‘make good’ in such circumstances. In examining the narratives and rhetorical processes by which they redeem themselves, Maruna unearths a number of themes in the accounts they provide about their own lives. These include discovering a new way of thinking and behaving which has less to do with finding ‘a new me’ but more with rediscovering, or as far as Farrall and Calverley might suggest – *discovering* for the first time, ‘the real me’, an authentic self which was there all along waiting for the right circumstances to allow itself to be revealed, reflected upon and nurtured.

Other techniques seem to be features of the desisters’ narratives: “the ‘I’, the ‘me’ and the ‘it’” (Maruna, 2001, p.92) by which the narrator takes responsibility for his/her present actions while assigning past behaviour; “selfishness, macho posturing, violence” (ibid, p.92) to external or environmental factors, the fact that they often find purpose in generative activities, or ‘giving back’ to the communities or to other people who will benefit from their personal experience and wisdom (i.e. potential or actual offenders). The core premise of Maruna’s work is “that to successfully maintain ... abstinence from crime, ex-offenders need to *make sense* of their lives” (ibid, p.7) [italics in original].

Maruna’s sample is also aligned along a continuum of desistance, engaged in a *process* as opposed to having achieved a fixed or final destination of complete abstinence from offending. Subsequently, McNeill and Maruna (2007) theorised that the concept of desistance might usefully be conceived of as consisting of different stages, which, borrowing from the criminological concept of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary deviance’ developed by Lemert (1967), they termed ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ desistance. The former consists of a gap or lull in offending behaviour, whereas the latter implies that there have been substantial changes to one’s identity, to the extent that a return to one’s former way of living, e.g. offending, misusing drugs, is incompatible with the ‘new’ or rediscovered self.

As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, my experience of observing men in the settings of prison and later in a perpetrators’ programme was that they frequently seemed at a genuine loss to explain, as opposed to excuse, their violence, that they possessed very little comprehension of themselves, of how they came to think and act as they did, and

how they thought and felt about themselves. Many also seemed confused and uncertain as to envisioning a different future. While some professed that they seemed able relatively quickly to stop or reduce their use of physical violence, as research e.g. by (Dobash et al, 1996; Gondolf, 2002) would appear to confirm, the persistence of other non-physical forms of abusive behaviour suggested that desistance required more; that being physically non-violent was not in itself sufficient, and that other aspects of behaviour and attitude change must be envisioned or embarked upon for desistance to be meaningful. In this respect the concept of secondary desistance seemed particularly apt. Consequently, the principle concerns of the study discussed in Paper 5 were, exploring with a number of men who were no longer but had previously been violent and abusive:

- how they understood and made sense of their past and present lives, and
- having ceased to be physically violent, how they now lived non-abusively in the present, and what this entailed and demanded of them.

These are further discussed in the text which follows.

Paper 5 therefore proceeds beyond the findings concerning what men actually learn from programmes (discussed earlier) by appropriately applying a qualitative methodology (Seidman, 2006; Silverman, 2013), consisting of a number of in-depth explorative interviews. These shed light on the complex processes of how these men continue to employ learning from the programme in the longer term, and how changes in their outlooks, activities, priorities and identities gradually evolve, and are sustained (see *Appendix 5: Desisting from Domestic Abuse: Influences, Patterns and Processes in the Lives of Formerly Abusive Men*).

The desistance study: reflection on the methodology and findings.

The following section provides a description of and critical reflection on the most recent of the three research studies discussed in this PhD thesis. It engages with the question of how desistance is conceived of and constructed by men who have attended perpetrator programmes, and the significance of this process for programme practice and future development.

Background to the study: rationale for conducting the study.

This study was based on a series of interviews conducted with 11 men who had 'successfully completed' one of two domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK. Interviewing men deemed to be 'successful completers' of programmes would yield important information about a group, 'perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse', on whom very little qualitative research concerning desistance had been conducted. The principle aims of the study were to explore how desisting from domestic abuse and violence was interpreted and defined by those engaging in such a process. The theoretical or ontological perspective, i.e. "the phenomena, or social reality" (Mason, 2002, p.13) to be investigated, concerned how these individuals understood their own experiences, actions, and behaviour, and the meanings they attached to beliefs about identity and themselves as social actors. Schwandt (2007, p.197) reminds us that "human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it". This study was concerned with exploring how the respondents constructed or made sense of the concepts of 'desistance', 'violence' or 'abusiveness', and of how these meanings derived from how they engaged with the social world.

I drew on a wider range of theoretical material from criminological literature on desistance from offending behaviour, particularly that exploring the existential aspects and narrative reflections of those engaged in desisting from crime (e.g. Maruna, 2001; Farrall and Calverley, 2006), as well as comparable research on behaviour change or personal transformative experiences (e.g. Ebaugh, 1988; O'Reilly, 1997). I was concerned to examine whether theoretical and empirical themes from the criminological literature, particularly those focusing on the personal accounts of those involved in desistance (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Maruna 2001; Farrall and Calverley, 2006), might have relevance when applied to those previously involved in domestic violence perpetration (whether or not this has been dealt with as a criminal sanction). Turnell and Edwards (1999) argue that in relation to work with offending populations, practitioners tend to focus on the behaviour associated with *stopping* something to the exclusion of identifying that behaviour which is to be *achieved*. Attention was paid here therefore to how desistance from domestic abuse *was achieved*, what this might entail, and what changes in behaviour, attitudes and identity occurred. I was interested in exploring in more detail than that which can be ascertained

from the findings of most of the positivist *evaluative* literature on perpetrator programmes, the various practices and processes of change. I hoped to reveal the various shifts - of attitudes and beliefs, of behaviour towards self, partners and children, experienced by a sample of men perceived as having achieved a 'successful' outcome in programme terms. The data would thus contribute to knowledge about how "change should be understood" (McNeill, 2006, p.45) potentially highlighting other factors which seemed to enhance, or present obstacles to, ongoing desistance.

I was aware that the data in Paper 2 concerning practitioners' experiences of working with men on programmes had the potential to have yielded more in-depth material had I been able to follow up the issues which the questionnaires had begun tantalisingly to reveal. As my principle aim in this study of desistance (Paper 5) was to understand something of how these men understood themselves (Silverman, 2013), and as understanding is "a ready-made strength of the interview situation" (Thomas, 2009, p.163), the resulting themes or questions I wished to explore validated the decision to pursue a qualitative approach, (Mason, 2002; Robson, 2011). A semi-structured interview format allowed me to pursue the themes I wished to address, the freedom to follow up points, and enabled participants to raise or to reflect on issues which were important to them. Thus, the interviews consisted of a combination of semi-structured questions and unstructured discussion. As became apparent during the interviews themselves, this format provided me with a guide from which I could deviate as necessary: "a structure ... to conduct the interviews, not a straitjacket" (Thomas, 2009, p.164). Seidman (2006, p.9) notes that "at the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth". As argued in Paper 5, I considered that these individuals' 'stories' were of worth for a number of reasons. Principally, that greater attention needed to be paid to issues of the continuing dynamics of men's lives, and of what was being expected or envisaged of formerly violent or abusive men in terms of the demands and opportunities of personal change as they 'move away' (Hearn, 1998) from violence.

Appropriating a feminist methodology

In seeking to explore men's perceptions of what participation in programmes had meant for them, I paradoxically drew on the tenets of feminist researchers, e.g. Jansen and Davis

(1998), who argue that research on sensitive topics prioritising the subjective views of devalued individuals from groups who are marginalised lends itself to a feminist inquiry. Similarly, Stanley and Wise (1983, p.18) observe that “any analysis of women’s oppression must involve research on the part played by men in this”. They argue that “without knowing how oppression occurs we cannot know why it occurs ... [and therefore] ... we cannot find out how to avoid its occurrence and how it is that liberation might be achieved” (ibid, p.167). Much of the literature which explores men’s accounts specifically of what they have learned from perpetrator programmes treats their accounts as either unreliable (Dutton and Hemphill, 1992), highly spurious, or indeed self-justifying (Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Cavanagh et al, 2001). While Stanley and Wise are undoubtedly referring to women’s oppression on a more structural level, it was my contention that disregarding or ignoring the voices of men who were grappling with issues of why and how *they* had been violent to women was to ignore an important (if sometimes problematic and contested) source of knowledge. As a researcher who was also a social worker, I was also committed to Davison’s assertion that there should be a commitment in social work research to “privilege the voice of the service user” (Davison, 2004, p.380). A commitment, however, which some might arguably find ethically and practically challenging when the voices of service users in this case involve those who are, or have been, domestic violence perpetrators.

Setting the groundwork

Drawing on professional contacts in the UK National Practitioners’ Network I approached three established non-statutory perpetrator programmes, outlining the aims of my proposed study, and obtaining their informal support in affording me access. Following University Ethics Committee approval, I wrote to the agencies describing my interest in speaking to men ‘for whom it can be said with some confidence’ that they had made substantial changes to their behaviour, namely that they can be considered as being ‘non-violent’. Unfortunately, one agency withdrew shortly afterwards due to my main contact leaving post, and my intended sample of twenty programme participants/ex-participants was reduced to a sample of eleven.

Initial contact with agencies

Over several months I conducted the interviews in two agencies in a large town in the south, and a major city in the north, of England. I spent a day in each with staff, revisiting aims and gaining information about the programmes concerned. I also observed programme sessions in both agencies. While programme formats were not an essential concern of this study and while there were no written curricula for either programme at the time, it was important to ascertain the extent to which they were broadly similar in their general philosophical and practical approaches with men. Both agencies adopted an open group-work format, met weekly for approximately two hours, and were co-facilitated by one male and one female practitioner. Groups drew on a feminist analysis of men's violence premised upon gendered concepts of male entitlement, encouraged men to explore and deconstruct past incidences of violent/abusive behaviour, current issues in their lives, and advocated and encouraged the development of personal responsibility for one's decisions and actions including a commitment to living non-violently. Both programmes 'taught' men skills to increase awareness of emotions, to deal with situations which they felt to be potential stressors, and sought to establish an atmosphere in which men were encouraged to reflect upon their violent and abusive attitudes and behaviour towards partners and their families.

Determining an appropriate sample

The men I interviewed were a purposively selected sample (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), initially identified by programme staff. As noted above and in Paper 5 itself, the accounts of men who have completed such programmes have often been seen to be at variance from those of partners or ex-partners, particularly in relation to the extent to which they see themselves as having made substantive positive changes in terms of violent and abusive behaviour and attitudes. While theoretically aware that there is no such thing as an objective 'truth', and that accounts for example of 'victimhood', 'abuse', and of 'desistance' are all 'constructed' (Crotty, 2004), it was important for ethical, practical, and safety reasons to establish that staff drew on other sources of evidence that these men's physical violence had ceased. As Hearn (1998, p.61) has observed, "violence clearly has a real existence in its own right; it does not only exist through construction". Consequently, a significant criterion for men's involvement included supportive evidence that they were

presently 'non-violent', arising from self-report, partner-report, information passed to the programme from, e.g. probation, police, as well as detailed information held on men by, and ongoing contact with, programme providers.

Ethical considerations: partners

Perhaps the most robust source of data regarding the extent to which the behaviour and attitudes of men appears to have changed after attending a perpetrators' programme are men's partners (Dobash et al, 1996; Davis and Taylor, 1999; Gondolf, 2002; Bennett and Williams, 2001). Consequently, close attention should be paid to their accounts. As a sole male researcher however, I reflected on the numerous ethical issues in conducting research around sensitive subject matter (Lee, 1993; Renzetti and Lee, 1993; Silverman, 2013), many of which were pertinent as far as speaking to men's partners and ex-partners was concerned. This could potentially involve discussing distressing material from which they probably wanted to move on. Women partners may feel that to participate or not might be seen as constituting tacit approval or otherwise, either of programmes or of partners' progress. It was important also to note that in the very process of interviewing the men themselves, their partners would in all likelihood be referred to in the course of discussions without them being present or having control over what might be discussed. Despite concerns such as these, and while interviewing partners was not a primary concern of this study (which was *not* about *comparing* men and women's respective accounts of change), it was nevertheless necessary to affirm the importance of women's experiences and ensure that where they wished, their voices were heard and valued (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Letherby, 2003).

Obtaining fully informed consent from all parties was complex however, and mindful that researchers "are in a powerful and highly responsible position" (Mason, 2002, p.82), further discussions with programme staff explored the issue of their ongoing contact with women partners and ex-partners, and how their views would be accessed. It was agreed that men would only be approached for interview where there was, or had been, regular contact with their partners and where staff were satisfied that women were able and willing, or had, commented positively and regularly to the programmes on their partners' behaviour and progress. It became apparent, as discussions with the agencies progressed

that some men's partners were prepared to provide further information to programme staff, and in some instances to speak to me directly, which three subsequently did. Providing that safety procedures practised by each agency in relation to partner contact were followed by me as a researcher, namely where that partners' consent was to be fully forthcoming, and where partners wished to speak with me, these offers would be responded to positively and valued.

Ethical considerations: male interviewees

As the male interviewees were likely to be discussing behaviour which had been/was abusive, and could be distressing or shaming to them as they revisited this material, it was important to pay attention to the possible emotional risks involved, and potential spill-over into their family lives afterwards (Lee, 1993). There was also the possibility that men might disclose ongoing abuse and if so, how this should be responded to. It was agreed with the agencies (and subsequently the participants) that interviews would be subject to a process of 'contingent confidentiality' (Dominelli and Holloway, 2008), by which any suggestion of ongoing or potential abuse would be disclosed by me to the relevant third party. These matters were revisited as I later introduced myself to the participants, agreed with them the parameters of the interview, establishing their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw, or indeed to decline to answer. In summary, an overriding concern throughout was to ensure:

- (a) that interviews were to be conducted with men who as far as it was possible to ascertain, were actually physically non-violent;
- (b) that neither partners, ex-partners or the children of such men were adversely affected by the interviews, pressured to participate or comment supportively or otherwise on men, and;
- (c) that participants, who would potentially be discussing painful past experiences (as well as current, and hopefully positive, experiences) were engaged with sensitively.

Preparing for the interviews

A preamble which I had devised providing information about the aims and nature of the study, stated that I had “considerable experience of having worked in programmes such as that run by... [the programme]”. Alert, however, to the fact that I was a man aiming to interview other men about issues concerning power and control, and that interviewing relationships are “fraught with issues of power” (Seidman, 2006, p.99), I subsequently reflected on the significance of the phrase ‘considerable experience’. This had been intended to provide interviewees with assurance in advance that much of what they might refer to was not an unprecedented experience for me, that my relative familiarity with the material made it less likely for me to be affected by “culture shock or disorientation” (Drake and Heath, 2011, p.30), and moreover that I was not concerned with passing judgment on any of the past (or present) behaviour which they discussed. Miller and Glassner (1997, p.128) note that “the issue of how interviewees respond to us based on who we are ... in their lives, as well as the social categories to which we belong, such as age, gender, class and race ... is a practical concern as well as an epistemological or theoretical one”. This well-intentioned claim to experience and the values or personal qualities it might convey, provided me with a cautionary warning of not presenting oneself as an ‘expert’ and to be sensitive in terms of gender, class, and significantly of power, in striving to establish an equitable interviewing relationship (Seidman, 2006).

Location of interviews

Interviews were carried out in agency premises during weekdays / evenings and when other staff were present on the premises. I did not expect myself to be physically at risk despite, or given, the subject matter to be covered by interviews. This, in retrospect, is interesting. It seems indicative either of the fact that I had experience of engaging with men on programmes, or also perhaps of the way I intended to ‘conduct’ the interviews themselves, and indeed of the fact that I would be interviewing a sample recommended and apparently willing to engage with me. Nevertheless, I made myself aware of safety procedures relevant to each agency.

The interviewees

Most of the (male) participants were white (one was of Afro-Caribbean origin), ranged in age from 37-59 years, were mostly in their late thirties or early forties, and defined themselves as 'working class'. Nine were in employment. All were fathers to children to current or previous partners; two had separated from their partners and lived alone. As previously noted, no suggestion was, or is, being made that they were a representative sample of men referred to perpetrator programmes. The criteria for their inclusion was that they were perceived to have successfully engaged with their respective programmes, had 'moved away from violence' (Hearn, 1998) and become 'safe'. They were a purposive sample (Robson, 2011), approached and selected "on the basis of their relevance to (my) research questions" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.151), able and prepared to provide in-depth accounts of their experiences of desistance and of how they construed and constructed these experiences.

The interview schedule

The interview schedule comprised a series of open-ended questions addressing a number of themes including biographical information, current domestic circumstances, and present status in relation to the programme (completed/still attending, etc.). Respondents' comments were sought on the programme they had attended, what they had learned from it, how it had affected them, and whether they had experienced any 'key moments' or 'turning points'. They were asked about their violent and abusive behaviour, how they had accounted for this before or during the programme, and their current thoughts about why they had been violent and abusive.

Silverman states that discussions concerning "myself before" (2013, p.311) produce data that is overly retrospective. Matthews and Ross (2010, p.265) remind researchers that narrative is "the depiction of a sequence of past events as they appear in present time to the narrator, after they have been processed and constructed into stories". Consequently, in addition to being asked to 'look back', participants were encouraged to consider everyday examples of whether or how their behaviour and attitudes had changed, how they lived in the present, dealt with problems and challenges they experienced, and whether any extra-programme factors seemed relevant to the issues they were discussing.

Attention was paid to their experiences of coming off or finishing the programme, where they sought or obtained support now, their views as to whether they were non-violent or non-abusive, and any other ongoing issues regarding their attitudes and behaviour. They were asked to discuss their priorities in their lives now and whether they differed from before. In keeping with the theme of past and present, they were invited to reflect on how they described themselves before the programme, and how that compared to the present. Space also allowed for any other comments which the interviewees wanted to make or felt might be useful for others to hear.

Presentation of self in the interviews

Aware that “establishing trust and familiarity, showing genuine interest and not being judgemental are some important elements of building rapport” (Silverman, 1998, p.106) I was mindful of how I presented myself, in my readiness to engage with and build rapport (Tewsbury and Gagne, 1996) by displaying the qualities of a good listener (Silverman, 1998) who listens empathically (Stanley and Wise, 1983). I was also influenced by my own experiences as a social worker familiar with the interview process. Davison (2004) suggests that researchers who are social workers should see their professional skills and values as an advantage which they bring to the interview situation. It is apparent from re-reading and listening again to the audio-transcripts that a number of these interpersonal skills, for example tone of voice, were utilised in order to establish rapport and engagement, and that in asking questions about sensitive issues, “a non-condemnatory attitude ... [was apparent, helping establish] ... a framework of trust” (Lee, 1993, p.98).

Beginning the interviews

Before beginning the interviews, I greeted each man with a handshake, adopting an open, interested manner, enquiring whether there were any pressures or restrictions on their time. I was aware that the men were agreeing to a process in which “they may be asked to reveal a great deal of information about themselves, perhaps at some emotional cost” (Lee, 1993, p.103). I established that they were content to have the interview recorded (as I wished to give them my full attention and avoid the distraction of taking notes in front of them as they responded to my questions). I briefly read from a preamble stating that they had been recommended as “having made substantial changes to their behaviour, namely

that they can be described as non-violent, at least non-physically violent” and “to explore ... how the programme has helped, but also at other ways (he) may have changed parts of the way (he) live(s) and why and how these might have come about”.

It was made clear I was interested in hearing their experiences of the challenges and rewards of desistance, to draw upon and value that experience, as part of a study concerned with understanding more of the dynamics of perpetrators’ experience of programmes and of desisting from violence. I intended to convey my belief that the information they could provide was important, relevant and ‘of worth’ (Seidman, 2006; Thomas, 2009), and to indicate that, notwithstanding my own previous professional involvement in programmes, “I was... [also] ... there to *learn* from them; they had the knowledge and experience I lacked” (Hoffman, 2007, p.329). While past behaviour and experiences would be addressed in our discussions, the focus would be on the ‘journey’ undertaken from the past to the present, and of how that present was engaged with. This focus on present and past also acknowledged the significance of *action*, of how desistance was constructed and sustained in everyday life, and not simply passively reflected on, a disadvantage of retrospective accounts of ‘self’ and behaviour (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Silverman, 2013). This seemed successful in facilitating an atmosphere of valuing what the men were being asked to share. It was also intended to afford them a pathway by which to proceed from discussing previous and possibly shameful past behaviour, to describe and reflect upon positive changes which they had made; a further consequence of which was that the discussion might fulfil a positive function in itself reminding them of and reinforcing these achievements, (see also Maruna, 2001).

The importance of attending to *processes*

The aim of this study was to examine the dynamics and processes of change from men’s subjective viewpoints, to explore what they had learned from programmes, and to acknowledge and address other internal *and* external factors and their significance in presenting challenges to, or supporting, desistance. Paper 5 addresses the main themes to emerge from the interviews. However, some years after the study itself, drawing on notes taken at the time, listening to recordings of the interviews, and re-reading the transcripts, it is relevant in comparing this study to other more positivist outcome-focused studies, to

reflect further upon *how* the interviews were conducted, *how* the various issues were explored, and as a consequence, how this produced specific and innovative findings relating to the desistance literature. By approaching men as subjects of worth in their own right, it was possible to encourage them to open up as to how they had thought previously and thought now about why they had been violent and about its effects upon others and themselves. This enabled attention to be paid, not only to what men had learned and put to use from the programmes, but also to how that learning had been sustained and augmented over considerable periods of time. It further enabled an exploration of the wider context of men's lives following the programme, examining what supported desistance and what still presented as challenges to their sense of stability and wellbeing and safety towards others.

Reflexivity and standpoint

Qualitative researchers influenced by feminist approaches are urged to be alert to the perspectives that they bring to, and which impact upon, the research process (Stanley and Wise 1983; Hertz, 1997; Mason, 2002). Gilgun, for example is clear that during her interviews with male perpetrators of violence, her reflexive standpoint "was that of a feminist woman" (Gilgun, 2008, p.184). My own standpoint, while not discarding my 'pro-feminist' principles, and aware that I had referred to my experience as a former programme practitioner and social worker, was arguably guided by a principle of 'beneficence' and a methodology intended to 'empower' respondents (Bogolub, 2010). This was important as they were about to discuss potentially painful personal subject matter, matter which, however, could also inform and educate others, and indeed play a part in improving knowledge about ways in which violence against women might be addressed.

Observing interaction

In a study which explored the ways in which men described, and often sought to justify, their violence towards women and partners, Hearn (1998) interviewed 60 men involved with 'social or criminal justice agencies', e.g. social work, probation, as a consequence of their violence. Nineteen had attended or still attended 'men's programmes'. Hearn observed that several seemed either minimally engaged with or resistant to being involved in the research process. By comparison, the sample I spoke to seemed co-operative and

engaged, turning up promptly for the appointments arranged beforehand. Hearn (1998, p.70) suggests that, “in some cases the agreement to be interviewed may be a means of demonstrating change and a move away from violence. The ability to talk about past violence may demonstrate the veracity of the man’s ‘non-violence’ claims in the present”. Hearn regards the willingness of men to be interviewed with some caution and possibly scepticism. My own reaction as these men appeared as requested, ready to tell their story (“if it helps” as several of them added), was more positively biased towards seeing their readiness as reflecting the programme staff’s observations regarding sustained progress over long periods of time.

The co-production of meanings: defining desistance

Discussing men’s contact with the programmes, I posed the question “When did you finish the programme?” near the beginning of what the transcripts refer to as ‘a conversation’, albeit a ‘guided conversation’ (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Introducing such apparently naïve or ‘bad’ questions has the potential to uncover “more interesting data” (Hearn, 1998, p.55). In this instance, and as I had believed it might, this question revealed that while some men had actually formally completed the requisite minimum sessions of the programme(s), they routinely practised aspects of what they had learned, incorporated programme language and lessons, often ritualistically, into their everyday lives, and remained in various forms of contact with the programme itself, sometimes frequently. Thus, a shared understanding was quickly reached that these men, while reportedly no longer physically violent, were still routinely confronting aspects of their behaviour which could give them, their partners, their children and others close to them, including workmates, cause for concern. The in-depth methodological approach adopted here therefore enabled a process in which desistance was actively being reflected upon as to how this was construed and constructed by the men themselves, rather than externally defined or categorically measured. It revealed that this process involved more than the ‘mere’ cessation of physical violence, the narrow (if nevertheless important) focus of which is a limitation of most positivist evaluations of programmes (Scott, 2004).

The co-production of meanings: why had these men been violent and abusive?

It was important not only to hear the accounts of how men had 'ended up' coming to the programme, commonly at a low point or crisis in their lives (see also Hearn, 1998), but also their own thoughts as to why they had behaved abusively in the past, a theme significantly addressed in Paper 5 itself. I considered that by exploring this issue with men who were for the most part reportedly engaged in longer-term desistance, that if they expressed the view for example that they had felt 'powerless', rather than 'powerful' (see e.g. Gadd, 2004), this was significant. Similarly, if they thought their abusiveness of others may have been rooted in part in fearful and abusive childhoods, (Dutton 1999; Dutton and Corvo, 2006; Aymer, 2008), as several went onto recount, then their perceptions ought to be validated. They ought not to be discarded as by some commentators (e.g. Cavanagh et al, 2001) as attempts simply to portray themselves as victims – which paradoxically of course some men do!

If men's subjective understandings of themselves are acknowledged, and affirmed that they are relevant, then the evidence here suggests that further attention needs to be paid to embedding individuality, complexity and multi-causality, into programme practices, in contrast to the somewhat generalised and monolithic approaches discussed elsewhere in this thesis (see Papers 3 and 4). As Gilgun observes, (2008, p.194) "the more we know about what violence means to perpetrators, the more effective we will be in changing the conditions that lead people to be violent in the first place".

The co-production of meanings: the enactment of masculinity

As Paper 5 indicates, all the interviewees cited the significance of violence being a currency with which to acquire goods in the performance of masculinity in the communities and neighbourhoods where they had grown up, and of the importance of performing 'adequately' in front of one's male peers (Connell, 1995, 2000; Pease, 2002). However, these stories also seemed more layered. A recent study by Dagirmanjian et al (2017) interviewed a sample defined as 'blue collar' men, not known to be perpetrators or desisting perpetrators of violence to partners, concerning their views about actual or hypothetical situations in which the use of violence was justified. As with the men in

Dagirmanjian's sample, this study found that their attitudes towards the use of violence more generally, i.e. towards other men in situations where they felt challenged or undermined, suggested an adherence to 'male norms', in which men often experienced their manhood 'precariously', and that "one's status as masculine needs to be actively achieved, and then just as actively maintained" (Dagirmanjian et al, 2017, p.2290). A further finding of relevance is that many of their respondents "referenced their *peers at work* as a particularly salient and influential social group" (ibid, p.2289) – a point pursued below.

Prior to the interviews time was given over for some conversation to break the ice. However, this also provided an opportunity for interviewer and interviewee to form and make an initial impression on each other. As Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2002, p.207) have observed, "it is not uncommon for men to try and exert a sort of compensatory control over the interview situation". On the occasion I interviewed 'Mick' for example, he explained that he had "beaten the traffic" by cycling to the agency premises. Gesturing to his bike, "I've got five, I made 'em all myself", which he carried up five flights of stairs to our meeting room, I realised at the time that Mick, a sturdy man in cycling shorts despite it being December, was bringing to our interaction a presentation of self that was thoroughly 'masculine'.

Subsequently, in the course of the interviews I was struck by the extent to which men's narratives of maintaining and sustaining changes in their behaviour resembled what Prosser (2008, p.106) has termed the "heroic struggle" she observed among a sample of violent (ex)-offenders 'going straight'. Hearing 'Charlie', another interviewee, referring to keeping himself and others safe as requiring "tenacity", and the positive, 'masculine' qualities he seemed to associate with that term, (see, e.g. Pease, 2002; Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 2003), encouraged me to pay particular attention to how these men currently thought of and sought to conduct themselves, or perform *as men*, (particularly as heterosexual men), and how this performance compared with how they might have thought and behaved previously. Thus, much of the interview content focused not only on the question of why and how men stopped violence, which as Scott (2004) has suggested is often a limitation of positivist studies, but with how they now went about achieving and maintaining an evolving but still 'acceptable' heterosexual masculine status. Desisting from being violent and abusive therefore required men, consciously or unconsciously, to reflect

on questions of what it means to be male, and the appropriate “displays of masculinity ... [or] ... gender enactments” (Schwalbe, and Wolkomir, 2002, p.304) which this now entailed.

Work and workplace challenges

One of the themes discussed briefly in Paper 5 and which recurred in the interviews was the question of how these men routinely engaged with and related to other men, frequently in the workplace, mostly in settings featuring traditional manual labour. The significance of work and workplace has been observed in the wider literature on men and masculinities (e.g. Cockburn, 1991; Collinson and Hearn, 1996) and is also recognised as a potentially meaningful factor in supporting desistance from crime more generally (Sampson and Laub, 1993). However, as well as providing a space to demonstrate ability, experience and derive self-worth, it can also be a place of stress and threat, (Pease, 2002). By encouraging men to discuss, as part of the interview process, their day-to-day lives therefore, the importance of work and workplace, the tensions and stresses which this could create for them and which threatened to spill-over negatively into their lives at home, was forcefully conveyed. The methodological approach employed here therefore enabled these desisting men to reflect and reveal that a major source of daily stress in their lives emanated from the male environments in which they were still expected to function according to traditional male norms. These environments created or exacerbated frequently problematic relationships with other men. They were places where they often felt either undermined, taken advantage of, or in conflict or competition with their peers. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2002, p.205) have observed that those “most alert ... [to flaws in another’s masculine performance] ... are other men, whose success at crafting a masculine self depends in part on the lesser success of other men’s efforts”.

Exploring factors such as those, rather than diverting attention away from the issue of violence, as Hearn (1998) asserts, in fact allowed the men to provide illuminating information about the complexities of their daily lives. They highlighted the routine demands and stresses involved, especially as they engaged with other men. They illustrated the pressures of having to negotiate issues of status, power, personal and professional

competence, and the perceived or actual challenges to their maintenance of masculinity on a regularly recurring, if not daily, basis.

Given Gondolf's (2002) assertion that 'interruptive techniques' might be what most men say they learn from programmes, it seemed useful to explore the contexts in which men resorted to tactics such as 'Time Outs' or other self-monitoring practices which the term suggests. The way in which men suggested a continuum of practices and processes involved in their own desistance stories suggested that McNeill and Maruna's (2007) utilisation of the concept of 'primary' and 'secondary desistance' was a useful one. Indeed, the term secondary desistance aptly describes the process of behaviour which looks beyond the cessation of physical violence to consider wider processes of shifts in identity and values regarding self and others. While all confirmed that they drew on practical techniques such as Time-Outs, for example, their meaning and purpose seemed to vary across the sample. For several the recognition of trigger situations was viewed in a somewhat mechanistic or reductive manner, as for example, when one referred to needing to 'top-up' as one might service a mechanical object or a motor vehicle. It is possible that for these individuals, some of whom are described in the Paper as still being confused about their behaviour, to take 'avoidant action' represents one way of learning to become physically non-violent without necessarily engaging with the more substantial changes of identity, understanding of self and new sense of priorities and purpose which others approaching what might be understood as 'secondary desistance' describe. It would also appear to be a technique which relies upon the mood of the person concerned and, moreover, which may give others such as their partners, occasional cause for worry or alarm.

What it also suggests however is that many of the men who attend programmes, have invested heavily in traditional male identities. They live in families and communities wary of personal 'transformation' and in which gender roles are somewhat restricted. It may be therefore that these interruptive techniques represent a type of 'reformative' or desistance-focused activity which they can employ and discuss without having to engage in or embrace a 'different' more 'feminised' style of thinking and speaking about oneself, (Irvine and Klocke, 2001). A minority of respondents in the study also frequently drew upon the cognitive tools which they had learned from the programmes, but also seemed prepared to engage with and prioritise other aspects of personal change, growth, self-

development, and, sometimes through counselling, self-reflection and development, a deeper degree of self-understanding.¹¹

It was clear however that all of the men valued their continuing contact with the programmes and drew on this as a space either to 'top-up', to reflect, to listen to others, or to 'give something back'. However, 'giving something back' took various forms, from speaking about one's own experience in the programme setting, thus supporting other men, or a determined commitment to (re)form and to engage positively and constructively in the world.

As with the significance of workplace, the need for post-programme contact was another important finding from the study. This raises a concern that perpetrator programmes as they currently function, particularly statutory programmes, have not been able to develop or maintain structures, processes, or crucially find the resources to continue providing a service to the 'completer', particularly but not exclusively for those whose desistance seems more precariously to resemble the 'white knuckle' variety. All of the men in this study for example men spoke, even several years after coming on to a programme, of still feeling that their 'anger' or 'vulnerability' was a recurring issue. Their comments powerfully illustrate that the programme settings and staff therein offer one of the few alternative networks in which these men can reflect upon, seek support and sustain the progress which they have made and/or share the anxieties and challenges which they still routinely encounter.

Conclusion: what desistance involves

The methodological approach adopted in these interviews in which men were asked to discuss aspects of their former and present selves, marked by processes of change but also of continuity, afforded additional insight into that often-overlooked question cited earlier by Turnell and Edwards (1999), of what behaviour is to be *achieved*, and moreover *how* it is achieved. It further allowed insight into one of the core findings of desistance research, as noted in particular by Farrall and Calverley (2006) and McNeill (2006), that it is the

¹¹ While in retrospect these activities seem related to these particular men's experiences and levels of education this unfortunately was not established nor pursued at the time the study was conducted.

meaning which is ascribed to the changed role or behaviour which empowers and sustains desistance. In the cases discussed here, reflecting and acting as *having changed*, but still presenting themselves as (heterosexual) men is important. To become non-violent involves finding and valuing new ways of enacting masculine roles but in ways that allow other pre-existing aspects of that role to be valued. These interviews afforded a nuanced and complex picture of what may be involved in achieving desistance from abuse and suggests that this process also requires a re-negotiation of how to enact masculine behaviours and presentation of self. They revealed that men observe, reflect and enact 'hegemonic masculinities' (Connell, 1995) in the group settings as in the world outside, and indeed that desisting and being seen to desist, being prepared and able to talk about shameful pasts, as well as negotiating and navigating the uncertain and uncharted waters of non-violence, are acknowledged themselves as positive 'manly' qualities.

Reflecting on the ways in which these men represented themselves, of how they employed particular phrases, e.g. "I took the bull by the horns", of how they answered questions and behaved in the interviews are, as Schwalbe and Wolkomir, (2002, p.204) observe, "potentially valuable sources of data". They suggest something more than attempts to deflect the attentions of other researchers who would compare their responses to those of partners and find them mostly evasive (Cavanagh et al, 2001). They suggest too that in representing themselves as men, Mick with his qualities of 'strength and vitality', Tony's 'emotional honesty', and Derek's 'energy and zeal', they are making sure "that some things are known about (them) first, so that others can put less flattering information into context" (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2002, p.215). These findings are therefore relevant to the wider theoretical and practice development of perpetrator programmes, highlighting as they do the need to reconsider the processes of how non-violence might be conceived and achieved. However, they also reveal that while men need to relinquish and desist from violent and abusive behaviour, they are nevertheless likely to retain particular aspects of themselves, and still value core elements of identity and behaviour, elements however which can now be positively harnessed to motivate more positive, responsible and achievable ways of accomplishing masculinity.

The final chapter reflects upon how each of these papers are linked and form a coherent body of academic scholarship.

Chapter 3: Conclusion

The aim of the five papers and the contextual narrative which links and presents this PhD thesis as a coherent programme of inquiry has been to outline and explore a number of important themes, as opposed to providing a comprehensive historical account, regarding the development of programmes for perpetrators of domestic abuse in the UK. In doing so, attention has been paid to the way in which particular voices have been privileged or silenced (Burr, 2003; Gregory and Holloway, 2005), and the impact which these voices have had upon programme development and practices with men who perpetrate violence and abuse (Gadd, 2004).

The contextual narrative begins by recounting for example how a long-acknowledged historical problem, namely 'violence against wives' (Dobash and Dobash, 1979), had nevertheless remained hidden in plain sight until 'officially rediscovered' in the USA and the UK. This occurred largely as a consequence of the voices and actions of women who challenged its interpretation by (mostly male) legal and medical experts as a problem of dysfunction or pathology, an interpretation moreover which frequently focused on women's behaviour as the cause of the problem (Gayford, 1975, 1976). For many of these women activists, whose knowledge was drawn from lived experience, the issue of men's violence and abuse was not dysfunctional but was instead entirely functional, concerned as it was with establishing and maintaining power and control over, and silencing, women, (Pahl, 1985; Hague and Wilson, 1996; Hester, 2005). The salience of this interpretation in turn informed the debates regarding the question of how to respond to, ameliorate or eradicate this problem. For some among the wider 'feminist movement', which comprises several perspectives, the answer lay in the eradication of gender inequality which would be achieved either by social action, and/or by changing the nature and structure of male-dominated social and legal institutions (or often, both). For others, possibly influenced by the day-to-day practicalities of working with women who experience violence and abuse at the hands of their partners, there was a pragmatic recognition that for a host of reasons, both practical and emotional, that while 'common sense' dictated that women should leave violent and abusive men, the processes involved in doing so could be both emotionally and practically complex (Schechter, 1982; Hanmer and Maynard, 1987; Hague, 2001; Hague and Malos, 2005).

Many social workers, police, legal professionals and even women's advocates might suggest that women should leave violent partners. While many women do, often having to overcome considerable difficulties in doing so, others noted that women they worked with 'simply' wanted their partners' violence to stop, or that the violence was 'bearable' (Horley, 2002). It was the psychological aspect of coercive control (Stark, 2007) which made life intolerable. These questions of how to respond to men's violence and abuse generated a raft of legislation which sought to protect women, also facilitated a shift towards recognition that it was in fact *men's behaviour*, not as had hitherto been commonly argued, *women's provocation* of their partners, which was the core of the problem which required to be addressed (Hester, 2005; Radford and Gill, 2006).

This in turn led to debates concerning how men's violence should be responded to. It is clear, for example, that policies needed to be established and legislation enacted so that those who were the victims of violence, in the context of this thesis primarily those of women and children, were protected. Some argued that the law also had to do more than protect or punish and should hold men 'accountable' for their violence. Various arguments were advanced (then and now) as to how accountability was best or meaningfully achieved. In the case of the origins of perpetrator programmes for men, for example, it is possible to see several conflicting perspectives on how men should be responded to, with two perspectives in particular, at odds with one another. There was on the one hand, especially in the context of the 'therapeutic society' prevailing in the USA at the time of a burgeoning men's movement, those who advocated that men who victimised others were frequently themselves victims, of damaged, disrupted childhoods (Stosny, 1995) or indeed themselves oppressed by 'patriarchy' who required 'treatment' (Dutton, 1999, 2002; Dutton and Corvo, 2006). These arguments were contested by feminist and pro-feminist protagonists who advocated that in order to 'hold men accountable', interventions needed to be reframed. Rather than requiring a pathologically-informed response, interventions should instead (ideally after being responded to as a legal/criminal issue, and as part of systemic approach to men) engage with them with the purpose of education or re-education (Pence and Paymar, 1993; Adams, 1998). Even here however, it can be seen that the didactic approaches of pro-feminist programmes drew to various degrees on aspects of cognitive-

behaviouralist as well as social learning theories to inform their practices with abusive men (Pence and Paymar, 1990).

What these disparate viewpoints have led to, particularly in the USA, is a somewhat polarised and unresolved debate which argues that on the one hand most men who are abusive ought primarily to be re-educated, whereas on the other they require intervention at a deeper level and quite commonly have a range of personal background factors in their lives which also need to be addressed (Babcock et al, 2004; Gondolf, 2007; Dutton and Corvo, 2007; Lehmann and Simmons, 2009).

Gondolf (2012), an advocate of the Duluth Model, concludes as far as programmes are concerned that 'one size fits most', i.e. the pro-feminist psycho-educational model is suitable for the majority of men who attend them. While Gondolf acknowledges that there are abusive men who experience or present other issues which need to be addressed, and while he accepts that attention to problems such as alcohol or substance abuse might be 'bolted on' to the Duluth Model, his primary anxiety, and this is indicative of the privatised nature of much service provision in the United States, is that therapeutically-oriented psychological programmes seek to replace or supplant the Duluth Model. It would seem, therefore, that the conflicting opinions regarding the purpose and efficacy of perpetrator programmes have generated a situation where the potential for programmatic fusion, co-operation or coalition has been replaced by two (often-mutually-antagonistic) theoretical approaches which seem to present quite different conceptualisations of the men with whom they engage.

Such a polarisation of approaches and the resultant antagonism between their respective spokespersons and advocates has been more muted in the UK (Bowen, 2011). However, the development of programmes aimed at perpetrators has also been significantly influenced by a different series of factors, which have nevertheless had an impact on how perpetrators, and engagement with them on programmes, has been conceptualised. These issues concerning both the origins of and the subsequent trajectory of programmes have been addressed substantially and through a series of different lenses in the published papers and the contextual narrative of this thesis. Particularly as far as England and Wales were concerned, for example, the political and organisational pressures upon the

Probation Service to deliver programmes which 'worked', as far as 'successful outcomes' was concerned, and the influence and persuasiveness of cognitive behavioural psychologists drowned out the voices of other commentators (Rivett, 2006; Gorman et al, 2006). The arguments of these commentators and practitioners, which ironically were often concerned with broadly therapeutic, 'constructive', or holistic approaches, were increasingly discounted as the Probation Service was pressured to adopt approaches which prioritised the assessment of risk and management *of*, rather than meaningful engagement *with*, those who offended (Smith, 2004; 2006). Priorities such as these coupled with discourses advocating managerialist practices and the neo-liberal restructuring of the Probation Service (Robinson, 2003), resulted in the creation of the 'responsible offender' whose needs could be deconstructed into those which were 'criminogenic' and therefore worthy of attention, and those other 'non-criminogenic' needs which could be overlooked or considered irrelevant to the offending behaviour in question (Andrews and Bonta, 1998).

In the context of these managerialist imperatives, and as Papers 1 and Paper 2 argue, the voices of practitioners were frequently marginalised and particularly in the Probation Service often overlooked completely (Eadie and Knight, 2002). When practitioners' voices *are* listened to however, as is the case in both of these papers, it can be seen that they make a powerful contribution to a number of themes which more formal positivist evaluations as to whether programmes can be said to 'work' frequently exclude. The major strength of the approach which was applied to all three empirical research studies carried out and which form a substantial part of this PhD thesis is that by drawing on qualitative approaches these reveal the complexities involved in a wide range of issues in the various processes involved for both practitioners and perpetrators in these types of programme. These include the importance of subjective experiences and emotions such as the confusion, anxiety and uncertainty which practitioners often brought to this innovative and challenging area of practice. They expose an often overlooked or unacknowledged consequence of working with offenders' (and perpetrators') challenging behaviour; it is both emotionally demanding and can be personally and professionally debilitating.

The importance of attending to issues of personal experiences and the nature of relationships are subsequently contrasted with the priorities of managerialism which informed the implementation of manualised programmes as discussed in Paper 3 and the

pre-occupation with risk assessment and management which once again overlooks human complexity as discussed in Paper 4. Paper 4 concludes by arguing that there is a need to attend to the strengths which some men on perpetrator programmes may possess, difficult as that may be to countenance, given the profoundly unpleasant nature of much of their past behaviour. Nevertheless, as argued in Paper 4, it is often these strengths and qualities which may need to be harnessed by practitioners and by men who have been abusive as they embark on the challenging and uncertain paths they may need to follow as they seek to desist and re-establish a more positive self in the present and in the future. The methodological approach to the study of men who are desisting from violence and abuse, discussed in Paper 5, the last of the papers presented here, provides an insightful and innovative contribution to knowledge concerning perpetrator programmes. By privileging the voices of desisting men, whose voices in the past may have silenced and frightened others, the study explores and reveals what may be necessary in understanding whether, why and how programmes might become more effective. It recognises that for many men who do desist, for whom something can be said to have ‘worked’, the process may be a long one, and one which requires a considerable amount of support.

Sadly, following the very recent and damning thematic inspection (HMIP, 2018) into the work of the privatised Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) which since 2014 have superseded the involvement of the Probation Service in delivering perpetrator programmes in England and Wales, it seems that the necessary levels of training and support both for practitioners and for perpetrators on programmes have been profoundly marked by their absence. This inspection recorded “a lack of strategic approach nationally and at CRC level to make sure that CRCs provided the right range, volume and quality of domestic abuse interventions to meet identified need [or] that interventions were evidence-based and delivered effectively” (HMIP, 2018, p.8). Consequently, the factors of relationship building and sustained support which are so important in enabling and sustaining desistance seem less evident now in terms of practical provision than they have been at any time since the inception of perpetrator programmes in the UK almost three decades ago.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Paper 1

Thinking Outside the Box: Looking Beyond Programme Integrity: The experience of a Domestic Violence Offenders Programme

Appendix 2: Paper 2

Firing up and Burning Out: The personal and professional impact of working in domestic violence offender programmes

Appendix 3: Paper 3

Re-education or recovery? Re-thinking some aspects of domestic violence perpetrator programmes

Appendix 4: Paper 4

Programmes for Domestic Violence Perpetrators

Appendix 5: Paper 5

Desisting from Domestic Abuse: Influences, Patterns and Processes in the Lives of Formerly Abusive Men

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: LOOKING BEYOND PROGRAMME INTEGRITY: THE EXPERIENCE OF A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDERS PROGRAMME

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Introduction

The initial surge of enthusiasm for cognitive behavioural programmes that developed within the probation service in the wake of the What Works literature has recently been somewhat curbed by a number of cautionary findings from research and practice. As early as 1997, Hedderman and Sugg's survey of probation services in England and Wales found that cognitive behavioural techniques were not always well understood by probation staff and that programmes in which they were delivered were inconsistently monitored. Discussing the implementation of Glamorgan's STOP Programme, Vanstone (2000) commented that staff enthusiasm for innovative group programmes might result in marginalisation and lack of attention to practice outside the programme, thereby undermining overall effectiveness. While formal accreditation of programmes aims to overcome such shortcomings, scepticism persists among practitioners and researchers alike that pre-occupation with the minutiae of programme detail deflects attention from the significance of good practice beyond the programme itself, (Gorman, 2001; McIvor, 2004). Although accreditation criteria do emphasise the importance of proper 'case management', an increasing body of research stresses the importance of a 'quality supervisory relationship' and how it too contributes to reducing offending and other changes in behaviour (Rex, 1999; Trotter, 1999; 2000).

Such general concerns about over reliance on programmes are heightened when applied to interventions with sexual or violent offenders and those who are violent in relationships. A significant finding in a recent major study of domestic violence offender programmes in the USA suggests that 'programme effectiveness' seems less related to programme format and 'dosage', and more on whether agencies within the criminal justice system communicate with each other, and respond promptly and consistently to men's offending behaviour (Gondolf, 2002). Work with male domestic violence offenders is increasingly an activity in which probation officers are engaged, particularly through the spread of

structured 'Duluth model' programmes. These are based on a feminist theoretical framework on the nature and purpose of men's 'domestic violence', and employ a range of cognitive behavioural (and other) methods in working with men. In view of the contested evidence about the effectiveness of such programmes, (see for example, Dobash et al 1996; Mullender and Burton, 2000; 2001; Gondolf, 2002), and in the wake of the recent accreditation of a model programme in England and Wales, it seems timely to examine whether, as with structured programmes more generally, the significance of individual case-work, and indeed the wider social context of offenders' lives, ought to be more fully incorporated into their evaluation, (Bottoms et al., 2001; Smith, 2004).

In 2003 a small study was carried out which examined the implementation of one such domestic violence offenders' programme in Scotland. This was conducted in a large authority where almost a quarter of the criminal justice workforce had received four days training on the programme's theory, structure and method¹. The authority's strategy was that the programme would initially be 'delivered' by workers from a specialist Probation Support Team, (PST). Thereafter each cohort would comprise one or more 'programme trained' workers from patch-based teams in the authority (Area Teams). This model, whereby programmes would increasingly be delivered by workers from outside the PST was aimed at disseminating knowledge about the theory and context of the programme throughout the organisation, thus promoting good practice. One possible disadvantage of the model for the programme itself however was that its 'integrity' might be jeopardised and its effectiveness diluted as a more diffuse group of workers, with minimal levels of programme experience became involved in its delivery.

Integrity and Integration

A major concern of management and key staff in preliminary discussions was whether the programme 'worked' i.e. to what extent it impacted on men's violent and abusive behaviour. However eighteen months after inception it was evident that the impact of the programme itself would be well nigh impossible to pin down. This had been a period of considerable adaptation and refinement, with successive cohorts of the programme involving combinations of workers with different levels of experience in and approaches to programme delivery. There were clearly major methodological limitations around a study which focused solely on outcomes at this early stage². (For a fuller examination of the difficulties of implementing programmes more generally within the probation service, see Underdown, (2001).

Demand for places on the programme had initially ranged widely across the authority. (More recently this had changed; referrals tending to come mainly from a few specific teams, an issue that is pursued further below). This early surge in volume and the pressure to provide a service promptly had meant, despite attempts to ensure consistency, that groups varied considerably in style and atmosphere, providing qualitatively different experiences for the men attending them. While replicability may be neither achievable nor necessarily desirable, and while each group inevitably creates its own dynamic (Smith

2004), it has certainly been argued that programme instability impacts negatively on effectiveness (Gondolf, 2002).

Two research themes were therefore agreed upon. Management needed to know what factors required to be in place in order to ensure that programmes were delivered as consistently as possible, and could be said to be approaching what Hollin (1995) terms 'programme integrity' i.e. that, 'the programme is conducted in practice as intended in theory and design' (Hollin 1995, p196).

Given the ongoing potential for instability during a pilot phase or at times of considerable organisational pressure, the role of case workers seemed clearly to be crucial in supporting or augmenting the work of the programme itself. The other key research theme therefore would look beyond programme integrity to what might be termed programme integration. As men's attendance on the programme was a requirement of a probation order, how were programme themes, concepts and values integrated into wider probation practice within the agency? To what extent might that practice enhance or undermine the programme's potential effectiveness?

Interviews were conducted with five PST workers closely associated with the programme's early implementation, and with ten Area Team staff who had also run the programme. A further ten Area Team workers who currently supervised men who had been on the programme were approached to discuss their experiences. A preliminary examination of the PST database³ coupled with the comments and observations of the workers interviewed, revealed that there was considerable inconsistency in the extent to which the new resource was made use of across the authority. The possible consequences of this inconsistency in contributing to, or detracting from, the potential effectiveness of the programme are explored below.

(Particular attention was paid to those phases where programme and one-to-one work interfaced; before and during men's actual attendance on the programme, and finally after men had completed the programme but still remained on a probation order.)

Workers' experiences of domestic violence offenders

Work with men who are violent in relationships is stressful and demanding. All who had worked directly on the programme commented that engaging with this client group was 'substantially different' from their experience of group-work with other offending clients. For some this experience had been professionally stimulating and represented an area of practice to which they were now completely committed or 'hooked'. For others it had been a draining experience from which they now wished to move on. The levels of denial and resistance to engagement that many men presented were exceptional and their negative attitudes to women partners deeply entrenched. Work within the groups seemed to be less about encouraging people to 'develop skills to overcome offending' and more about confronting men's ingrained attitudes and beliefs.

'They're very difficult clients who... at the beginning of the programme were very much, defences up, denying a lot of behaviour, or minimising it, and to begin to break that down was so hard. The first probably eight weeks of the programme was really, really tough.'
(Programme Worker: Female)

Pre-group experiences

Gondolf's longitudinal study of four domestic violence programmes in the USA examined the role which the wider criminal justice system plays in enhancing the effectiveness of domestic violence programmes. He emphasises the necessity of men entering programmes promptly following conviction, and of being swiftly sanctioned where they fail to comply (Gondolf, 2002). In this Scottish study despite an agency 'intention' that men should commence programmes 'as soon as feasible' after being placed on probation, the PST database recorded a fairly consistent interlude of three months between men being placed on a probation order and commencing the programme!

There were several reasons for this, including factors in the men's own circumstances:

'Well, this guy's life was a mess generally. He had a real bad drinking problem. He wasn't blaming the violence on the drink exactly... but before we could get him to look at anything he needed to get stabilised in some way... Then he had been put out of the house, so he was at his brother's then out of there... eventually he got a room. So there were all these pressing issues to address, ... and that was in the first... say eight weeks before we could finally get him on the programme.'
(Area Team Worker, Male)

Mainly though, delays seemed to be due to organisational issues, factors of time and resource with which many probation officers can readily identify. While management were attempting to tackle this problem by increasing the frequency with which cohorts ran, or by (unsuccessfully) attempting to run 'pre-programme groups', the prevailing view within the workforce suggested that these pressures were both longstanding and likely to continue. If this was so then what did this mean for men who were waiting to go onto the programme?

Programme workers and case-workers were asked about what work was going on with men during this period. Was this seen as a 'waiting period' before attention to the man's use of violence could begin, an opportunity for important preparatory work to be commenced, or a time in which other issues and problems might be addressed? The answers to these questions were often less than clear.

Programme workers' views (pre-programme)

Programme group workers commonly felt that men often turned up 'totally unprepared' for engaging in a programme, uneasy and anxious about coming to a group, which as one participant feared would 'put me in the spotlight'. Such anxiety was a significant inhibitor in terms of men's engagement:

'When men come in they're in a very high level of denial. You very rarely get one that will admit to anything... Their anxiety levels are so high... and I think that stops us doing the job we need to be doing. They're so anxious about having to sit in a group and talk about violence that for the first couple of weeks you're having to do basic group-work stuff.'
(Programme Worker: Female)

Dealing with men's denial was a constant refrain in programme workers' accounts. While they sympathised that their Area Team colleagues had many priorities to balance there was a feeling that much more could be done to prepare men for the programme. If for example they could focus more on men's motivation, so that men had begun to accept *some* degree of personal responsibility for their actions when they entered the programme, its early impact might be enhanced.

Case workers' views pre-programme: risk and resistance

Case workers' experiences of engaging with men prior to entry into the programme were of working with complexity, sometimes dealing with a number of apparently incompatible tasks. At the same time as they might be determining the risk which men presented to their partners they might also be trying to engage with men who presented as angry, blaming of others and highly resistant to the idea that they were 'wife batterers'.

The confidence and clarity which case workers brought to pre-programme engagement seemed to vary considerably. Some wondered whether confronting men too robustly might heighten their resistance, as Miller and Rollnick (1991) have suggested elsewhere, or worse, aggravate men's risk to partners. They had to manage a balancing act of confronting men with the seriousness of their behaviour and stipulating the consequences while at the same time encouraging men to see the programme as an experience from which *they* might benefit.

Some stated that while they felt more confident about challenging men's *denial*, they were hesitant about issues they would pursue thereafter, such as the 'association' between alcohol and violence, or other 'stress factors' in the man's life, lest this be seen as a form of collusion with men's 'excuses'! Others worried that their efforts might overlap with, but more particularly undermine, the work of the programme:

'Because I'm quite familiar with the content of the Programme, I'm not wanting to give men a half measure you know?... a half idea about what it's

all about but not getting into it in any depth. I worry if you give them too much of a flavour of what's gonna be on the Programme that they're going along to and, ... 'Oh I know all this!' kind of attitude!

(Area Team Worker/Programme Worker: Female)

Thus while programme staff looked for men to arrive 'prepared' for the experience, their Area Team colleagues were faced with the complex situations of men's individual circumstances. The degree of risk they presented to their partners, or to themselves, was often the most pressing concern at this time. For the most part they also were dealing with highly resistant clients who were not yet at the 'stage of contemplation' defined by Prochaska and Di Clemente (1992) as being necessary for any personal change to take place.

Such complexity highlights the difficulties of attempting to discuss programme effectiveness in such a way that excludes or ignores other factors in the lives of the participants themselves. To do so certainly discounts the extent to which individual workers need to contribute to men's motivation, engagement, and participation, a contribution which in turn is influenced by the worker's own familiarity with the programme as well as the other skills and knowledge which each brings to their task.

Integrated working during the period of programme attendance

Inconsistent practice was again noticeable during the time men actually attended the programme. Certain Area Teams seemed to be less engaged with the programme than others. Unfortunately attempts to follow this up with some of those teams concerned were protracted and unsatisfactory, and further research is presently being pursued to shed more light on this issue.

Those programme staff and case workers who were regularly engaged with the programme however described having being involved in a 'steep learning curve' not only about the programme, but also about the prevalence of male violence and the extent to which it had featured in their caseloads over the years, (sometimes recognised, sometimes not). Their burgeoning awareness led them to question instances where casework colleagues' practice seemed to be minimally connected to the aims of the programme. Could this all be put down to workload pressure? Were workers simply unaware or poorly informed about the dynamics of the violent behaviour of men on their caseloads? Did some have particular difficulties in addressing this issue? Were some denying the seriousness or even tacitly colluding with the men's behaviour and attitudes? There was a general perception that there seemed to be less evidence of male workers either referring men or subsequently engaging with the programme. There was also a feeling among some programme and case-workers alike that there might in fact be some *resistance* to the programme.

If this was so it was not possible in this study to determine whether or why there may be an unwillingness by male workers to engage with the issue of male violence on their

caseloads, or to what extent there was a certain weariness with 'programmes' as a panacea for all ills. Nevertheless the questions workers were asking raise fundamental issues about the complexity of adopting an agency wide approach to an issue such as men's domestic violence, behaviour which until recently was regularly diverted away from the official scrutiny of probation officers' attention. No matter how strongly the goal of programme integrity was pursued, the integrity, and therefore the effectiveness, of the wider probation response was affected and arguably undermined by inconsistency of workers' practices and attitudes across the authority, which in turn impacted upon the probation experience on clients' lives.

Examples of positive practice

If there were 'pockets of resistance' then it had been clear from the outset of the study that there were particular teams where more positive practice was evident and where workers were enthusiastic in using the programme as a resource to assist their own work with men. Interviews were undertaken with staff in four of these teams to explore why this might be so. Ten probation staff had undergone training in the programme; the other six who responded had not, but were nominated case workers for men who had recently been on the programme. There is of course a bias in this sample inasmuch as only 'engaged' workers responded to my approaches. Nevertheless, their responses concerning good practice are worthy of note.

Interestingly the factor that was most commonly referred to in these teams was the presence of a manager or senior worker who was responsive and enthusiastic and who encouraged their staff to engage with the programme. (This seemed to be related not only to domestic violence programmes, but to a willingness to embrace innovative ways of working more generally).

'Our senior here is good. I think that people are more aware about what works and what doesn't. And if you've got that in the team...and someone who'll let you try out new ways...it helps. I think if you look at our team we're like that. There's a kinda buzz ...which is good.'
(Area Team Worker: Male)

Problem recognition and *awareness of how to engage* with it seemed to be crucially important. In one team with a large proportion of women workers, there was already an established awareness of, and willingness to respond to men's domestic violence where it routinely appeared. It was evident too that the workers shared the feminist theoretical approach to men's violence endorsed by the programme. Consequently the programme was seen as a *resource* that further enabled them to work with these men on their caseloads, and which allowed for the regular sharing of advice, information and good practice.

Not surprisingly either, the presence of 'programme trained' workers in teams also generated and influenced discussion about the prevalence of male violence on caseloads, and had an influence in refining practice:

'Well, it has an effect on day to day stuff ... I mean there are workers who come and say, 'Look I'm not sure about this guy... (I'm assessing for court)', or, 'Look, this guy, it's a one-off, he's never done it before and he's no' gonna do it again...erm, so we talk about ... our experience of that story and how familiar it sounds, (laughs). So aye, they're using us as a resource...'
(Area Team Worker: Male)

After the programme

While it was beyond the scope of this study to follow up in detail the nature of the post-programme work carried out with men, interviews with programme and case workers highlighted their concerns both about maintaining the momentum begun in the programme and dealing with the wider problems and issues in the participants' lives. While the findings again apply to this particular authority they are nevertheless recognisable and relevant to many probation settings.

Although procedures for reviewing men's participation in the programme were in place, it was difficult to establish how effectively these had been implemented, and how programme recommendations were actually taken forward in one to one work. Indicators were that both quantity and quality of work carried out with men after they left the programme depended on the inevitable issues *of time, worker's knowledge about the programme's principles, worker commitment and, significantly, understanding of the nature of male violence.*

A consistent concern was expressed that men's experiences on the programme had meant that 'work had only just begun', or 'things were just beginning to sink in' at around the time they were completing their requirement to attend the programme:

'I had two guys who went through it and... with one it was quite clear what I needed to work with him on afterwards and I got that information from the programme worker. I did that work with him... maybe because I had done the programme as well, maybe it was easier for me because I knew he's done it and I knew what areas to work with him. It was like... he just couldn't get empathy! He just couldn't understand things from his partner's point of view... We kind of worked away at that. The... last time there was a domestic incident was six months ago which considering it used to be every two weeks, it's you know... an improvement!'
(Area Team Worker: Female)

Another worker pointed to the need to locate the learning from the programme into the wider context of men's lives:

'You have to realise that there's all this other stuff going on for (the man). I mean he might come through the programme but there's... (still)... big issues going on as well. Is he working? You want to know if he's dealing with his anger and so on better more generally. If he's still with his partner or not and what that means. His drinking. All this kind of stuff'
(Area Team Worker: Male)

Examples like these provided some evidence that case workers in teams were able to utilise the advice of programme colleagues or of programme methods and materials in their practice with men over the duration of the remaining probation order. They also suggest that they were engaged with ongoing issues and problems in their clients' lives in such a way that looked beyond the immediate focus of the programme. The comparative lack of positive illustrative examples however was worrying. Even after men had completed the programme, workers were often explicitly concerned about the *risk* which some of them still presented to their partners, and of how their concerns were being taken on board while the men remained on probation orders, (and thereafter!):

'Some clients don't require that high level of intervention, some require serious fortnightly contact at the very least. They need structured work to continue the process, structured co-gendered work. Again we can prioritise high risk because some of these guys are so incredibly dangerous they should not be worked with alone. So that's good practice, that's what should be happening.'
(Programme Worker: Male)

Integrity, Integration, Drift and Resistance

Although based on an examination of practice within one authority, the evidence from this small study is nevertheless relevant for many probation and social work settings. The extent to which the local domestic violence offenders programme was being delivered according to principles of 'programme integrity', (i.e. conducted in practice in accordance with theory and design, well managed and staffed by skilled practitioners), was fraught with many of the practical and design difficulties noted in other studies, (e.g. Vanstone, 2000; Underdown, 2001).

It follows from this that attempts to gauge the 'effectiveness' of any programme, (which as Smith (2004) has argued is inherently problematic anyway), need to acknowledge the wider intervention of which the programme itself is but a part, (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Bottoms et al., 2001).

Evaluations need to take account of the re-emerging research (e.g. Rex, 1999) on the importance of the relationship which clients have with case workers, (*and* programme

workers). They also need to reflect more on the issue of context, i.e. the extent to which any programme may be 'over ridden' depending on other factors in clients' lives.

Taking these points into consideration therefore the present study went on to look 'outside the box', focusing more on wider aspects of practice, looking particularly at how case work and case management had considerable potential both to enhance or undermine the effectiveness of that programme.

The study revealed variations and gaps in practice in this authority that were at times concerning. In several instances caseworkers seemed unsure of their role in relation to the programme, particularly during the worryingly protracted pre-programme period. It was hugely apparent that the presence or absence of informed pre-programme and post-programme case work was crucial in either supporting or undermining both the work of the programme itself as well as the quality of the overall probation experience more generally. There seemed for example to be a real need for skilled motivational work to be put in place prior to programme entry.

Programmes such as the one discussed here are undoubtedly valuable however. Domestic violence programmes have had a significant effect upon the way in which this issue has come to be responded to by the probation and criminal justice social work services. It is necessary however to look beyond programmes being the flag carrier of 'what works' practice, as Mair (2004) and others have argued. It is vital in the quest for 'programme integrity' to question what at times appears as an almost obsessive concern with the minutiae of their sequence, detail and structure; a narrowness of focus that has been described by one Chief Inspector of Probation as 'programme fetishism', (HMIP 2002:8).

Examining the emerging findings from research into the processes of desistance from offending for example, McNeill (2002) has suggested that this pre-occupation with 'dosage' in much 'what works' literature has overlooked the 'complex personal, inter-personal and social contexts' of *why* change occurs and *why* people stop offending.

Studies of desistance have led us to consider the complexity of the processes and circumstances in which people may move between states of resistance, of vacillation, or persistence in offending, and of the complexity of maintaining personal behavioural change more generally, (Rex 1999, Maruna 2002, Farrall 2002). In the case of men who commonly resist the intrusion of the criminal justice system into the 'private business' of their relationship with their partners, (whom usually they see as being responsible for 'causing' them to be violent), the process of change is indeed complex and is daily influenced by the patriarchal society in which they / we live. For men such as these to begin and sustain change it is clear that a programme will play only one part in this process and that much is yet to be learned in terms of how, whether and in what combination of circumstances the possibility of desistance is achievable.

The effectiveness of domestic violence programmes and of offending behaviour programmes generally depends on wider systemic factors to reinforce the criminality or harmfulness of that behaviour and the need for change to take place. In order for the 'complex personal and interpersonal contexts' of behaviour change to be more fully addressed however, any programme effect can only be bolstered by informed work on motivation, the development of trust, engagement and participation, and of modelling behaviour and values that have proven to be so significant elsewhere in work with offenders (see Burnett, 2000; Rex, 1999; Trotter, 1999:2000). Where case workers exhibit these skills in their one-to-one work with offenders, they surely enhance the potential effectiveness of any programme, just as a programme may complement the skills of that individual worker. This is the essence of a truly integrated approach.

Endnotes

- ¹ Subsequently a further twenty workers underwent training on programme delivery.
- ² Additionally the fact that in the past the author had been involved in the development of the original programme adopted by the agency raised legitimate questions and concerns about the 'researcher objectivity' which he would bring to a study of whether the programme was 'effective'. Despite this it was agreed that his 'insider' knowledge could be advantageous in terms of understanding programme content and process, as well as the demands of working with domestic violence offenders. Consequently a research agenda that satisfied both the objectives of the authority and the author's own interests as a researcher / practitioner was established.
- ³ At the time of the study seven cohorts of the programme had been completed comprising a total of 120 men who had actually been on a programme at any one time.

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Probation Journal 2008 55: 139
DOI: 10.1177/0264550508090272

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The Journal of Community and Criminal Justice

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DOI: 10.1177/0264550508090272

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Firing up and burning out: The personal and professional impact of working in domestic violence offender programmes

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Abstract The term vicarious or secondary trauma describes the negative impact on professionals' emotions resulting from painful experiences in their practice. This study of practitioners involved in UK probation programmes for domestic violence perpetrators suggests that the emotional consequences are considerable and may differ for male and female practitioners, with potential implications for the nature of their relationships and intervention with men on such programmes. The study also concludes that current training is based on a knowledge base which may be outmoded, and that ongoing support from management and colleagues for staff engaged in this work is insufficient and may be preoccupied with managerial concerns to the neglect of professional practice.

Keywords domestic violence, perpetrator, probation, programme, vicarious/secondary trauma

Introduction

Since the 1990s a body of research has emerged which explores the adverse effects on health and social service professionals of being exposed to emotionally painful material in their work. Most of this research has focused on those dealing with victims of traumatic experiences (McCann and Pearlman, 1990, 1991; Pearlman and Maclan, 1995; Pearlman and Saakvitne, 1995; Schauben and Frazier, 1995). From these studies the term 'vicarious' or 'secondary trauma' has been coined to describe a range of symptoms which impact negatively on professionals' emotions and core beliefs about themselves, their relationships with others and the nature of the world in general. These include disruptions to feelings of intimacy and trust, self-esteem, safety, autonomy and personal agency, as well as debilitating intrusions such as flashbacks or lingering preoccupations with the painful experiences of others.

Research on practitioners who work with people whose behaviour might cause trauma for others has remained relatively unexplored, although attention has recently been paid to work with sexual abusers (Baird and Jenkins, 2003; Petrillo, 2007; Way et al., 2004). As far as domestic violence offender perpetrator work is concerned, only one study, conducted in Western Australia, has presently been published (Ilfie and Steed, 2000). Given the rapid development of domestic violence perpetrator work within the Probation Service over the past decade, however, and difficulties encountered in recruiting and retaining sufficient staff (particularly men) to respond to this growth, it seems appropriate to explore the personal and professional impact on probation officers and others engaged in this demanding work.

For several years the National Practitioners Network comprising probation officers, voluntary project workers, psychotherapists and others working with perpetrators and victims of domestic violence, has met regularly to compare and develop practice. Workers have used these events to explore, usually in gender specific groups, the personal effects of working with men. The following study emerged from these informal reflections. While this has recently evolved into a series of ongoing qualitative interviews some findings from the initial phase of the research are discussed in the following.

Methodology

A questionnaire was distributed at a practitioners' network meeting in autumn 2006 and subsequently circulated online to members of the Respect¹ network. Aimed at professionals working in domestic violence perpetrator programmes, it asked about their experiences of engaging with domestic violence offenders (compared to other offending groups), the quality of the training received prior to this work and the support and supervision available thereafter. Other areas explored included the challenges and rewards of working in this field, the coping strategies workers employed in doing so and their willingness to continue doing such work. (Though not discussed here practitioners' views were sought about feedback they received from men's partners and how they assessed the effectiveness of their work.) They were also asked to describe the personal impact of undertaking such work with men, how it affected their feelings about men in general, about relationships between men and women, and their own relationships in particular.

Thirty practitioners responded – sixteen probation officers and fourteen from psychotherapy, social work, and women's support work – all experienced in domestic violence programme work. The probation officers worked mostly in court mandated programmes, the others largely with non-court-mandated men. Probation officers and voluntary programme workers averaged just over four years' experience of programme work. Two probation officers had between eight and ten years' experience, and two voluntary workers over sixteen years' experience. The sample ranged in age from 26 to 59 years. All were white and, with the exception of two Irish respondents, were of British origin which unfortunately precluded the experiences of black and minority ethnic practitioners. Twelve of the probation officers and eight voluntary programme workers were women.

Previous involvement in domestic violence related work differed between voluntary programme workers and probation officers. The former had more experience of working with women and children affected by violence. Four women counsellors, for example, had come to work with men having worked previously with survivors. While probation officers had often supervised men where violence was present or suspected, their experience of working directly with men on the issue of their domestic violence was substantially related to the development of group-work programmes in the mid-1990s.

Training for programme work

Most of the sample had undertaken three to four days' training on perpetrator programme work, although the recent implementation of the Home Office accredited Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) meant that for some probation officers this had increased to five days. Three who had completed this training concluded that it was minimal, – 'training gives you an overview, but the subtleties of the work and how each person's needs are different cannot be covered by training – not before you actually start doing the work anyway'. There was also a concern that training could focus more on the technical aspects of programme delivery than on 'establishing meaningful workable relationships with clients', and that not enough time had been allotted to the impact of actually working with domestic violence offenders, an omission also evident in Iliffe and Steed's (2000) study on domestic violence perpetrator programme workers.

Voluntary programme workers' pre-programme training was extremely diverse. It included periods of volunteering or working in other domestic violence related agencies (e.g. Women's Aid), of group work, and of training or study in relation to gender issues. Almost half came from backgrounds in psychotherapeutic counselling, which provided considerable experience of working with personal and relationship problems, but left substantial gaps in knowledge of the dynamics of working with domestic violence and men who were violent.

Had I only had my training as a psychodynamic psychotherapist I would have been a danger to abused women. There was no mention of domestic violence – other than from me – and the approach taken with violent men was collusive. The probation training deepened my capacity to look for and read patterns of behaviour in the men. I was given specific skills to avoid colluding. (Probation Officer/psychotherapist)

This comment from someone who had worked in both statutory and voluntary sectors (and who developed his practice by moonlighting in a voluntary programme), illustrates the need for training to incorporate not just the knowledge base of the structured, (pro-feminist) cognitive behavioural group-work programmes increasingly embraced by probation, but also those more holistic, person-centred, social-work oriented approaches, increasingly marginalized in probation practice over the past decade (see Smith, 2004).

Both probation *and* voluntary sectors have recognized the importance of developing practice which is evidence-based, informed by the (still contested) findings of

evaluative and other studies into effective interventions with domestic violence perpetrators. This is reflected in the implementation of the accredited IDAP and CDVP programmes, by the Statement of Principles and Standards developed by practitioners affiliated to Respect (Respect, 2004) and indeed by Respect recently becoming an accreditation agent of best (non-probation) practice in its own right.

The Probation Service has however been criticized previously (Gorman, 2001; Mair, 2004; Shaw and Hannah-Moffatt, 2004), for being preoccupied with the roll-out of somewhat standardized approaches to programme implementation. While the IDAP Programme, rolled-out in 2005, is aimed at providing a clear model of practice for domestic violence offenders, based on a sound (pro-feminist) theoretical framework underpinned by research, the comments of some of this sample – about training and monitoring focusing more on the technicalities of programmes, and less on a more holistic engagement with the domestic violence offender – are worrying.

The consistent findings from the emerging 'who works' literature, for example, emphasizing the importance of relationship skills in motivating change in offending clients (Barry, 2000; Burnett and McNeill, 2005; McIvor, 2004; McNeill, 2002; Rex, 1999; Trotter, 1999, 2000), point clearly to the need for workers to be confident, skilled and able to venture beyond the boundaries of a cognitive behavioural curriculum in order to engage more effectively with the complex lives of clients. Similarly, studies into the assumed commonalities of domestic violence offenders which underpinned the development of earlier pro-feminist programmes (which in turn underpinned IDAP) have increasingly questioned the concept of a prototypical perpetrator. Instead it is suggested that there may be particular characteristics or sub-types of such offenders (e.g. men who are generally violent, 'family only' violent, or who are exceptionally dependent) (see Gilchrist et al., 2003; Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994), for whom interventions have to be specifically tailored.

Findings such as these all suggest that probation officers' comprehension of why and how some men are violent in relationships, of how to intervene, and of the processes by which they may eventually desist from such behaviour, requires them to feel prepared and able to work at depth, with need as well as risk, and with underlying problems as well as presenting behaviour.

Support needs

Almost as much of a concern for probation officers as training was the quality of the support and supervision they received thereafter, a finding consistent with similar studies (Iliffe and Steed, 2000; Way et al., 2004). Labouring under the initial impact of men's programme work and frequently experiencing a simultaneous loss of confidence, probation officers wanted this work to be valued and supported by their colleagues and managers. This was also a notable finding of a recent article in this journal on the experiences of female probation officers working with violent and sexual offenders (see Petrillo, 2007).

While most officers were 'reasonably satisfied' with support from management and colleagues, a third felt 'unsatisfied' or 'unsupported' in working with domestic

violence perpetrators. Where managers were simply uninformed about the nature of men's programmes this was broadly acceptable and could be resolved. In three instances, though, where management seemed uninterested, unsympathetic to perpetrator work, or as Petrillo (2007) has also observed, preoccupied with targets, consequences for workers were disabling, damaging to their esteem and on their ability to work confidently and effectively.

One noted that 'probation management say all the right things but show no real interest or commitment to the process of supporting staff in doing this work, or of understanding the impact it has on the energy and emotions of workers.' Another, whose manager was sceptical about perpetrator programmes, felt personally isolated and professionally obstructed. Finding time to prepare properly for group work had been 'a nightmare. . . . I'm afraid to say the probation service does not support me. I have had no supervision in the last eight months.' Opportunities for debriefing and offloading personal feelings, so crucial in minimizing the negative impact of stressful emotional work (Wollman, 1993), were not available for more than two-thirds of the entire sample.

Feeling isolated

Concerns about training and support were reinforced by the fact that (as with Iliffe and Steed's 2000 study), a large proportion of the sample felt isolated working in this comparatively innovative area. This occurred irrespective of setting; the comment of the counsellor in a small voluntary organization, 'stuck out there on my own . . . [experiencing] . . . a lack of support, or approval and validation from other agencies for the value of the work we do . . .', was echoed by one probation officer's observation that, 'while my authority has supposedly bought into all this, I have real difficulties convincing colleagues and others that domestic abuse should be taken seriously'.

Impact on self

McCann and Pearlman (1990, 1991) had concluded that professionals working with child abuse victims sustained disruption to their beliefs and emotions in seven core areas: frame of reference, safety, trust/dependency, esteem, independence, power and intimacy. Iliffe and Steed (2000) encountered similar disruptions among domestic violence professionals working both with perpetrators and victims/survivors. The principal concern of the present study was to explore with those engaged in this innovative practice the personal consequences of working with men who perpetrated violence against women. As previously indicated, practitioners were asked how this had impacted upon them emotionally, its effects on their views about 'men in general', their perceptions of themselves as men and women and on whether this had influenced their views about personal intimate relationships, including their own relationships.

For most probation officers, working directly with men who were violent had engaged them emotionally unlike any other of their experiences with offending clients (see also Iliffe and Steed, 2000; Morran, 2005, 2006). One recounted, 'each week I dread the group from when I wake up – and yet, when I drive home afterwards I realize that it's where I'm best challenged and derive most satisfaction as a worker. I must be mad!' The work 'stretched' them more. 'This is more intense, it uses up more emotional energy. I think about it more between sessions. It is also more satisfying, more meaningful, more real.' The 'sheer uphill slog' of engaging with men's resistant, challenging and sometimes hostile behaviour in the groups, while 'completely draining', kept workers 'enormously focused'.

Several compared their experiences of domestic violence perpetrators to other service users, particularly sex offenders.

I personally find working with men who use violence in their relationships more challenging than working with sex offenders, which . . . may be to do with the negative attitudes towards women and levels of minimization, denial and blame . . . lots of men in the groups. . . do not really accept responsibility for controlling behaviour and therefore minimize their past and current behaviours towards their partners.

Some were envious about the levels of support they felt were available in sex offender work (not necessarily borne out in Petrillo's 2007 study), which acknowledged the demands upon workers, and which seemed to have been overlooked as far as working with domestic violence offenders was concerned.

Views about relationships

As with the findings of McCann and Pearlman (1990), and Iliffe and Steed (2000), most workers in this study reported an increasing, troubling awareness of power and control issues operating at all levels in their own lives, persistent distortions in relation to their perceptions of men, and considerable changes to their view of their personal world as a safe and reliable place.

The responses of women probation officers were particularly illuminating. Working with men in programmes had made them 'hyper aware' about issues of power, control and abusiveness, whether this concerned life in general, relations within the workplace, between family and friends, or significantly, in their own personal relationships.

Most were constantly watchful for abusive or disrespectful attitudes to women to emerge in everyday conversations, of what to let go or challenge. 'I recognize that I see "issues" more quickly when my female friends and family discuss their relationships' commented one, and 'I think that I . . . question things that may be just power struggles or the non-abusive "dance" in a relationship'. Several were more assertive and ready to challenge men, not only in the men's groups, but also with friends and colleagues.

Working in a perpetrators' group has made me much more aware of both my own and society's expectations of me as a woman. I assert my rights much more. . . . which doesn't always make me popular! (Female Probation Officer)

Three referred specifically to the impact perpetrator work was having on their views about intimacy and on their relationships with partners. 'I am more wary and I focus on aspects of abuse in my own relationship,' one noted. 'I will not permit any type of abuse to go unnoticed in my own relationship!' A colleague concurred, saying 'I'm more up for challenging when I'm treated as though my experiences, views and needs are not listened to or ignored. . . . I'm clear that addressing this is good for us both.' Some women reflected on their own potential for behaving abusively, '. . . doing this work has had quite an impact on my own relationship. Sometimes I wonder if I'm becoming abusive to *him* as I react to every little thing!'

Resonance with personal experiences

While no one in the sample had been asked whether they had experienced abuse themselves in personal relationships it was evident that for several, particularly women, there were resonances between professional and personal experiences, past and present. The effect of regularly encountering issues of abuse and control through work with perpetrators had affected some women's decisions to remain in, or terminate relationships, and had also resulted in them re-appraising current and former partners. 'It's made me aware that a previous relationship I had was emotionally abusive,' one reflected. For another, 'doing this work coincided with a low point in my life and a difficult relationship which ended. I definitely think my hyper awareness of abusiveness means I felt negatively about men in general . . . and this man in particular.' She, like her colleague felt that her experience of working with perpetrators had contributed to a general lack of trust and hesitancy about entering into intimate relationships in future.

McCann and Pearlman's findings (1990) that exposure to damaging and painful material affected workers' self-esteem, sense of vulnerability, and wider world view, were again evident here. Female officers were powerfully affected by the dismissive, demeaning attitudes to women that they heard in perpetrators' groups, and sometimes compared themselves with the men's partners, 'I look at myself as a strong woman but I'm aware that I am in the victim group for many men'. Another noted,

I always thought I was quite aware of what it means to be a woman in this society but I have felt very powerfully just how I am seen by men and that has really shaken me and made me feel very uncomfortable. Sometimes I feel – as do the men's partners – that as a woman I can't win no matter what I do!

Experiencing a decreasing sense of personal choice and autonomy, a third observed:

I've always been a very confident woman and still am. Before, I would have believed that I was the architect of my own fate. But now I believe much more in. . . . luck . . . that I haven't fallen into an abusive relationship myself. There is no difference between me and women victims – except I've been lucky so far.

Concerns about personal safety

Women's concerns about their physical as well as emotional safety were evident, and several – as in Iliffe and Steed's (2000) sample and Petrillo's (2007) study – reported feeling exposed and vulnerable when engaging with men. 'I'm constantly . . . working out what anger is aimed at the man's partner, what is about women in general, and what is aimed at group workers or me due to being female,' commented a social worker from a voluntary programme. A probation officer worried about how to 'model' herself in the groups:

I continue to be conscious that my role as a youngish woman is very important in how I and my colleagues relate to one another during the sessions. I'm conscious of being strong and not presenting myself in a 'weak' way and that causes a certain amount of stress as I am so aware of this throughout the sessions.

Another whose experience of working with men had resulted in 'extreme feelings of fear, rage, hate and confusion' observed,

I am far more concerned about seeing these clients at times that are *safer for me*, when others are around. . . . I frequently think about my clients and whether any of my input is resulting in increased difficulties for their partners. The moral dilemmas are enormous. (Emphasis in original)

Complex emotions

Studies of vicarious trauma have found that counsellors, particularly those working with victims of sexual and other forms of abuse have felt enormous feelings of anger (Iliffe and Steed, 2000; McCann and Pearlman, 1990; Schauben and Frazier, 1995). Powerful emotions were clearly experienced by workers in this present study. Anger, rage and even loathing for the men they worked with were reported by a number of the women, the intensity being illustrated by one who recounted,

I experience strong feelings of shame if I let something go that I felt I should have challenged. Sometimes I am filled with loathing if the man is bragging about his capacity to manipulate, scare or control others. I experience rage when men justify appalling abuses as responses to perceived slights from their partners.

Women sought however to balance these negative (and distorted?) experiences about men by acknowledging positive examples of men in their lives. Sons, fathers, brothers and male partners served as alternative reference points for many. The proximity of such men was important. Although several women, elsewhere in the study, provided illustrations of positive changes in men they had worked with, their perceptions of men as abusive, controlling and oppressive seemed persistent and powerful. Only a small minority expressed the view, shared more generally by male workers, that some men were possibly frightened as well as frightening. One, expressing a guarded optimism about her work with perpetrators observed, 'It's

enabled me to see that some men want to change, that they are enormously confused and misinformed about women, and that they often appreciate direct responses with caring listening and firmness about their abusive behaviour.'

Men's responses: Them and us or 'struggling brothers'?

Four of the sixteen probation officers and six of the fourteen 'others' were men, a reflection perhaps of previous observations (e.g. Buckley, 1996; Morrán, 2005) that men are less numerous than women in domestic violence perpetrator work in both probation and the non-statutory sector. Responding to questions about the personal impact of working with other men on their violence and abuse, their replies tended to be more brief and 'matter of fact' than women's. It is not clear whether this was due either to the style or indeed the medium of an exploratory questionnaire. It may be that such brief responses reflect a shortcoming of the methodology of this initial study, hopefully remedied by the in-depth interviews with male and female workers currently taking place.

At any rate most men, whether probation officers, counsellors or others, like their female colleagues, acknowledged their heightened awareness of men's abusive and oppressive behaviour which they observed in everyday situations by 'men in general', friends and colleagues, fathers, brothers, sons. They, like the women, were also more alert to power and control issues in their personal relationships. Their comments suggested they 'thought more' about how their behaviour affected their partners, were prepared to 'take on [partners'] perspective more', and were 'generally less selfish'. Hearing the men in the programmes it seemed, had had a sanguine effect, and, significantly, male workers saw aspects of these men in themselves. Some, recognizing the range of abusive behaviour and attitudes of the men they worked with, asked themselves to what extent they shared similar characteristics. 'I see many men unable to get beyond hierarchy in their relationships – I recognize some of that in me.'

While men did not experience, or did not report, the concerns for their physical safety that the women referred to, they acknowledged other ways in which working with perpetrators had left them feeling vulnerable. 'While I am not exactly a fan of hegemonic masculinity,'² one reflected, 'I am more able to see most men as "struggling brothers."' Men also, unlike most (but not all) of the women, suggested that they perceived the men as afraid, fearful as well as frightening. Reflecting on how working in a programme had affected his views about men generally, one of the counsellors, referring to whether he found the group environments personally threatening commented, 'No. I'm *frightened* [my emphasis] of violent people. Luckily in the groups I mostly see the "frightened little boy". I'm starting to perceive all men as having similar emotional problems. I'm spotting frightened angry men everywhere!'

Heightened emotional sensibility

It was also apparent that several of the men, as with Iliffe and Steed's Australian study (2000), felt 'energized' in doing this work. Some referred to experiencing feelings of 'elation' compared to the women's more commonly cited 'weariness and despondency' of working with perpetrators. This seemed related to how they saw *themselves* as changing and evolving as men, of 'having my own ideas challenged', and 'having to work on my own ideas and attitudes in my relationships'. A number observed a sense of movement in their own emotional vulnerability, of a developing awareness of feelings in themselves or in other men. For some there was a sense that their own emotional life was expanding, of understanding that a 'limited emotional palette' was causing problems in their lives. One of the counsellors commented expansively, 'I feel things more deeply and run through a range of emotions like anger, sadness, joy, ecstasy and frustration! Doing this work has helped me grow up!' A probation officer referred to 'being more emotionally vulnerable, more sensitive, more likely to cry, more patient and more loving'. Being alert to one's own vulnerabilities had also allowed some men to value themselves more, of 'being OK with my weaknesses', and learning to live with some of the internal contradictions of being a man looking critically at the attitudes and behaviour of other men.

Modelling behaviour

Several struggled, however, with what they were expected to model in the groups, of what to challenge and what to let go. This could be perplexing. One wondered, 'Is it more realistic or more symbolic if it's me and not [woman colleague] challenging the man on a particular issue?' Others pondered whether they might be overcompensating for behaviour and attitudes they witnessed in groups, observing that in their personal lives they were 'constantly monitoring our own behaviour' which was 'wearing' and felt 'very much like hard work'. Concerns about 'living life as a role model' of 'committing to living non-abusively', represented another aspect of isolation. It was experienced by the police officer working in a voluntary programme who felt completely 'out of kilter' with his male colleagues and by those probation officers who anxiously sought, sometimes unsuccessfully, the validation and support of their male colleagues and managers. This need for the support of other male colleagues and for a recognition from them of the importance of working with men's violence and abuse as a legitimate area of probation concern continually came across as crucial and essential.

Rewards

This is the best, most satisfying and challenging job I've ever had!

Given the many challenges of working with men who were violent, the impact upon workers' sense of personal and professional safety, personal vulnerability and view

of the world, what was rewarding? What kept them engaged and committed to such demanding work?

Optimism

Perhaps surprisingly given the negative feelings which working with men engendered, 11 of the 16 probation officers felt either 'very optimistic' or 'quite optimistic' about the fact that the work they were doing was positive and having an impact upon 'perpetrators'. While workers were appropriately wary about men's own accounts of behaviour or attitudinal change (tempered by awareness of research which cast scepticism on the effectiveness of this work) and often placed more faith in partner feedback, it was also evident that most retained a belief in the capacity for men to change.

They referred to 'watching men begin to get it', of the usually small though occasionally significant, shifts which they displayed in their attitudes and behaviour towards their partners and others, especially when verified by partner workers or partner contact. Their most immediate source of evidence though was in the groups. Here workers witnessed men challenging other men, acknowledging something of the impact of their attitudes and behaviour on others.

In the groups it's about getting to a point where the man can speak candidly about his behaviour and we can work on alternatives. Recently a man I was working with came to realize how his verbal assaults on his partner were deliberate attempts to get from her the rejection he most feared. This has opened up a whole new territory for him. It has taken nearly a year to get through all his arrogance and claims that he doesn't need anyone. The hope that these small steps promote a reduction in destructive behaviour towards himself and others is my reward. (Female Senior Probation Officer)

Conclusion

The findings from this small study indicate that the experience of working with men on domestic violence offenders programmes impacted upon workers both positively and negatively in ways that were distinctly personal. It appears that for probation officers, working with the complexity of men's abuse was unlike engaging with the 'otherness' of most (offending) clients' behaviour. It was more connected directly with the way that officers lived their own lives, and their own experiences and struggles in relationships. It also had resonance for what they saw in themselves and were trying to change in others.

It is clear that the emotional impact of working with men's violence upon the women in the sample reflects the constellation of factors described by McCann and Pearlman (1990), of workers' anxieties about their own physical and emotional safety, trust, loss of self-esteem, perceptions of power, powerlessness, independence and autonomy, and the nature of men, women, and general view of the world.

If, as Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995) have suggested, vicarious trauma interferes with the ability of practitioners to work effectively with their clients, then the findings from the present study raise important issues about practice with domestic violence offenders. It is entirely conceivable, for example, that the impact upon workers of engaging with men in domestic violence programmes affects the manner in which they in turn relate to and engage with these men.

When female probation officers are regularly exposed to men's negative behaviour and attitudes, often accompanied by a robust and entrenched resistance to change, it is essential that this is recognized and that managers and colleagues support them in a manner that sustains their willingness and ability to continue working with such men. It also seems important in the light of the women's experiences, and in terms of what is known about the importance of the worker/client relationship in motivating and facilitating personal change (e.g. Barry, 2000; Burnett and McNeill, 2005; McNeill, 2002) to consider how they set aside or otherwise deal with feelings of fear and anger, and either suppress or utilize them in such a way that facilitates progress with truculent men who may already be antagonistic to women (see also Petrillo, 2007).

As far as male workers are concerned, a striking finding was that although they too found domestic violence offender work demanding and challenging, most identified to some degree with the men they worked with. They also felt extremely isolated and unsupported by the majority of their male colleagues in undertaking this work. This raises a number of questions. Do such feelings of identification with men on programmes act as a disincentive for other male officers to become involved in programme work, given that they might see programmes as the domain of feminists and male camp-followers where men are under attack? For those men actually working in the programmes, are feelings of affinity and identification understood as an asset which they can then harness positively to encourage other men to commit to a process of personal change, or are they interpreted as another insidious example of collusion, by which all men knowingly or unknowingly undermine challenges to their attitudes and behaviour?

Domestic violence perpetrator programmes have been a core probation activity for the past 15 years. They remain a contested area of practice, where despite the recent accreditation of IDAP programmes, knowledge about the effectiveness of programmes and of interventions with perpetrators is still 'rudimentary' (Rees and Rivett, 2005). This study suggests that future research needs also to acknowledge that while female and male workers may co-work in perpetrator programmes, the impact of doing so affects them differently as women and men, which in turn may influence their interaction and potential effectiveness with programme participants. It is also patently evident that both male and female probation officers need to be supported much more than is presently the case in undertaking this difficult and demanding work.

Notes

- 1 Respect is the UK membership association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services. Respect's key focus is on increasing

the safety of those experiencing domestic violence through promoting effective interventions with perpetrators. The Respect Phonenumber is on 0845 122 8609. For more information see <http://www.respect.uk.net>

- 2 'The set of ideas, values, representations and practices associated with "being male" which is commonly accepted as the dominant position in gender relations in society at a particular historical moment' (Jefferson, 2001: 138). See also Connell (1987).

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Probation Journal

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Probation Journal 2011 58: 23

DOI: 10.1177/0264550510388968

The online version of this article can be found at:
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The Journal of Community and Criminal Justice

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DOI: 10.1177/0264550510388968

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Re-education or recovery? Re-thinking some aspects of domestic violence perpetrator programmes

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Abstract There has been a substantial development of domestic violence perpetrator programmes within the probation service in recent years. Pressures to ensure that approaches are 'evidence-based' and thereafter formally 'accredited' have led to the proliferation of somewhat standardized models of intervention in both probation, and increasingly, in the voluntary sector. This does not fit either with the experience of practitioners nor from emerging research in this field. This article suggests that too much might be expected from current interventions. Consideration is then given to what individualized approaches might require in this context and specifically examines how desistance-focused approaches might apply with this type of 'offender'.

Keywords desistance, domestic violence, effective practice, masculinity, narratives

Controversial and contested: The development of programmes in the UK

Domestic violence perpetrator programmes remain a controversial and often contested form of intervention as far as responses to men's violence against women is concerned. Much resistance and opposition to their early development in the UK came from the combined voices of feminist researchers, activists and practitioners engaged in the protection and support of victims/survivors (usually women), and children, who suffer at the hands of violent and abusive men.

A substantial amount of research evidence from evaluations of programmes conducted largely in the USA in the 1980s fuelled their anxieties. Several studies had concluded that programmes were largely ineffective in impacting on men's violent and abusive behaviour (Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989) or, even if apparently

successful in stopping men's physical violence, had little or no effect on their verbal, psychological and other forms of abuse (Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989; Edleson and Grusznski, 1989). It was argued that their existence could actually render women more unsafe as they held out an (unrealistic) hope that men could, and would, change as a consequence of participating in such programmes. Concerns were expressed that whereas organizations like Women's Aid had struggled to raise awareness of this problem, (never mind secure resources to address it), programmes for men might present a direct challenge to the nature of service provision, with funding for refuges and support for women becoming subordinated to the 'promise' of programmes.

Despite these concerns, there has been a gradual incursion of programmes into both statutory and voluntary sectors over the past ten to fifteen years. There are a number of reasons as to why this might be so.

The issue of domestic violence which re-emerged from the shadows in the 1970s as a result of women's activism and consciousness-raising has become recognized as a major social problem, linked inextricably with the issue of male violence against and oppression of women in general. This has been accompanied by, and reflected in, a raft of legislation, policies and (gradually) funding aimed at the support and protection of women and children who experience what Hearn (1998) has termed the 'violences of men'.

There has been a concurrent recognition of the appropriateness of the use of law to criminalize such violence, and a re-appraisal of existing sanctions and interventions, (see Mullender, 1996). Domestic violence perpetrator programmes were developed in the UK against a background of increased attention being paid to evidence-based approaches to offender interventions and associated questions about 'what works'. They were initially perceived as broadly similar, at least in their emphasis on cognitive-behavioural techniques and structured group-work approaches, to programmes being developed more generally within the probation and social work sectors to engage with various types of offender.

Some of the more contemporaneous outcome studies have also contributed if not to programme development then at least to their visibility. The first evaluation of programmes in the UK by Dobash et al. (1996) compared the outcomes of two court-mandated men's programmes in Scotland with those of other criminal justice sanctions, and concluded that:

... the evidence on violence, controlling behaviours and quality of life shows that men successfully completing one of the criminal justice based programmes, in contrast to men sanctioned in other ways, significantly reduced the prevalence and frequency of their violence and significantly suppressed the range and frequency of their controlling and coercive behaviours. ...

Importantly, in view of the fact that some early US evaluations had relied on participant and worker report only:

Women whose partners participated in one of the programmes, report important improvements in their behaviours and attitudes and these changes have had significant influences on their own quality of life (Dobash et al., 1996: vii)

Despite reservations about methodological limitations of this study, principally that the sample was too small (51 men and 47 women in the 'programme group' at 'Stage 1', – declining thereafter) and the follow-up period of one year post-conviction, too short (Mullender, 2001), the Dobash findings nevertheless provided encouragement for probation officers and other professionals whose experience was that actually engaging directly with male clients on this issue was something which had perplexed and often eluded them. The fact too that the programmes evaluated were embedded in a criminal justice response assuaged to some extent the concerns of women's activists. Men's violence was seen to be taken seriously, and furthermore, any programmes implemented as a criminal justice intervention would thus not compete for funding and resources for victims/survivors. Programmes it seemed were worthy of further exploration and development.

Gondolf – The system matters

While the Dobash study had been critiqued on grounds of sample size and duration, the body of evaluative evidence in favour of programmes was subsequently boosted by research carried out by Edward Gondolf and associates in the United States. This extensive evaluation which explored the outcomes of four 'batterer programs' in four US cities by following up 840 men and 481 partners over a four year period, was extremely comprehensive and significant. Stated broadly Gondolf's conclusions about programme effect and outcomes were (with several caveats) generally positive. It is worth including the following paragraphs in their entirety.

Our examinations of re-assault rates and women's perceptions . . . present a more positive picture than previous evaluations and an implicit endorsement of conventional batterer counselling. (Gondolf, 2002: 199)

The majority of men in the programmes eventually become violence free. By the 30-month follow-up more than 80 per cent had reportedly not assaulted a partner in the previous year or longer, and this rate was repeated at the four year follow-up. The intervention did eventually appear to work for most men. Most of the female partners of the men seemed to concur with their feelings of being 'better off' and 'very safe.' In sum, the outcome evidence appeared to support the intervention systems and counselling programmes for men arrested for domestic violence. (Gondolf, 2002: 129)

However for Gondolf, men's compliance in attending programmes was most noticeable in one setting (Pittsburgh), where they were promptly returned to a dedicated domestic violence court for sanction or regular review of progress. Gondolf observed that:

. . . Our findings . . . suggest the need for more system development . . . More needs to be done before and after programmes as part of this process. *The emphasis on system development contrasts with the heightened attention on new counselling approaches and innovations.* (Gondolf, 2002: 199) [italics added]

This conclusion, that 'emphasis on system development' should stand in contrast to 'new counselling approaches and innovations' has considerable potential consequences for the continuing direction of work with domestic violence perpetrators in the UK.

The importance of locating men's programmes or interventions with men within wider co-ordinated responses aimed at women's safety is not contested. However it is argued here that in light of the fairly limited range of interventions in the United Kingdom at present, close attention needs to be paid both to research and practice experience to ensure that while we develop efficient 'systems' we do not ignore the potential of 'new counselling approaches and innovations' (which Gondolf's comment might be taken to suggest). It is further argued that as elsewhere in practice with offenders we should look beyond programmes and systems to the significance of the perspective and approach of the practitioner, the relationship between practitioner and service user, the relevance of strengths-based approaches, and the evidence from desistance research which focuses on behaviour change processes generally. We might then usefully critically reflect upon and apply this knowledge to practice with domestic violence 'perpetrators'

'Evidence-based practice', accreditation and the IDAP

The pressure upon statutory and (increasingly) voluntary or independent sectors to deliver models of practice, which are 'evidence-based', and subsequently 'accredited' by 'expert panels', reflects New Labour thinking and policy on a range of problem (or problematized) behaviours. This approach has not been without its critics, several of whom have argued that the priorities of intervention have often focused somewhat narrowly on the achievement of targets or outcomes and the application of economically driven one-size-fits-all approaches to the complexity of human behaviour (see, for example, Mair, 2004; also Singh Bhui and Buchanan, 2004).

The development of the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme, (IDAP) accredited by the Home Office in 2003 – while ostensibly open to emerging theory and research refinement has for example been criticized (not least by many practitioners involved in programme delivery) of adopting a somewhat inflexible and simplistic approach to the way practice with perpetrators is carried out while paying less attention to how the complexities of personal change among domestic violence offenders, as with all offenders, should be understood.

As is now recognized, attention to theory and evidence in the wake of those evidence-based approaches which characterized probation interventions in the 1990s has shifted from a principal concern with 'what works' to questions about 'who works?', and 'what matters?'. Such questions have reminded us of the importance of the supervisor/supervisee relationship in addressing problems, providing support which probationers value and make sense of, and not least, facilitating personal change. The significance of relationship is consistently borne out in several studies, e.g. Burnett and McNeill (2005), Rex (1999); Trotter (2000, 2007), and

has re-ignited debate within probation and correctional services about the need for practitioners to be skilled in more than the mechanics of programme delivery.

Re-appraising the evidence / Re-building the base

Other findings from theory and research are contributing to a re-appraisal of the 'what works' paradigm and constitute something of a cautionary counterweight to the unremitting pressures on probation and other practitioners to deliver 'effective' outcomes economically. These include reflections upon the appropriateness of strengths-based as opposed to deficit-focused models in working with offenders, as well as to a re-appraisal of the processes and dynamics associated with personal change, and how these should be interpreted and applied in relation to offending behaviour. This latter interest in the relevance of *desistance theories*, while tentatively entering the mainstream of probation practice, has not yet merited much discussion in relation to what is often seen to be a particularly recalcitrant group, namely participants in domestic violence 'offender' programmes.

If McNeill asserts correctly in his reflections on a desistance paradigm for probation practice that 'what works' approaches 'begin in the wrong place, that is, they begin by thinking about how *practice* (whether 'treatment', 'help', or 'programme'), should be constructed without first thinking about how *change* should be understood' (McNeill, 2006: 45), then this certainly resonates as far as interventions with domestic violence offenders are concerned [*italics in original*].

The processes by which people might move towards sustained or 'secondary desistance' (see Maruna and LeBel, 2003) are to say the least difficult to predict. They are contingent on numerous variables, such as age, maturity, social bonds and networks, employment, identity, and the meaning which individuals and significant others attach to making changes in their lives. There is also the enormous influence of the social context in which people live, and, finally, factors of randomness and happenstance. Given the contentious nature of programmes already commented on and the risks involved for those affected by domestic violence and abuse, any concern to apply the lessons of McNeill's 'desistance paradigm' to work with the domestic violence perpetrator must proceed cautiously. However if we merely restrict our vision for perpetrator programmes to that which currently applies, no matter how laudable our concerns with issues of men's risk and the protection and safety of victims, we do little more than 'hold men accountable'. That is to say we 'name' men as the perpetrator whose criminal behaviour must be recognized but overlook the more substantial question of whether we should be addressing the possibility of transformative rather than merely pragmatic outcomes in developing our knowledge of practice with these men.

Programmes at the crossroads – Which way now?

It is important to acknowledge that what has been accomplished in the development of men's programmes in the UK over the past twenty years represents considerable

progress. The probation service ran 1200 domestic violence programmes in 2006–07 (NOMS, 2007), and there are approximately 36 agencies providing programmes in the independent or non-statutory sector (Respect,¹ personal communication, October 2009). At present programmes in both sectors in Scotland are very few although the statutory 'Caledonian Programme' has been accredited at the time of writing. Programmes have earned, or achieved a place at the table.

Despite this the future development of work with men via the medium of domestic violence programmes is at something of a crossroads in the UK. There are potential conflicts of interest, perspective and purpose among those currently involved in their delivery and application, which impact upon the way this work is developed, to whom it is entrusted, what its objectives should be, what constitutes ethical practice, and not least, what defines effectiveness.

The probation service has clearly become a major provider of programmes. Notwithstanding some difficulties around the funding of services for women victims and the integration of provision for men with services for women (HMIP, 2004), domestic violence perpetrator work is a significant probation activity. To some extent the probation service has been a victim of its own success and the progression of men from the courts onto the programmes subject to considerable delay. There are concerns however that these programmes are seen simply as another workaday activity for many officers, the major aim being the throughput of men and the completion of orders. This is a pragmatic rather than a transformative outcome.

The fact too that programmes have flourished in the probation service has not been mirrored in the non-statutory sector, – which was initially extremely influential in pioneering this work in the UK. While this constitutes a victory of sorts for those committed to programmes offering services only to men post-conviction, there remain very few other routes of referral through which men (and men who might potentially be more motivated to engage with programmes) can receive a service.

There is also an increasing divergence as to the aims of work with 'perpetrators', regarding both the philosophies concerning method and style of engagement as well as intended outcome. If the safety of women and children is the primary goal of this work, and one with which no-one could seriously argue, what does this say about those interventions which seek either to engage with men on issues around their own difficulties and issues, or seek to work with men (some of whom will be perpetrators), in groups or settings where violence is not the central aim of the engagement?

Finally those concerned with building and appraising theory which influences and reflects practice need to re-examine the hegemony of the prototypical 'power and control' model so prevalent in UK programmes. Currently there is within the practitioners' network of those delivering programmes an undercurrent of debate around the adequacy of just such a model. This seems irreconcilable with underlying issues which seem so often to be at the core of men's need not to feel *powerless*. However these discussions which are engaged in robustly among service providers in the USA are rarely addressed in the UK, one consequence being that therapeutically-oriented interventions are marginalized, or significantly, excluded from funding sources.

Dialogue is needed on whether it is sufficient in the light of emerging theory and research both on the nature of 'perpetrators' and on the efficacies of different methodologies, to engage with men as we do currently. The questions thus posed here are: What can be done in programmes to motivate and engage men and provide opportunities in their internal and external worlds which increase the possibilities and opportunities for desistance?

Creating the space for motivation, engagement and connection

The answers require us to address the issues of how programmes engage with, motivate and maximize the possibilities for men to 'comply', and thereafter take responsibility for their actions, address what are usually long held beliefs, and finally embrace the possibility of sustained personal change and (hopefully) some kind of comfort with oneself and even personal growth.

This requires programmes to accomplish the complicated act of balancing the confrontational (the holding to account) with the motivational. It lays stress on what thoughtful practitioners have known all along, that in order to engage with and begin to motivate a man it is necessary to acknowledge his individual circumstances, his life history and his perception of why he is abusive. In short it is necessary to hear his voice. It may well be that this voice is one which is difficult to listen to, but where this is simply drowned out, and the man presented with a template which 'brands' or labels him simply as a 'perpetrator', then his resistance to engagement is heightened from the outset. Practitioners have indicated (Morrán, 2006) that their experience of engaging with domestic violence offenders on programmes faces them with a quality of resistance to engagement quite unlike their other experiences. While it is distinctly possible that this is a characteristic of angry or ashamed or callous men themselves, resistance is also diminished or enhanced by the quality of the connection or relationship between the man and the worker. Those programmes which provide space to hear not just the man's account of his behaviour (which may be evasive and shameful) and which allow him to envision how life might be, through assessing his personal 'constructs' (Macrae and Andrew, 2000), considering a better 'quality of life' (Williams and Streat, 2005), or a 'good life' (Ward et al., 2007) report that resistance to engagement, which also has a toxic effect on others when brought into the group setting, exacerbating non-compliance and attrition, is much reduced when these are attended to (personal communications, Wolf-Light; Macrae and Andrew, 2000). This recognition of individualized approaches is of course a feature of desistance-focused practice.

Allied to this issue of responsivity is the question of whether programmes might pay more attention to approaches which value working with men from a strengths-based model (see Ward et al., 2007). While cognitive behavioural group-work methods are appropriate for much of the deconstruction of thoughts and feelings which are an essential part of engaging men, there is a concern that men need to have their strengths and qualities as individuals valued as well as deficits deconstructed. Ward reminds us in discussing the 'Good Lives' model that:

... attention needs to be paid to the language of treatment. Modern texts... consistently use language such as 'deficit', deviance, distortion, risk and prevention. All such words are associated with negative evaluations or negative expectancies. The... (good lives model)... is a positive model, based on the assumption that people are more likely to embrace positive change and personal development, and so the language... should be future-oriented, optimistic, and approach-goal focused. (Ward et al., 2007: 93)

Scourfield (2003) also reports that social work professionals who work routinely with child protection cases inevitably begin to see the men they deal with in a negative light and lapse into the use of pejorative terms when discussing them. While programme workers as professionals assumedly attempt to remain non-judgemental, it is often the case that programmes are engaged in deconstructing many of the qualities (i.e. 'deficits') associated with (particularly) working class masculinities. This process, particularly when engaged in by middle class men (or middle class women) is also one in which resistance to engagement occurs, and where attrition is fertilized. Workers need to listen to men more and remember when advising men that they 'choose' to be violent, that the term 'choice' can sound simplistic or even trite, to someone whose other choices, e.g. where to live, whether to work, how to locate and be accepted by, different, more positive, less criminalized peers, cannot always be exercised.

'Perpetrators' and 'batterers': Rethinking them and us

Further thought should be given to the concept of the perpetrator/victim dichotomy. While the term 'perpetrator' might be preferable to its US equivalent, 'the batterer', and while it does signal the fact that programmes are concerned with men's actions *upon* or *against* others, this should not blind us to the complex circularity in the lives of men who may themselves have been victims of abuse as children, or otherwise oppressed by patriarchal as well as myriad social factors.

This dichotomy has meant that in the UK the development of interventions with men is something which has become almost completely 'professionalized', as something imposed on the 'offending' group by the other 'non-offending' group. This sets up confusion for 'perpetrator' and professional alike, particularly when the wider goal of success is not about achieving primary desistance (stopping physical violence), but secondary desistance (essentially sustaining a pattern of and commitment to a way of living that is non-abusive), where the goal of the work is about a continual addressing of behaviour and attitudes. Professionalization has also limited responses to those delivered by technical 'experts' (either probation officers, psychologists or similar). This has been at the expense of the development of more organic approaches to work with men, approaches for example which seek to engage men as something other than either professional expert or perpetrator. There is very little tradition in the UK of using formerly violent men as advocates of change as is often done in the USA, Canada and Australia, for instance, where the value of the ex-user is widely recognized. There is virtually no role for what Maruna (2001) has termed the 'wounded healer', so important as a catalyst and

exemplar of personal reform, and recognizable in other fields as the 'recovering alcoholic', ex-addict or 'reformed man'.

Significantly fresh consideration has to be given to theoretical perspectives on which men's violence against women is based. Programmes as they currently operate in the UK have been hugely influenced by an unashamedly ideologically committed analysis of men's violence against women, namely that violence and abuse are tactics in a (usually conscious) strategy by which men establish and maintain power and control over women, and that men are conditioned and supported in this strategy by the individual, structural and cultural embodiments of patriarchy.

Influenced by a concern to protect victims and face offenders up to the consequences of their behaviour, programme content has been built upon a deconstruction of male socialization, a re-thinking of attitudes and values towards women and a development of cognitive/behavioural skills. What they have sometimes failed to engage with and build into their provision, however, is recognition of the messy and complex worlds of men who are abusive, and the confused (though nonetheless frightening and violent) set of contradictions they frequently are (Rees and Rivett, 2005). Equally overlooked is how men, in the light of having to continue to live in a patriarchal society, with few alternative role models existing as to alternative masculinities, will successfully accomplish the trajectory of personal change which extends beyond primary desistance – the stopping of physical violence, to accomplish the more transformative goal of secondary desistance, i.e. those forms of behaviour and attitudes towards self and others and the discovery of new meanings in one's life which signifies and reinforces a sustained commitment to change and growth.

Desistance factors and the 'domestic violence offender'

These questions and concerns lead us finally to a consideration of how we acknowledge the importance of those factors usually associated with desistance – the development of 'maturity', the influence of 'social bonds' (positive and negative), and the meaning attributed to past, present and future – as one establishes a 'life story' which allows for change, and apply these to the domestic violence offender, what we expect of him in terms of reform, and how we underpin that process of reform in our practice.

Maturation

For men who come onto domestic violence programmes (who tend on average to be older than others in more general offending programmes), the process of maturation is less likely to be found in factors to do with physical age, or such external manifestations of maturity as, for example, leaving home, obtaining a job, or commencing a relationship. Indeed as far as relationships are concerned, instead of this being a process in which the man 'settles down', it is more accurately the site in which those factors in his personal and social

development now motivate his numerous strategies to punish, control and humiliate the other, or in which he regresses, becoming variously infantile, needy, controlling and dangerous. Maturation in this context requires the man to be enabled to re-examine critically almost all the beliefs and expectations which he has grown up with, held onto, and invariably has had vindicated in his dealings with other men. Maturation also requires him to proceed beyond the extent to which he has been restricted in his development as a child, to face up to his abusiveness as something rooted in long term patterns of behaviour and strategies aimed at self gratification, if not 'preservation'. To engage in the process of maturation requires here an adult commitment to responsibility for oneself, and an equal commitment to sustaining that responsibility over the long term. As yet we have very little service provision for men which can sustain such a complex and concerted process. We have developed approaches which are in danger of overlooking the need to develop the offender's human capital, when we simply assume that this can be achieved by *skill development* (and reminding him of his deeds while downplaying his needs). Nor might we have much to offer in terms of helping him to develop the social capital which allows him to function as a different kind of man.

Social bonds

This older (and sometimes outwardly 'law-abiding') domestic violence offender may seemingly be bonded to work, mates, and (for better or worse) to his partner and (significantly) to his children. It is these latter two bonds which feature hugely and consistently in the motivations of men presenting at domestic violence programmes. It is clear that the trajectory of change, of becoming non-violent is bound up with these relationships or their absence in the man's life. Consequently the process of secondary desistance – that is living non-abusively, living positively – means that he must continually deal with, engage with or think about how he should conduct himself in relation to these others, either as partner, ex-partner, father, 'provider' or role model. Just as crucial for the desisting offender if real change is to take place, is how or whether to let go of, and how to function without, other hugely influential bonds in his life, namely those with other men, brothers, workmates, mates, or peers. In ignoring the need for men to experience support and meaning gained from new bonds in their lives, we ignore those central aspects of the 'system' that matters, namely the new structures and networks of support (the social capital) which the desisting man requires.

'Telling stories' or telling the story? Men's narratives

The significance of listening to narratives of change, of how it is accomplished, of how the narrator accounts, explains, or 'explains away' (his) involvement in offending, drug or alcohol abuse, etc. is a major feature of desistance literature. So too is the story of what is meaningful to someone in embarking upon a different course of behaviour and why change is now feels right for him. As far as the

domestic violence offender is concerned, however, a consistent view of commentators has been that men's accounts of behaviour change are usually dubious. Men, particularly when asked to provide accounts of their behaviour in programme outcomes studies have frequently been found to be evasive. In short, they are not to be trusted.

While one needs to be cautious about a (universal) tendency for individuals to maximize reports of positive change and minimize their potential for further negative behaviour, this does not mean that we should not hear men's endeavours to make sense of why they have behaved as they have done. While ensuring that we do not rely on men's accounts of what they may have learned in programmes as the definitive account of whether they are now safe, we will nevertheless continue to learn from men, what they have drawn from programmes, how their sense of themselves has altered, what they needed from others, and how they now find meaning in their lives, only by allowing their voices to be heard. Thus when men speak as they do, of having grown up with feelings of self hatred, of being isolated (as well as isolating), of being fearful of abandonment, we need to do something other than label these simply as self-serving or self-victimizing accounts. We can instead utilize these narratives to build into our practice with men, elements that are missing from our current provision. We can also hear something of how men now reflect upon issues which they have spent much of their lives trying to conceal. This provides us with insight and understanding of hitherto unexplored territory, and allows us opportunities to work at a more holistic level, with someone who is not 'other', not simply or simplistically a 'perpetrator' but a person.

There is a clear need in the UK to draw from models being applied to other areas of behaviour change. Currently domestic violence programmes continue largely to adhere to a risk/relapse model, where men are alerted to potential trigger situations and how to avoid them. There is little doubt that these acquired skills or 'interruptive techniques' (see Gondolf, 2002) are valuable and are consistently commended by men who have completed programmes. While these might be useful and important tools in themselves they provide only a partial reassurance that a man, if he is so-minded, might use them to avoid or divert himself from further violent or abusive conduct. The limitation of this risk/relapse model as Ward *et al.* (2007), have argued is that it limits our interventions to the teaching of skills. They have a reductionist approach to human behaviour, and do not engage sufficiently with men either on the question of how abusive behaviour has 'met their needs' (and what will do so from now on), nor on establishing the motivation to change.

We also understand that desistance necessitates one being afforded the opportunity to (re)construct an acceptable personal identity, one which allows a sense of purpose, fulfilment and growth. Most programmes in the UK now aim to work with men for a minimum period of approximately six months in programme contact with one-to-one provision made available both before and after. While this represents a substantial intervention, if we are to realistically consider what needs to be in place for desistance to 'take hold' then we need to aim to intervene both at the internal level (examining skills, beliefs, attitudes, self efficacy and so

on) as well as at the external, that is by either providing or signposting the opportunities, resources and networks of support which is necessary for a sustainable transition to be achieved.

Unfortunately too much of our intervention is premised on the former. The IDAP Theory Manual pays only passing attention to issue of follow-up work with men whereas almost all programme providers know this to be crucial. Unfortunately our intervention in these men's lives comes after the event. While policies are being developed to address issues such as gender inequality in the school, and public campaigns aimed at consciousness-raising are now increasingly common, there is as yet almost no provision aimed at 'recovery'. This may seem a problematic term when transposed from the medically influenced model of substance abuse from which it originates. There is evidence, however, that men who have been violent and abusive do need to recover, to move away from the unhealthy and damaging models of male behaviour which they have absorbed, and to learn not just the skills, but the values and attributes, the growth and development needed in order to live at peace with themselves and with others.

Note

1. Respect is the UK membership association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services. Respect's key focus is on increasing the safety of those experiencing domestic violence through promoting effective interventions with perpetrators. The Respect phone line is on 0845 122 8609.

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7

PROGRAMMES FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATORS

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Introduction

Group-work programmes for domestic violence perpetrators emerged in the UK in the early 1990s (Scourfield, 1995; Gadd, 2004). As in the United States, their development encountered considerable resistance from feminist activists committed to supporting female victims/survivors who suffered at the hands of such men. Early, somewhat equivocal evaluations of North American programmes (e.g. Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989; Edleson and Grusznski, 1989) fuelled their anxieties. Concerns were expressed that they held out an (unrealistic) hope for women that men would change as a consequence of attending them, and that, whereas organizations like Women's Aid had struggled to raise awareness of this problem (and the resources to address it), the dubious 'promise' of perpetrator programmes would overturn the nature of service provision, with refuge funding becoming subordinated to unproven interventions with violent, abusive men (Horley, 1990; Scourfield, 1995; Hague and Malos, 2005).

Despite these concerns perpetrator programmes evolved considerably from their origins in the non-statutory sector. They established an early foothold within Criminal Justice Social Work services in Scotland and have developed substantially over the last 15 years within the Probation Service in England and Wales. Throughout this period there have been a number of significant theoretical, pragmatic and policy influences which have shaped their trajectories and priorities in both statutory and non-statutory sectors. This chapter examines some of these influences. In doing so it explores why there has been a gradual shift from a systemically focused, risk-driven paradigm of practice to one that acknowledges

the heterogeneity of men on programmes, the various factors which may underpin or sustain their abusive behaviour and what may need to be in place to support men's desistance from abuse. Some examples of how practice has been re-appraised in order to engage more positively and achieve more sustainable outcomes for men on programmes, and consequently for those intimate others directly affected by their behaviour, is also considered.

Programmes for perpetrators: Early beginnings

Programmes for men who are violent and abusive in relationships (hereafter perpetrator programmes) originated in the United States in the 1980s. They varied considerably in their analyses of the causes of men's violence and abuse and their consequential practices with men (Pirog-Good and Stets Kealey, 1985). Situated in a 'therapeutic society' which perceived complex, cultural and political issues as psychological syndromes (Dobash and Dobash, 1992), many practitioners interpreted men's violence to partners as an individualized, often pathological problem. Its origins were said to lie in the childhood experiences of the men (for which they could not be held fully accountable), or otherwise explained as a problem of dysfunctional family systems which required that 'treatment' be focused on men and women alike, regardless of any power differential between the two. Explanations such as these set their protagonists, many of them participants in a factional and often disparate men's movement (Clatterbaugh, 1990), at odds with women activists who saw the problem of men's violence to women as profoundly social and indeed political.

Gradually, however, feminist perspectives on men's violence gained momentum and leverage, a consequence of social and political activism (Hague and Malos, 2005) and of research (e.g. Martin, 1976; Dobash and Dobash, 1979), which sought to illustrate the functional intent behind men's abuse in relationships. Psychotherapeutically influenced interventions were increasingly challenged by the alternative perspectives of interpretative and feminist researchers and practitioners working with this abuse (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). These perspectives underpinned the emergence of so-called pro-feminist programmes for abusive men which allied themselves with the women's movement, interpreted men's violence as functional – a consequence of patriarchal power and control – and as behaviour requiring criminal sanction. The most significant of these pro-feminist programmes was the model pioneered in Duluth, Minnesota, by Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar (Pence and Paymar, 1993).

The Duluth Model

This 'Duluth Model' has been hugely influential over the last 30 years in the way that interventions with men who are violent and abusive have been developed in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, (Bilby and Hatcher, 2004; Bowen, 2011; Gadd, 2004; Morran, 2011). Sometimes misinterpreted as a prescribed curriculum for engaging with violent and abusive men's behaviour, in fact the primary stipulation of the Duluth Model is that the 'men's programme' must be nested within a 'co-ordinated community response' to domestic violence; that is, it should not be a stand-alone intervention, merely one link in a chain of social and legal service provisions whose primary aim is the safety of women/survivors and children (Pence and Paymar, 1993). The second is that engagement with men should ideally form part of a criminal-justice response to men's violence, that is, where the man has been arrested, charged, brought before the court and required to attend the programme, with sanctions enacted if he fails to comply.

The content of the Duluth Men's Programme itself was firmly based on a feminist analysis, the essence of which was that men employed violence and abuse against women in order to establish and maintain power and control over them. They did so largely because their experience of growing up in a patriarchal society had reinforced their sense of entitlement to treat women as being there to do men's bidding. The Power and Control Wheel (App. 1) vividly illustrates this analysis and is a major learning tool used in the programme. While power and control is reinforced overtly through physical and sexual violence, even where the man does not routinely employ these behaviours, he can and will draw on a range of 'tactics of abuse' which allow him to control, intimidate and punish his partner (Pence and Paymar, 1993).

This emphasis on men being socially conditioned to believe they are entitled to behave in abusive ways is significant; it implies that violence is behaviour which is both *learned* and purposeful, (as opposed to 'essential' or pathological forces inside the man). Consequently, as men are capable of learning new skills, attitudes and behaviour, via the didactic educational approach of the programme, they can therefore choose to practise alternative behaviours premised on ideas of equality and partnership. The programme is less concerned with men's own interpretations or 'reasons' for their violence (often redefined as *excuses*) (see, e.g. also Bancroft, 2002), and more inclined to see issues such as men's personal and interpersonal insecurities, or exposure to violence as a child, as tangential factors underpinning their *choice* to be violent.

Will 'What Works?' work for perpetrator programmes?

For the Probation Service in England and Wales, interest in perpetrator programmes coincided with growing discussions on the role 'masculinity' played in offending behaviour (Senior and Woodhill, 1992; Jenkins, 1994; Newburn and Mair, 1996; Potts, 1996; Scourfield, 1998), and significantly, with renewed attention to 'evidence-based practice' and in particular the question of 'what works?' with offending behaviour.

The fallout from Martinson's 'Nothing Works' Report in 1974, and the readiness of politicians to seize on its apparent conclusions to criticize the Probation Service, has been extensively documented elsewhere (e.g. Raynor, 1985; Hollin, 1999; Mair, 2004), as has its impact upon the confidence of the Probation Service (at least at the level of management if less so in actual practice, see e.g. Robinson, 1999). Some resurgence of professional confidence was subsequently propelled, however, by Canadian research (e.g. Gendreau and Ross, 1987; Andrews 1995) and a series of academic and professional studies in the United Kingdom (e.g. McIvor, 1990; Hollin, 1995; McGuire, 1995). This body of work averred that 'effective' practice with offenders was most likely when interventions recognized the levels of risk presented by different types of offender, with intensity of provision allocated accordingly (usually in structured programme format), and offenders' (almost all of them incidentally, male offenders) cognitive skills and attitudes addressed. Successive 'What Works?' conferences throughout the 1990s examined the evidence base and explored lessons from pilot programmes (e.g. Knott, 1995; Roberts, 1995; Raynor and Vanstone, 1997). Frameworks to promote effective practice with offending populations were also proposed, most notably the Risk, Needs and Responsivity Model (Andrews, Bonta and Hoge, 1990).

Within this wider climate of academic and professional scrutiny, domestic violence perpetrator programmes such as that represented by the Duluth Model, with its structured group-work approach, utilization of cognitive-behavioural methods and, significantly, its stipulation that offenders accept personal responsibility for their behaviour, seemed broadly at least to sit alongside other programmes being concurrently developed and piloted in the United Kingdom for various types of offending populations (Mair, 2004; Gadd, 2004).

Official interest in their development was bolstered by the fact that two Scottish prototype programmes operating within a criminal justice context had been evaluated by a jointly funded Home and Scottish Office study, whose findings were broadly favourable, its authors concluding that, 'criminal justice based programmes, in contrast to men sanctioned in other ways, significantly reduced the prevalence and frequency of their

violence and significantly suppressed the range and frequency of their controlling and coercive behaviours' (Dobash et al., 1996, p. vii).

While reservations were expressed about methodological limitations of this comparatively small study (Mullender, 2001), this evaluation nevertheless provided encouragement for those whose experiences of engaging directly with male clients on this serious issue had been problematic (Scourfield, 1998), and several practitioners in both probation and voluntary sectors set up similar projects (Scourfield and Dobash, 1999; Gadd 2004). A number of domestic violence programmes flourished during the early 1990s (Scourfield, 1995), which, while influenced by a general set of pro-feminist principles and practices (Eadie and Knight, 2002), varied in the methods, procedures and practices adopted with abusive men (Scourfield and Dobash, 1999).

Standardizing practice: IDAP

Within Probation the initial enthusiasm of practitioners to work innovatively, however, was subsequently restricted by pressures upon management to develop programmes which were standardized and 'replicable' (see, e.g. Singh Bhui and Buchanan, 2004). Consequently, a centrally driven approach to practice with perpetrators (which management could regulate and routinely monitor) was developed. The more autonomous early probation programmes were superseded by two prototype models; the Community Domestic Violence Programme (CDVP), already partially implemented by a minority of Probation Trusts, and the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP), based substantially on the Duluth Model Programme and subsequently adopted by the majority of the Probation sector (Bowen, 2011). IDAP was duly assessed by the Joint Prison/Probation Accreditation Panel in 2003 and rolled out in England and Wales in 2006. By 2008, IDAP programmes were embedded in almost all of the 35 Probation Trusts.

As with the Probation Service's investment in cognitive-behaviourally influenced programmes more generally (see e.g. Mair, 2004), IDAP soon met with criticism, not least from practitioners with experience of programme delivery (Wolf-Light, 2006; Morran, 2008), that it imposed an inflexible, simplistic approach on how practice with perpetrators should be carried out, overlooking the complexities, characteristics and other prevailing problems in these individuals' lives. Additionally, the managerial practices favoured by New Labour imposed pressures on the Probation Service which resulted in a preoccupation with programme procedures, technicalities and completion targets, and less attention to how the

project of encouraging and facilitating personal change, the processes by which people desist from offending, might actually be achieved.

An important critique of IDAP's evidence base (and by implication that of Duluth) began increasingly to be voiced, namely that its analysis of men's violence being attributed to patriarchy was simplistic, not to say ideological (e.g. Dixon et al., 2011) and failed to take into account other potential contributory factors underpinning men's violence. David Gadd (2004) has argued, for example, that the reasons why the 'pro-feminist cognitive behavioural model' such as Duluth became the standard in the UK had little to do with being 'evidence-based', but instead conveniently met various needs and interests; the feminist critique of male abuse, the wider priorities and practices of criminal justice and probation systems, and the public's desire to see men punished.

Such a conflation of social policy, managerial and theoretical/ideological interests also overlooked such fundamental issues as the diversity of men on programmes (Gilchrist et al., 2003; Sartin et al., 2006), of what their own needs (criminogenic and otherwise) might be and of what personal change as men, the process of becoming non-abusive, might actually entail, and consequently of how practitioners ought to engage with them. As McNeill has observed elsewhere, a major problem of the 'what works?' paradigm is that it focuses on how practice ought to be constructed, instead of thinking about how the processes of personal change should be understood – 'the absence of a well-developed theory of how rehabilitation occurs is ... problematic.' (2006, p. 45).

Practitioners involved in the delivery of programmes readily observed, of course, that perpetrators' lives frequently involved entrenched difficulties and problems, and that while programmes might furnish them with some skills by which they could 'control' their use of abusive behaviour at home, they minimally equipped men to deal with other challenges and stresses in their lives (Bilby and Hatcher, 2004; Morran, 2006). Indeed, Gondolf (2002) in his significant (and cautiously positive) four-year evaluation of perpetrator programme outcomes had concluded that 'interruptive techniques', that is, 'Time Outs', were often the most that men (and successful completers of programmes at that) had learned; useful only if men chose to use them!

Criticisms were also levelled at the Probation Service (Eadie and Knight, 2002; Bilby and Hatcher, 2004) that practice often overlooked the interests of women or women's services and was therefore unsafe. Men seemed resistant to engage with programme staff, attrition rates were problematic (NOMS, 2008–9) and an anticipated evaluation of outcomes remained elusive (Gadd, 2007; Bowen, 2011). Probation-based practice with perpetrators was increasingly recognized as somewhat static and in need of

a substantial re-appraisal of how perpetrators were engaged with, of how possibilities for 'rehabilitation' (if such were possible!) envisaged and workers re-equipped for such a task.

Programmes in the non-statutory sector

Before this re-appraisal of probation practice is addressed, though, it is necessary to examine how interventions with perpetrators had evolved in the non-statutory sector, the other significant provider of programmes in the United Kingdom. While their number continues to fluctuate, not least due to the often problematic short-term nature of funding (Kelly and Westmarland, 2015), Respect, the 'UK association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated women's services', recently recorded 38 programmes operating throughout the country (Respect, 2015).

With origins lying in what Gadd, (2004, p. 174) has described as 'the idiosyncratic preserve of ... psychotherapists and anti-sexist activists', the importance of the non-statutory sector to the development of practice with perpetrators in the United Kingdom has been substantial. The term 'non-statutory' may be misleading, however. Indeed from Gadd's allegedly 'idiosyncratic' beginnings, many such programmes currently engage with men not only on a voluntary basis; increasingly programmes include various combinations of men required to attend or referred by agencies such as Children's Social Work Services or (in England) the Children and Family Court Advisory Service (CAFCASS). The responsibilities and expectations imposed upon programme providers as these partnerships have been pursued, especially concerns in relation to monitoring perpetrators' risk and maximizing children's safety, have been considerable.

The National Practitioners' Network and the Respect Standard

Significant also to the development of programmes was the formation in the early 1990s of the so-called National Practitioners' Network. The NPN (which also included many probation officers) met twice-yearly for almost 20 years with the aim of supporting and developing work with abusive men, enabling discussion and debate and, importantly, forging partnerships and alliances with organizations involved in providing services to victims/survivors of violence. Committed to providing a 'ground-up' experience, its meetings were characterized by an ad-hoc, egalitarian atmosphere. Gradually, working groups of programme practitioners, influenced

by and closely associated with victim/survivor advocates and interests, began developing successive 'Statements of Principles and Minimum Standards of Practice for Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Women's Services', that is, victim/partner services (e.g. 1995, 2000, 2004). Following discussions that the membership should form a representative organization, 'Respect' was officially launched in London in March 2001.

As Respect strove to promote practice whose primary stated aim was to increase the safety of women and children, the *Guidelines* which constituted the Statement of Principles were superseded by the more formal (and therefore binding) Respect Accreditation Standard (Respect, 2006; subsequent versions, 2008, 2011, 2012). The development of the Standard caused considerable discussion and some tension among some of the Respect membership, arousing concern, for example that the Standard might become overly prescriptive, thereby influencing, that is, *restricting*, the ownership or development of innovative practice in programmes.

It is important to note that Respect has consistently refuted such concerns (see e.g. Debonnaire, 2012) and sequential versions of the Respect Standard (2006, 2008, 2012) stipulate that the system of accreditation is not aimed at prescribing one specific model of provision, but is instead concerned with providing a strong framework where many different approaches and models can be effectively used. The priority of the Standard significantly has been, and remains, concerned with establishing *systems of delivery* 'so that members of the public, funders, commissioning agencies and other professionals can be assured of a high quality and safety-focused service from organisations that achieve accreditation', (Respect, 2006). Most important among the 'other professionals' are those providing services for victim/survivors and their children. In 2007, Respect (after membership consultation) began the process of 'accrediting' those of its member organizations which satisfied the requirements of the Standard, stating unequivocally that the minimum unit considered for accreditation would consist of a programme working with perpetrators of domestic violence (DVPP) and an Integrated Support Service for partners. 'Organisations running a DVPP without an ISS cannot be considered for accreditation as they are unsafe and will automatically fail' (Respect, 2008, p. 2).

Respect's aims were in this respect therefore laudable. Its prioritization of the safety-focused interests of partners and children, and the need to develop strategic alliances with feminist organizations such as Women's Aid and other agencies providing support to victim/survivors and children are entirely appropriate. However, these important pragmatic priorities arguably had the side effect of subordinating discussions around the evolving theory and practice base of work with abusive and violent men, particularly those applying to various strengths-based and desistance-oriented approaches which increasingly questioned the Duluth Model.

Before examining these approaches, however, it is worthwhile noting in passing that Respect's attention to the importance of systems was also influenced by the findings of the most substantial evaluation (thus far) of perpetrator programmes, conducted by Ed Gondolf and colleagues in the United States (2002). Gondolf, the keynote speaker at Respect's First Annual Conference in London (2004), had produced a generally positive evaluation of four US 'batterer' programmes. Significantly, however, he concluded it was 'the system which matters':

Our findings ... suggest the need for more system development. ... The emphasis on system development contrasts with the heightened attention on new counselling approaches and innovations. (Gondolf, 2002, p. 199)

In this environment it is perhaps not difficult to see how some of the more independently minded practitioners (particularly those whose motivations were primarily driven by their interest in working with *men*; see Morran, 2008) who had helped pioneer work in this innovative area became subdued by these other cautious, systemic priorities.

As with probation practice, therefore, though for different tactical and strategic interests, the non-statutory sector formally privileged procedural, risk-driven approaches in which the possibilities for alternative, reflective and (dare one say) optimistic practice with perpetrators was (at least formally and publicly) somewhat circumscribed.

Risk assessment and risk management

This is not to suggest that practitioners (even, perhaps especially, optimistic practitioners) ought to overlook the very real risks which perpetrators present to others. For several reasons, including the fact that our understanding of risk around domestic violence and abuse is yet in need of substantial development (Kropp, 2004; Bowen, 2011) and that many programmes work with mixed populations of perpetrators, whose needs and risks vary considerably (see Gilchrist et al., 2003) the Risk, Needs, Responsivity model is not immediately transferable to practice with domestic violence offenders/perpetrators. However, instruments to conduct risk assessments with such perpetrators are widely used and include the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide (SARA) (Kropp et al., 1995) – (subsequently updated) within the Probation sector – and the adapted CAADA DASH RIC Scale (2012) adapted by Respect (2012). Both are best described as checklists of risk factors, which, as Kropp (1995, p. 3) notes in relation to SARA, ensure 'that pertinent information is considered and weighed by evaluators'.

It is not intended to discuss the technicalities of either tool here other than to note that neither requires assessments of inordinate complexity, and both have been devised for use by a wide range of practitioners. Their importance lies in how they impact on practice once risk has been initially – and continuously – assessed. What is consistent concerning both instruments is the emphasis placed on detailed information-gathering, including, crucially and where possible, information provided by the victim/survivor, and significantly the nature and processes of information-sharing in order to comprehensively assess, address and manage ongoing issues of risk. Of relevance here is the fact that it has also been noted that an equally essential element of risk management and reduction is the necessity of working with perpetrators from the outset in such a way that actively engages, motivates and retains them (see e.g. Newman, 2010; Kerr, 2015, personal communication).

Beyond systems: “New counselling approaches and innovations?”

Having stated unequivocally that processes for risk assessment and management are requisite components of good practice, it is now appropriate to give further consideration to what might be needed as far as practice with perpetrators is concerned; attention focuses beyond risk to envisage what a more holistic and meaningful engagement with men might entail.

Here it might be worth noting that Gondolf's privileging of systems over what might be taken as a less than enthusiastic reference to 'heightened attention on new counselling approaches and innovations' actually positions him on one side of an occasionally rancorous and somewhat polarizing debate in the United States between those, like himself, who broadly favour the 'traditional', that is, feminist-inspired Duluth Model (which allegedly adheres to a somewhat homogenous view of abusive men as controlling patriarchs) and others who interpret the reasons underlying men's abuse as being multifactorial and who advocate engaging with men through more nuanced, therapeutic and significantly 'evidence-based', as opposed to didactic and apparently ideological, approaches.

In a somewhat polemical text published in the United States in 2009, editors Peter Lehmann and Catherine Simmons strongly argue the need for a paradigm shift as far as the state of perpetrator programmes is concerned (Lehmann and Simmons, 2009; Simmons and Lehmann, 2009). They consider that the Duluth model and its 'associated feminist philosophy' have had a 'stranglehold' on programmes. Despite evidence that they have been largely ineffective, they argue, the political and philosophical

dogmas associated with the Duluth Model have ridden roughshod over alternative theories, approaches and empirical findings concerning the causes of intimate partner violence, and consequently of alternative, more positive approaches to working with perpetrators.

Various contributors to this volume, practitioners and academics thereafter describe several strengths-based approaches, some drawn from practice with other offending or 'problematic' service user groups and some piloted with domestic violence perpetrators. The principles of these approaches can be summed up as follows. Interventions should adopt a helping, therapeutic rather than didactic approach, be characterized by empathy, recognize individuality and resist a one-size-fits-all perspective. The client should be met where he is and have his own emotions and strengths recognized rather than his weaknesses and past mistakes constantly revisited, thus fostering shame and disengagement. Lehman and Simmons note that all of the approaches described are drawn from empirically supported therapeutic principles and techniques of behaviour change in other fields. Although they concede that the various approaches outlined, while promising, have still to provide significant evaluations of their applications to this particular field, they argue that the Duluth model is itself 'largely ineffective' (2009, p. xiii) in large measure because it ignores these very principles they describe.

Old lessons for new practice: Beyond the risk paradigm

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, where there is less evidence of a turf war and a somewhat more moderate tone, those interested in 'new ... approaches and innovations' have paid attention to the wider criminal-justice and criminological interest in concepts of desistance and 'desistance-focused' practice. Such practice pays particular attention to the dynamics and processes of personal change, to the significance of the therapeutic relationship (Burnett and McNeill, 2005; McNeill, 2006; Rex, 1999; Trotter, 2000, 2007), to how individual life factors and characteristics are acknowledged by practitioners and to the internal and external resources which have to be available in order to commence and sustain a desisting process or journey (Farrall, 2002).

Here, as in the United States, it has been suggested that the Duluth-influenced IDAP model has adopted a somewhat simplistic one-size-fits-all approach to practice with perpetrators that has overlooked their diversity (Gadd, 2004; Bowen, 2011) and the complexities of how

personal change among perpetrators might better be conceived and enabled (Morran, 2011).

Research concerned more with questions of ‘what matters?’ rather than the technically-focused ‘what works?’ has reminded us of the importance of the professional relationship in engaging and motivating service users. In this context, it is suggested that earlier approaches in perpetrator programmes, influenced partly by research which found men’s accounts of change to be spurious or evasive (see e.g. Cavanagh et al., 2001), often failed to acknowledge the confusing complexities of men’s lives. Such approaches engaged with men almost entirely in terms of their abusive behaviour (behaviour, to be sure, which requires addressing) but in the process focused on men’s negative, deficit characteristics and qualities (Langlands et al., 2009; Morran, 2011), significantly ignoring the various competencies and strengths which many men possess and which might be harnessed more actively to encourage changes in behaviour.

No surprise perhaps that men have often been resistant to co-operating in a process of self-examination where recognition of other more positive parts of their lives seemed of relatively little interest to the practitioner, concerned (appropriately) with the issue of the safety of the men’s partners or children. Such concern, however, should not allow practitioners to forget that to engage meaningfully with the man is to begin the very process of risk reduction from the initial point of contact.

This then leads to the question of how, given the ineffectiveness of existing models, practice which takes account of risk but is also mindful of men’s own strengths and goals has been reflected upon and developed in the UK context.

Shifting perceptions of working with perpetrators as men

It is useful to remember that what actually occurs in practice is often quite different from that which policymakers prescribe, managers oversee and academics endeavour to critique or evaluate. In this respect the demise of the Practitioners Network due to cost factors has constituted a lost opportunity for practitioners to reflect on how they actually practice and how this compares with prevailing public narratives, that is, the systemic preoccupation with IDAP for Probation and the Accreditation Standard for Respect.

Several practitioners, however, have (like their academic counterparts) written reflectively about practice, not least in Respect’s own newsletter.

Thus in 2006, Wolf-Light discusses how one organization 'examined and amended' their original Duluth template, stressing the need for an emotional engagement with its participants so as to understand their 'world' and provide a re-analysis of the defences which men so often put forward, seeing them not just as techniques of denial (in which 'these' men excel, and moreover employ as yet a further technique of abuse – see e.g. Cavanagh et al., 2001) but instead as patterns of behaviour, beliefs and attitudes which individuals develop in order to avoid experiencing certain types of emotional discomfort (Wolf-Light, 2006, p. 10) – the type of discomfort created by an overtly 'challenging' facilitator perhaps? (See e.g. Morran, 2008.)

Macrae and Andrew (2000), working with men referred to their programme by the courts, discuss reconciling some of the polarity which they observed between the 'criminal-justice versus therapy dichotomy', emphasizing the challenge of developing practice which, while not collusive with men's violence and which holds men accountable for their behaviour, is nevertheless committed to engaging with men effectively in a process of change. Adhering to a pro-feminist approach 'does not remove the need to *listen* to each man or to ask "why is *this* man abusive?"' (2000, p. 31; italics in original). They then describe the process of engaging with the man's 'personal constructs' to explore how he conceives of his world now, but significantly of how he conceives of a future, alternative world, one in which he is non-violent and in which he feels positive, valued and of value in himself.

Similarly, the present author on the basis of numerous conversations with practitioners has commented (Morran, 2011) on how they have increasingly seen the value in providing space to hear not just the man's account of his behaviour (which may be evasive and shameful) but to allow him also to envision how life might be. These practitioners have noted that men's resistance to engagement is much reduced when they are *heard* and that men's own perceptions of why and how they act are essential to any process of their meaningful engagement with programmes.

Approaches that overlook these essential practices limit interventions to the teaching of skills at best. Their reductionist approach means that they neither connect with men on the core issues of how and in what ways their abusive behaviour has previously met their needs (and crucially how will they meet them or otherwise address them from now on) nor on establishing much motivation to change. In a recently published study (Morran, 2013), which involved interviewing 'successful completers' of two perpetrator programmes, the importance of being *listened to* (and challenged) and of being seen as someone with positive qualities comes across forcefully in men's accounts of desistance.

Looking into the future ...?

In the United Kingdom, strengths-based, solution-focused, future-oriented models have featured in those informal discussions in the NPN but have also shaped official, strategic interest in their implementation. By 2009, for example, the NOMS Lead for Prison and Probation Domestic Abuse Programmes was arguing the need for a new domestic violence programme incorporating more contemporary ideas 'including ... a ... multifactorial explanation for domestic violence'... a 'strengths-based approach using "Good Lives" principles, the use of principles/approaches associated with Narrative Therapy... and optional ... modules to address specific, individual areas of concern, e.g. alcohol abuse' (Weatherstone, 2010). These principles were substantially incorporated into the 'Building Better Relationships Model', which since 2012 has replaced the earlier IDAP Model. The BBR is at the time of writing being implemented widely throughout England and Wales, and although its effectiveness is yet to be determined, anecdotal evidence suggests that the level of resistance by men previously encountered in the delivery of IDAP is much less in evidence and that it seems to 'make more sense' to perpetrator and practitioner alike (personal communication, Nesbit, 2015).

In Scotland the Caledonian System, an 'integrated approach to address men's domestic violence and to improve the lives of women, children and men' (formally accredited by the Scottish Accreditation Panel for Offending Programmes in 2009), stresses the need for a systemic approach in which direct work done with the men who perpetrate violence is only one aspect of an overall, integrated service. Discussing the processes underlying the thinking of its various authors (all of them experienced practitioners in perpetrator, partner or children's work), one of them (Macrae, 2014) makes a number of salient points about how the principles influencing the philosophy of practice with men had evolved out of their experience. He realizes that simply to describe the purpose of the System as 'increasing women and children's safety' was in itself inadequate, recognizing from the many men they had worked with the essential *unhappiness* (italics added) of the men concerned and the need to acknowledge this as being key to engaging with them. He and his colleagues increasingly had come to see their practice being explicitly concerned with improving the quality of men's own lives as well as those of the partners and children who had been damaged by the men's behaviour. Acknowledging a history of being 'steeped in pro-feminist programmes', he recognizes the shortcomings of practice in which men's strengths had often been overlooked. Approaches to practice which were more focused on positive, strengths-based principles had therefore been embedded within the Caledonian System. At the

time of writing, the Caledonian is currently running in approximately one-third of Scotland's local authority areas and will shortly undergo the process of evaluation.

More recently still, other experienced practitioners in this field who have been afforded opportunities to re-envision or redesign their approaches, such as the HELP Programme in Merseyside and the Positive Pathways motivational programme in Tyneside, have spoken to this author during the course of the writing of this chapter. They have commented positively on early evidence noting men's increased engagement with programmes; men have appreciated not being judged and having someone believe in them as individuals. Practitioners have also reflected on the need to start from where the men are, not from a predetermined explanation into which men are expected to fit, (personal communications, Cook, 2015; Nesbit, 2015).

As with the strengths-based approaches advocated by Lehmann and Simmons (2009) in the United States, these person-centred, individualized, desistance-focused approaches need to be vindicated by demonstrating that they are effective. What is significant, however, is that they have all resulted from sustained discussions and reflections on the part of practitioners, academics and researchers who have addressed the questions of *how* change works as well as for whom, in what circumstances and what needs to exist beyond the individual to support that change. What is also known, however, from the evidence from those who desist is that the processes involved take time and rely on the internal motivations, strengths and skills which individuals bring to the process, and the environments, supportive and otherwise, in which they live. Of the various other factors that may be necessary to this process, the importance of the practitioner in conveying a sense of respect, of hopefulness and a sense that change is achievable is paramount.

The following observations from a small study looking at how men negotiate the processes of desistance from violence and abuse illustrate these points succinctly and poignantly (see Morran, 2013).

Mark speaks of how his fears about how he would be regarded when he came onto a programme were proven wrong.

I can remember ... very well ... what kept me there, there was a gain for me. And also, you know, the sensitivity in which the work was carried out in the fact of not demonising me and not making me feel toxic shame, so where I'm rotten to the core, you know? It enabled me to look at what I was doing ... and say, 'Yeah this needs to change, this isn't right and clearly it's not working for you or anybody else', but actually there are other areas in your life which are clearly functioning okay ... as a basis for giving me some self-esteem ... something that I felt I never had.

Sean speaks of how the programme taught him not only how to 'defuse' everyday situations but also about how he had gone from being

a coward, a bully ... a little man with a chip on his shoulder

to what he is now:

I think what it (the programme) has made me is a man, but a proper man, which may sound a bit dramatic, you know, a man with feelings and concerned for other people's feelings ... I'm a man now with a heart—that's what it's made me.

Both of these men, incidentally, still frequented the programmes which they had ostensibly completed several years previously. Their commitment to desisting from their past use of violence was in considerable part a testament to the importance of the faith of others that these men were capable of change, had the skills, strengths and courage to do so, as well as of a growing awareness and recognition within the men themselves that they were worthy of such investment.

Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that perpetrator programmes have, since their emergence both in the United States and the United Kingdom, been contested projects, shaped by a number of ideological or theoretical, pragmatic and other constraints. The first of those was how the problem should be named: transformed from one of 'abused wives' to that of 'violent men' (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). This in turn gave rise to debates around how work with perpetrators should be envisaged and practised, and to the public 'outing' of the 'batterer'. It is, at least from a UK perspective, perhaps rather startling that Lehmann and Simmons' (2009) critique of Duluth should nevertheless be entitled 'Strengths-Based Batterer Intervention'. While naming both the term and the behaviour 'battering' reflects the political struggle by various elements of the women's movement over three decades, the continual references in almost all the US academic literature to 'the batterer' indicates the tentative path which has to be trod by those who would engage with such an individual by paying him heed (for it is invariably 'him') and seeking out his qualities and strengths.

Various other constraints upon the articulation of practice have been mentioned in this chapter, including the subjection of flexible practice experienced within the Probation Service by the demands of

'accountability' from successive governments and the need for 'replicability' by management in order to achieve 'respectability' by researchers and inspectors. A combination of similar systemic priorities has also been at the forefront of the accreditation agenda pursued in the United Kingdom by Respect. This has been important to sustain alliances with women's organizations, affirming that it is a serious organization which is mindful of the risk inherent in all practice with violent and abusive men.

Vital to the emergence of our current knowledge concerning interpersonal violence (which is constantly changing) have been the voices of women. Those voices need to be heard and heeded. It is also the case, though, that the voices and experiences of others have sought to articulate complicated challenging arguments and viewpoints. In this chapter, it has been suggested that practice with men's abusive behaviour has been shaped by structural discourses which have discouraged the optimistic, even naïve, voice of the practitioner who looks for strengths and qualities in difficult places. Here, the voices of some of these practitioners seem consistently and persistently to say that if we do not listen in turn to where our 'batterer' or 'perpetrator' begins to tell us his difficult, blaming, self-justifying, confused, frightening and fear-filled story, we all fail to move forward from the risk-filled present to a difficult, challenging, but ultimately more worthwhile and safer future.

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The Howard Journal Vol 52 No 3, July 2013
ISSN 0265-5527, pp. 306–320

DOI: 10.1111/hojo.12016

Desisting from Domestic Abuse: Influences, Patterns and Processes in the Lives of Formerly Abusive Men

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Abstract: This article argues that domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK have paid insufficient attention to how perpetrators actually desist from abusive behaviour in the long term. It draws on evidence from a 2010 study which investigated how a sample of men accomplished desistance from abusive behaviour. It reveals that even men committed to desistance may require programmes to support them over a period of several years, and confirms that desistance is best understood as a process and not an outcome. The article concludes that these men's experiences underline the need for interventions to be substantially more desistance-focused than they are at present.

Keywords: domestic violence; domestic abuse; domestic violence perpetrator; perpetrator programmes; desistance; desistance-focused intervention; behaviour change

The most comprehensive investigation conducted thus far into the outcomes of men's domestic violence perpetrator programmes (Gondolf 2002), followed 840 male participants and their partners over a four-year period (a substantially longer time frame than other evaluations). While Gondolf's study focused on whether men's violent behaviour stopped or decreased as a consequence of programme participation, it shed little light on the wider dynamics in men's lives which impacted positively or negatively on their behaviour and capacity to change. While several studies have considered what men have actually learned in programmes (Dobash *et al.* 1996; Bowen, Gilchrist and Beech 2005), little attention has been paid to the wider context of their lives and the 'journeys' by which men desist from violent or abusive behaviour once formal completion of the programme has been achieved.

The effectiveness of perpetrator programmes remains contentious. Researchers have, nevertheless, often concurred in being sceptical about

the extent to which one particular source of evidence, perpetrators' own accounts of behaviour and attitude change, can be considered reliable. By contrast, the observations of men's partners, it has been argued, provide a more 'accurate' picture of whether, or how, men have changed as a consequence of participating in programmes (Dutton and Hemphill 1992; Dobash and Dobash 1998). Indeed, some have suggested that men's testimonies of positive personal change may even constitute ongoing tactics of abuse, characterised as they seem to be, by denial, minimisation and self-justification (Cavanagh *et al.* 2001).

Caution is necessary when listening to men who have been abusive (and deceitful) in the past. They may have a self-interest in presenting themselves as 'reformed', and a tendency to portray themselves in a more favourable light than is justified. However, while men's accounts may sometimes, indeed, be evasive, if these are simply dismissed as innately spurious or misleading, opportunities will also be missed in understanding how men actually make sense to themselves and others of why they have behaved abusively in the past, and of how they think, feel and act in the present. Moreover, important information may be lost as to why, and how, those men who *are* engaging in genuine processes of personal change do so, and what helps motivate and sustain them. Through listening to men's narratives it may also be possible to discern, not merely their deficits but their strengths, and crucially, learn more about what men need, not simply to desist from negative, harmful behaviour, but to live more positive lives which sustain personal change and growth.

By paying increased attention to men's perceptions, the potential is established for interventions with abusive men to be more personalised, compared with the somewhat standardised 'Duluth model' programmes which have largely prevailed in the UK thus far (Bowen 2011). This model utilises a feminist perspective on men's violence against women. The core ethos of such 'pro-feminist cognitive behavioural' programmes (Gadd 2004), focuses on men's skills deficits, but primarily 'educate(s) and challenge(s) men regarding . . . sexist expectations and controlling behaviour' (Stordeur and Stille 1989, p.32). In brief, the Duluth model programme regards men's violence and oppression largely as a consequence of patriarchal conditioning. It is not greatly concerned with men's underlying issues; indeed, its protagonists are, arguably, at loggerheads with those (particularly in the USA) who advocate the need for more therapeutic interventions with men (see, for example, Wallace and Nosko (2003); Dutton and Sonkin (2003)).

Increasingly, a number of practitioners and researchers have argued that the questionable effectiveness of Duluth model programmes may be a consequence of failing to engage meaningfully with men by discounting the complexities of their lives (Milner 2004; Lehmann and Simmons 2009), dismissing the meaning that violence holds for men themselves (Gadd 2004) and, as with offender programmes more generally, overlooking the wider social contexts of people's lives (Farrall 2002; McCulloch 2005).

The Study

Previous research exploring the experiences of criminal justice social workers delivering perpetrator programmes in Scotland (Morran 2006), concluded that many programme participants had only minimally absorbed elements of the programme by the time they had completed court orders requiring them to attend. They frequently lived in communities where few, if any, networks existed to support them in implementing even the more basic lessons from programmes. It was also apparent that many faced substantial personal and social problems, which, while they did not excuse their responsibility for their violence, certainly impacted upon their ability to sustain behaviour conducive to personal stability, responsibility and personal change.

Consequently, the present study focused on what processes and experiences might be involved for men who had completed programmes, acknowledged their violence and abuse, and could be described as ‘non-violent’. Interviews were conducted with eleven men who had ‘voluntarily’ attended and ‘successfully completed’ one of two UK domestic violence perpetrator programmes, one in the north of England and one in the south. They ranged in age from 37 to 59 years, most being in their 30s and early 40s. One man was of Afro-Caribbean origin, the rest were white. Nine were in employment and all described themselves as ‘working class’. All had children to present or previous partners; two currently lived alone. The men had completed programmes between two and seven years previously; five years being the average period since ‘completion’.

The aim of the study was to speak to men ‘who have attended programmes . . . and have made substantial changes to their behaviour, namely that they can be described as non-violent’ (taken from the letter which was sent to agencies, seeking access and stating the purpose of the research). Sources of supportive evidence included worker knowledge of the men, recent or ongoing contact with men’s partners by an agency representative, or direct contact with partners (if appropriate). Participants were recommended by key programme personnel as ‘a successful completer’ of the programme. In addition to the eleven men interviewed, I spoke directly to four women partners, three by telephone. However the data analysed here draw almost entirely on the accounts provided by the men themselves. It is also important to acknowledge that the findings of the study are limited, inasmuch as they concentrate on a small sample of men who have ‘successfully completed’ perpetrator programmes, and given the absence of comparable accounts by non-completers, cannot be generalised to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes *per se*.

The study was influenced both by wider theoretical and research literature on recovery/desistance from alcohol and substance misuse (for example, O’Reilly 1997) and on desistance from offending more generally. I wished to explore how the development of personal maturity (Jamieson, McIvor and Murray 1999), responsibility or ‘agency’ (Sampson and Laub 1993), consequent or associated changes in social bonds and networks

(Biernacki 1986; Farrall 2002), and the narratives by which ‘offenders’ made sense of past and present behaviour (Maruna 2001), applied to men who had perpetrated violence and abuse in the past.

I was specifically interested in what these men’s experiences had been of attending a programme, of the techniques and concepts they had found useful, of what they had learned about themselves, and why they believed they had been violent or abusive. I wanted to explore what other problems men had faced in their lives, and whether they considered that these had played some part in their violence and abuse. I was interested in the personal and social context of men’s lives, how they defined personal priorities previously and presently, about networks and supports available to them, and of how they dealt with everyday experiences and challenges.

What Men Thought was at the Root of their Violence

The men had attended perpetrator programme(s) which adhered broadly to a feminist perspective on the nature and purpose of violence and abusive behaviour, namely that men receive socially-endorsed messages as to their entitlement to control and chastise women. I was aware, though, that programme workers here, as elsewhere (for example, Macrae and Andrew 2000; Rees and Rivett 2005), researchers (for example, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart 1994; Gondolf 2002; Bowen, Gilchrist and Beech 2005) and other informed commentators (for example, Gadd 2002, 2003; Fisher 2011), had acknowledged that such men often experienced other problems which might manifest themselves in behaviour harmful to themselves and/or their partners and families. It was crucial, therefore, to ask those in this sample what they themselves thought lay at the root of their violence.

All referred to the influence of powerful patriarchal attitudes and beliefs which they had absorbed, or been subjected to, when growing up, and of the part these played in terms of learning ‘how to be a man’, of this being ‘the way things were’. The significance of violence being a currency to resolve problems or enacted to achieve ‘masculinity’ (for example, Newburn and Stanko 1994; Collier 1998), seemed evident in many of their lives. Unquestioning attitudes such as these, often extended (Dobash and Dobash 1979; Bancroft and Silverman 2002) into expectations which they brought into their relationships with partners.

Experiencing ‘anger’, or ‘anger and resentment’ was specifically referred to by ten men. However, it was difficult not to interpret anger as the presenting emotion arising from other troubles in their lives (see, for example, Real 1997). Referring to himself as a ‘walking time-bomb in the past’, Derek¹ seemed to be experiencing grief when he spoke of being undervalued by his parents, and a loss of purpose when he ‘agreed’ to come out of the Army – which ‘had meant everything’ to him. Unfeeling parents and childhoods characterised by abuse, emotional coldness and cruelty, featured consistently in several of these men’s recollections. Alan

struggled to make sense of the anger he continued to feel, mostly in his workplace, although he now recognised that he could ‘exercise choice’ as to how he behaved when angry, and could ‘defuse situations, before they get out of hand’.

What emerged consistently in the men’s reflections was the extent to which they acknowledged that their behaviour had been underpinned by a ‘need’ to control their partners. While coercive control of partners is a widely-recognised phenomenon in the literature on domestic violence (for example, Pence and Paymar 1993; Stark 2007), it seemed important to explore what this ‘need’ meant for these men themselves, and the function it served in their lives.

As with anger, it was evident that some men still grappled with why the need for control seemed so important. For some, it seemed sufficient simply to recognise this as an ongoing issue in their lives, be alert to its recurring presence, and have a series of tools and supports to draw on when necessary. They relied heavily on ‘interruptive techniques’, such as taking a ‘time out’ from situations where they may become aggressive, which Gondolf (2002) noted, was often the principal learning achieved by men on programmes. In terms of the desistance process, these men appeared to be negotiating what Maruna (2001) has termed ‘primary desistance’, that is, a gap or lull in their pattern of abuse (even of several years in some cases), but were still very much engaged in work-in-progress as far as ‘secondary desistance’, the ‘assumption of the role or identity of a “changed person”’ (McNeill and Maruna 2007, p.226) was concerned.

Over half the sample reflected upon their experiences as children where ‘witnessing abuse, being shamed as a child and experiencing either cruelty or unpredictable emotional availability’ – the basis of what Dutton (1998, p.viii) has termed ‘the abusive personality’ – came through consistently. Low self-worth, indeed self-loathing, was frequently a significant factor in their sense of themselves as men.

Terms like ‘being scared of my own feelings’ and ‘insecurity’ characterised the narratives men employed to make sense of their past abusive behaviour. The controlling of others (exacerbated by assumed social expectations as to a gendered sense of entitlement) (for example, Connell 1987, p.183), seemed to offset a sense of fear, vulnerability and inadequacy in their own lives, a point recurrently made by practitioners and commentators in the field of perpetrator work (see, for example, Wolf-Light 2009; Macrae and Andrew 2000; Wallace and Nosko 2003; Dutton and Sonkin 2003):

I think that my violence . . . sustained an inflated version of myself. Otherwise I would feel worthless . . . where I’m rotten to the core, you know, [the programme] enabled me to look at what I was doing and my behaviour and say ‘yeah, this needs to change’, . . . (and enabled) . . . me to look at other areas in . . . life which are functioning okay as a basis for self esteem, which is something I felt I never had, I felt rotten to the core, deep down that’s what I felt. Does that make sense? (Andrew: eight years after commencing a programme)

Learning about Oneself

All the men had learned more about themselves *as men* through participating in the programmes. As commentators on masculinities have noted (for example, Busfield 1996; Pease 2001), and as these men confirmed, a significant area of learning was that they had been closed off to their internal lives and had struggled to realise that they were human beings with feelings. Many seemed to have been a mystery to themselves before entering the programmes. Mark 'felt that everyone else was to blame for his problems', and that he wasn't aware of how his emotions impacted upon his behaviour. A turning point for him had involved the development of a sense of personal 'agency' – that is, becoming more active in taking responsibility for (his) life (see, for example, Maruna 2001) when he 'stopped looking at *situations*, and started looking at *me* and discovered who I am'.

This recognition and need to engage with feelings and their consequences constituted for all the men an ongoing, daily activity, in which potential stressors had to be monitored, new skills constantly applied and old beliefs and fears addressed. Its application took various forms, depended on how men thought and spoke about themselves and possibly reflected concepts used in the different programmes. Mick, Alan and Derek, who saw their problem as 'anger' (which was enacted in areas of their lives other than their relationships with partners) spoke instrumentally about 'keeping on top of feelings', keeping their 'toe dipped in', or 'coming back for a top-up'.

For Mark, Andrew and Robert this need to remain consistently focused on their daily routines meant that they now practised living 'transformed lives'. Each had studied relevant literature, attended counselling at some point in addition to a men's programme, and had, to varying degrees, absorbed some of the language and concepts of therapy. They seemed committed to understanding themselves more fully and to questioning in depth what had underpinned their desire for control and 'order' in the past. Each had undertaken counselling training, and was either volunteering or working in the programme which they had previously attended. The decision to live as a 'changed person' (McNeill and Maruna 2007) seemed evident, and was reflected in their attempts to develop or nurture an 'internal locus of control', whereas in the past each had been preoccupied with the controlling of others.

Yet even these three men discussed constantly needing to be aware of their emotions, and of spaces or situations in which they felt 'threatened' or 'vulnerable'. For them, as with everyone in the sample, negotiating the present meant navigating new emotionally-packed, territory, recognising that every day presented challenges to a recently-acquired, sometimes uncertain, equilibrium. While it is not being suggested here that the violent, abusive behaviour formerly enacted by the men in this sample could be compared to an addictive behaviour, there are consistent similarities between the strategies adopted to sustain 'recovery' from substance abuse (for example, Fagan 1989; Yates and Malloch 2010) and the constant

attention and self-nurturing required to maintain 'secondary desistance'. As McNeill and Maruna (2007) have argued: 'desistance should not be seen so much as an ongoing event or state, but rather as . . . an ongoing work in progress, . . . the going is the thing' (p.225):

I've had an instance today of my sons, I get it all the time. I've got twin boys and they misbehave, they push the boundaries and so the worst it gets these days is that I get verbally abusive. But if I can stay connected with that care for them then I'm not going to hit them. . . . It's a recognition of how inconsistent I can be, and . . . trying to stay above myself . . . to be objectively, consciously aware of how I am, that's important to me because I've still got the potential to be abusive, and fortunately or unfortunately the worst it gets these days is verbal, but I'm working on that . . . I don't like that, but the primary goal has certainly been achieved, I mean, I don't see myself as a threat to women and children any more. (Mark: three years after commencing a programme)

Continuing Contact with the Programme/Agency

I explored what else kept men 'going'. An earlier study (Morran 2006) noted the scarcity of resources or post-programme support networks for men. How had they sustained themselves or found support once they 'completed' their programme curriculum? From their answers, it was apparent that for all of them, programme contact remained ongoing. All had been in touch with programme agencies on a fairly regular basis over the years. None felt that they had actually finished the programme as such. As Mick succinctly put it: 'I'm a lifer here!'. Again, similarities with findings from research on recovery from substance misuse are apparent (for example, Best 2010).

Remaining in contact served various purposes. As has been suggested, some men seemed to be in different stages along a continuum of 'primary and secondary desistance'. For Richard and Alan, for example, the question of when they 'finished' seemed almost superfluous. Both had come along regularly, for over two years and five years respectively. Richard struggled with pressures in his life, apparently related to stresses at work which 'spill over to arguments at home'. Aware of the pain he had 'put [his] partner through', he seemed committed to doing something about his behaviour, but appeared to be on something of a 'white-knuckle ride' as far as keeping on top of the 'anger' he felt.

Alan had 'never really stopped coming' and was going in for a 'top up' on the day he was interviewed. Several others spoke of the value of coming back periodically, of the importance of the group experience, of listening to others. Both programmes ran an open-group policy. Charlie, Derek and Roy, who had attended over long periods of time, had been encouraged to remain involved because they were seen as having 'got it'. They served as models for other men, an experience which each found gratifying and worthwhile.

The men expressed loyalty to their programme and programme workers, a factor known to be important in enhancing commitment to

desistance (Burnett and McNeill 2005; Farrall 2002; McNeill 2009; Rex 1999; Trotter 1999, 2000). Programme staff fulfilled an important function as a source of support in men's lives. Seven years after beginning a programme, Tony still felt 'scared to go back into the world' and was a regular presence around the office, checking things out with the project worker (whom, according to his partner, 'he idolises'). He comes back when he feels 'in over my head at times', had recently sought assurances that he handled a dispute with his neighbour appropriately, and on another occasion, whether he was 'being a good enough father'. His experiences of his own father were, apparently, extremely negative.

Developing New Interests

Men referred to other processes which seemed important in keeping them committed to maintaining changes they had made; these included attending a gym, joining a band, or in one example, switching from attending football matches to rugby league matches, because of past involvement in football hooliganism.

Several had made conscious efforts in their lives to shift from functional work to engage in employment which allowed them to engage with and connect with other people in a more caring capacity, and, arguably, reflected a desire to invest in developing a changing male identity (Hearn 1987). Five were involved in counselling or voluntary activities, and Alan, a former construction worker, now taught building skills to people with learning difficulties:

I worked in the building industry . . . it's a very rough and ready industry . . . very sarcastic . . . the name calling and swearing . . . I started to look at my job and the behaviour of people in and around my job and everyone was behaving, . . . as bad as me (laughs). I got very frustrated. Somebody suggested that perhaps I should look elsewhere . . . I've always enjoyed the thought of caring for people, . . . and then the job came up in the day centre which is where I am now. I've got my building industry background so I can continue to use it but I'm also working in the care industry, helping people who need help . . . so I get the best of both worlds. (Alan: commenced a programme five years previously; still attends regularly)

'Giving Something Back'

The importance of generativity, of 'giving something back' to others, has been observed in desistance research more generally (Maruna 2001; McNeill and Maruna 2007), and similarly in research on recovery from drug or alcohol misuse (for example, Yates and Malloch 2010). Such a desire was expressed by the majority of this sample. Being supportive to men new to groups by 'being there' and 'encouraging them' was important. For two men who also attended Alcoholics Anonymous, giving back meant sharing one's story, finding time to engage with others, and pursuing a more worthwhile, fulfilling life. Robert who 'left . . . [his] drinking

pals behind long ago’, wanted to live a more spiritual life which involved ‘making time for and helping others’.

Mark saw his development as a ‘caring, thoughtful human being, partner and father’ not just a way of making amends but also about acknowledging and respecting the trajectory of change which had brought him to a place of some contentment in his life. Andrew, who ‘felt a huge sense of loss when he left the programme’ had undergone groupwork training, carried out facilitation in the programme he had previously attended, worked daily with young people, and stressed self-care as a way of valuing his still recently-discovered sense of ease with himself.

The ability to develop and undertake such redemptive interests and activities seemed an important, possibly even essential, activity in terms of these men committing to a new, more positive, identity which contrasted with a negative past self.

Priorities

I explored with the men how their lives differed from before, whether their activities, interests and priorities had changed, and if so, what seemed to be significant for them. A common refrain running through men’s reflections on the priorities in their lives, ‘then’ and ‘now’, was that previously they had primarily been preoccupied with meeting their own needs, without giving much, if any, consideration to their partners, or other people generally – a disdain for the world in general was evident as the following exchange illustrates:

Alan: The programme . . . also taught me the . . . biggest word . . . that I didn’t even know before I came to [programme] and that is . . . ‘empathy’. I didn’t know . . . never heard of the word and I certainly didn’t know what it meant.

Interviewer: So you had no idea how other people might feel . . . ?

Alan: No.

Interviewer: Couldn’t put yourself in other people’s shoes?

Alan: Didn’t know how other people saw me.

(Alan: Commenced programme five years previously; still attends regularly for a ‘top-up’)

Maturity

To varying extents these men saw themselves as having changed, of having developed a greater understanding of themselves and of looking back on the people they were before as being somehow reduced compared with how they were now. The development of personal maturity, that is, the extent to which, or processes *by* which, someone develops new responsibilities or ideas about how one should behave and which enhances or reinforces the desistance process, recurs, of course, within relevant literature and research (for example, Sampson and Laub 1993; Maruna 2001).

The men in this sample, however, were mostly in their thirties and forties, married or in relationships, had children and/or step-children and (noticeably) mostly held down jobs. In short, they had been preoccupied with conforming to a ‘traditional’ set of masculine identities at home and work (Willis 1977; Morgan 2001), which superficially appeared robust, but in reality was characterised by ambiguity and anxiety (Brittan 1989; Pleck 1995).

They spoke of having lived out prescribed, unquestioned scripts of how they should think, and act as men; unemotional, indeed wary of emotions, continuously alert to challenges, from partners, but also from other men, to what they perceived as their authority, and were unthinking and unfeeling about the effects of their violent or controlling behaviour over their partners. The process of maturation thus represented an awakening of knowledge of self, but specifically involved a rejection of some of the sexist, aggressive, boorish behaviour which they had previously either embraced or gone along with. Maturation involved a process of reflecting upon previously unquestioned ways of thinking and acting *as a man*:

I don't keep any of the same company to be truthful with you, don't hang round any of the lads I used . . . plus, don't get me wrong, you know, . . . I'll be honest, I think what it's [the programme] made is a *man*, but a *proper man* which may sound a bit dramatic, you know, but I'm a man now with a heart, I'm a man with feelings and concerned for other people's feelings. That's what it's made me . . . (Tony: commenced programme seven years previously; still comes around occasionally)

Desistance Processes and the Appropriateness of Current Approaches/Programmes

As can be seen, therefore, the processes by which these men ‘desist’ from violent and abusive behaviour requires continual attention to self-monitoring and regulation, a developing sense of self-awareness, the availability of opportunities, as well as a desire for engagement in alternative activities, priorities and networks, and crucially, the ability to seek and receive support and guidance to sustain the desisting process. In this respect, the processes through which those in this (admittedly small) sample negotiate or navigate their desistance journeys are similar to those undertaken both by desisting property or ‘street’ offenders, as well as those involved in overcoming addictive behaviours (Maruna 2001, p.34).

One conclusion to be drawn from these accounts is that if men who are violent and abusive are to be engaged with meaningfully, and interventions are to be desistance-focused, there needs to be a reassessment of current interventions which have largely prevailed in the UK thus far, and greater consideration given to what might need to support men in negotiating the desistance journey.

Several men in this study acknowledged their ‘need’ to control both other people and situations in which they find themselves. While some struggled to understand why this need was so overpowering, it may be that interventions ought to engage more with deeper psychological and

emotional issues than they do at present. While ‘patriarchy’ might entitle and endorse men’s use of violence and abuse, and while ‘power and control’ interventions might apply to a proportion of domestic violence offenders (see, for example, Young *et al.* 2005), there is also a compelling body of research and practice evidence which attests to the fact that interventions must address the ‘lived experiences of men’s lives’. The lived experiences of this present sample suggest that interventions may need to consider issues of disrupted attachment – resulting in a consequent fear of abandonment and consequent need to control (Dutton and Sonkin 2003), experiences of childhood trauma (Dutton 1998) and the presence of alcohol or substance misuse in men’s lives (Bowen 2011). It might also be useful, if men’s motivation and engagement is to be enhanced, to acknowledge what Gadd (2004) has termed: ‘the uniqueness many programme attendees associate with their “problems”; the mixture of love, envy and vulnerability that violent men often implicate in their behaviour’ (p.18).

To date, the majority of perpetrator programmes have encountered difficulty in addressing either the complexity or uniqueness of the men who come before them. They have also been dogged by the ideological and managerial climate in which they have been developed. Within the probation service, for example, ‘accredited’ programmes were established throughout the last decade to address a range of criminalised or problematic behaviours (Mair 2004). The original version of the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP), accredited by the Home Office in 2003, was criticised (not least by many practitioners involved in programme delivery) for adopting a somewhat inflexible and simplistic approach to the way practice with perpetrators was carried out, while paying less attention to how the complexities of personal change among domestic violence offenders should be understood (Gadd 2004; Bowen 2011; Morran 2011).

Fortunately a number of these criticisms recently appear to have been heeded by those involved in an internal re-evaluation of the IDAP, and continuing revisions to the model seem to pay substantially more attention than before to approaches aimed at recognising heterogeneity among perpetrators, and of motivating programme participants by incorporating more strengths-based and desistance-focused practices, which, as Farrall (2002) has observed, must pay attention to a desisting future and not merely an offending past.

As McNeill has asserted in reflecting on a ‘desistance paradigm’ for probation practice, ‘what works’ approaches ‘begin in the wrong place, . . . they begin by thinking about how *practice* (whether “treatment”, “help”, or “programme”), should be constructed without first thinking about how *change* should be understood’ (McNeill 2006, p.45, italics in original). There is a compelling argument, therefore, that those engaged in the further development, delivery, refinement and evaluation of perpetrator programmes, whether in the statutory (or indeed the voluntary) sector should pay more attention than has often been the case, to those processes which seem to characterise behaviour change, and acknowledge the complexities of the desistance process. This must include

attention, not only to the individual, but also to the social context of the perpetrator's world.

This is a demanding task. Those who deliver interventions with violent and abusive men must rightly be concerned with the safety of victims/partners. They need to acknowledge the fact that any meaningful processes of change which perpetrators accomplish (which may take considerable time), have to be weighed against the everyday consequences for men's partners and children. Currently, programmes for perpetrators (in both statutory and non-statutory settings) generally adhere to a minimum length of approximately 26 sessions, usually supported by ongoing 'case management' or supervision. There is an undercurrent of unease, however, (expressed anecdotally by many practitioners) that management in some Probation Trusts has drastically reduced the time frames in which contact occurs in order to accommodate matters of costs and resources (personal communications received by the author).

It is suggested here that if the interventions and practices with men who perpetrate abuse are to be meaningful (and thus, arguably, more effective) they may need to be reconfigured in such a way that they are more readily available to men than current provision allows or encourages. The desisting men in this study all drew on the support of their programme workers or, indeed, the programme itself over a period of many years. Some continued to live lives characterised by doubt, vulnerability, and the fear of a return to a negative, troubled and harmful self. If provision for men is to continue to progress it will benefit from being open to a developing body of theory and research as to the various roots of violence, and to the emerging trends in constructive, strengths-based practices (for example, Gorman *et al.* 2006; Ward, Mann and Gannon 2007; Lehmann and Simmons 2009). Moreover, it might usefully take account of the fact that provision should be available at those times in people's lives when, as is inevitable, problems and challenges recur. Much of the evaluative literature concerning perpetrator programmes has been concerned thus far with 'outcomes'. It is time for greater attention to be paid to process, and, indeed, to understanding the person who desists as someone involved in continual 'work in progress'.

Note

1 To preserve the anonymity of the participants their names have been changed throughout.

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Date submitted: February 2012

Date accepted: June 2012