



**This electronic thesis or dissertation has been
downloaded from Explore Bristol Research,
<http://research-information.bristol.ac.uk>**

Author:
Harne, Lynne

Title:
Violence, power and the meanings of fatherhood in issues of child contact

General rights

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author, unless otherwise identified in the body of the thesis, and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement. It is permitted to use and duplicate this work only for personal and non-commercial research, study or criticism/review. You must obtain prior written consent from the author for any other use. It is not permitted to supply the whole or part of this thesis to any other person or to post the same on any website or other online location without the prior written consent of the author.

Take down policy

Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions prior to it having been deposited in Explore Bristol Research. However, if you have discovered material within the thesis that you believe is unlawful e.g. breaches copyright, (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please contact: open-access@bristol.ac.uk and include the following information in your message:

- Your contact details
- Bibliographic details for the item, including a URL
- An outline of the nature of the complaint

On receipt of your message the Open Access team will immediately investigate your claim, make an initial judgement of the validity of the claim, and withdraw the item in question from public view.

**Violence, Power and the Meanings of Fatherhood
in Issues of Child Contact**

Lynne Harne

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Social Sciences, School for Policy Studies, February, 2004.

Abstract

This research explored the meanings of fatherhood and fathering practices with twenty men who were domestically violent to partners and attending perpetrator programmes. It looked at the interconnections between men's understandings of fatherhood and their violence and abuse, when they were still living with families and in the post-separation context, where most fathers had contact with their children. It found that these fathers' relationships with their children were often directly physically and emotionally abusive and that fathers tended to discount the impacts of this abuse. Since almost half had moved on to second households their abusive behaviour affected a wide cohort of children.

Significantly, several fathers stated that they were regularly involved in looking after young children when living with partners. It was apparent that this context provided further opportunities for child abuse, where very young children were perceived as instigating the abuse by their own behaviour. In the context of child contact post-separation, there were indications that fathers were more likely to directly abuse young children the longer they had contact with them. In this context most fathers viewed contact as meeting their own emotional needs and children's own feelings and fears of fathers were not considered. These findings were supported from mothers' accounts, where their views on violent ex-partners as fathers were explored in a separate sample.

The research also looked at the impacts of perpetrator programmes on the men's views of themselves as fathers. It found some contradictory impacts where some fathers found 'new' means to rationalise their violence and represent themselves as victims. In conclusion, the research indicated that these men's fathering practices, post-separation were integrally concerned with the reconstruction of masculine social relations of dominance and power.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference to the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol. The dissertation has not been presented to any other university for examination either in the UK or overseas.

Signed *L. Plaine* Date *17th February 2004* .

Contents

Chapter 1 Fatherhood and family law policy	1
Introduction	1
The earlier context	2
Family law policy changes	3
Fatherhood and custody decisions	4
Fathers' rights movements	5
Nurturing fatherhood	7
Fathers' participation in childcare	9
The social value of father involvement	10
Feminist challenges	11
Sexual division of labour analyses	12
The New Right	14
Father deprivation and children's welfare	16
The impacts of divorce and separation	19
Interparental conflict	19
Father-child contact	20
Family law policy changes	22
Discourses of children's welfare and rights	23
Children's rights and protection from harm	28
Further policy changes	29
Further policies on enforcing contact	33
Discussion	35
Chapter 2 Children's experiences of violent fathers	36
Introduction- the extent of domestic violence	36
Feminist definitions of domestic violence	41
Children's experiences	41
Developmental psychology and children's perspectives	42
Fathers as perpetrators	43
Children's experiences of witnessing domestic violence	47
<i>Witnessing emotional and psychological abuse</i>	51
<i>Using children in the emotional abuse and psychological control of their mothers</i>	52
Links and overlaps with physical abuse of children	55
<i>Fathers' direct physical abuse of children</i>	56
<i>Children being harmed when 'caught up' in the violence towards mothers</i>	62
<i>Mothers' physical abuse of children in the context of domestic violence</i>	63
<i>Pregnancy</i>	63
<i>Child deaths</i>	64

Violent fathers' mental cruelty and extreme control of children	65
Links and overlaps with the sexual abuse of children	67
Overall impacts of living with fathers' violence	71
<i>Impacts for younger children</i>	72
<i>Impacts for older children</i>	74
<i>Impact on relationships with mothers</i>	79
<i>Children's coping strategies</i>	80
Children's understandings of their fathers' violence	82
<i>Children's feelings and perceptions of their relationships with fathers</i>	82
<i>Hatred, resentment and wanting nothing to do with fathers</i>	83
<i>Happiness at leaving violent fathers</i>	86
<i>Shame, anger, sadness, dislike and loss of respect</i>	87
<i>Ambivalence and divided loyalties</i>	87
Post-separation violence and harassment	89
<i>Father-child contact and post-separation harassment and violence</i>	90
<i>Abduction</i>	92
<i>Contact handover</i>	92
Children's experience of contact	92
<i>Fewer problems over contact</i>	96
<i>Fathers' unreliability in relation to contact</i>	97
<i>Children separated from their mothers</i>	97
<i>Contact applications and problems for children</i>	99
<i>Litigation abuse</i>	101
The presumption of contact and the failure to protect children	101
<i>Children killed by violent fathers during contact</i>	102
<i>Violent fathers' direct abuse of children during contact</i>	102
<i>Fathers' neglect of children during contact</i>	107
<i>Fathers' manipulation and emotional abuse of children</i>	108
<i>The impact of abusive contact on children</i>	108
Supported and supervised contact	110
<i>Screening and risk assessments</i>	112
Mothers' and children's experiences of supported and supervised contact	113
<i>Contact: moving on</i>	115
<i>Fathers' pressure for direct visiting contact</i>	116
Conclusion	117

Chapter 3 Violence, masculinities and fatherhood	119
Introduction	119
<i>Part 1 Violent masculinities</i>	119
Biological explanations	119
Psychological and psycho-social explanations	120
Feminist sociological perspectives	123
Masculine identities as violent social practice	128
Violent masculine identities and fatherhood	134
Sexual division of labour analyses and psychoanalysis	136
<i>Part 2 Practice based approaches</i>	136
Risk assessments	140
<i>Different risk assessment models</i>	143
<i>Assessments of violent fathers' contact with children</i>	147
Perpetrator programmes and violent fathers	151
Standards for perpetrator programmes	153
<i>Children's specific safety needs</i>	154
<i>Standards for probation programmes</i>	154
Perpetrator programmes and risk assessments	155
The efficacy of perpetrator programmes	155
Evaluation methods	157
Studies looking at the effectiveness of the Duluth model programme	158
Studies comparing different models	159
Perpetrator programmes and violent fathers	162
Conclusion	164
Chapter 4 Methodology	165
Overall approach	165
Why directly study men?	166
Research aims	168
Operationalising my theoretical framework	170
<i>Theoretical questions</i>	170
<i>Empirical questions</i>	170
<i>Policy and practice questions</i>	171
The research process - gendered power relations	171
Research strategy	176
Sampling strategies	177
<i>Difficulties in finding the sample</i>	178
<i>Social backgrounds of the fathers interviewed</i>	181
Limitations and reflections on the sampling strategy	182

Finding a sample of mothers	183
Ethics and safety concerns for mothers	183
Perpetrator project workers	186
Interviewing strategies – the interview as social interaction	187
Confidentiality, safety and ethics	188
Reflections on the ethics of this strategy in relation to the safety of children	191
Reflections on the ethics of this strategy in relation to fathers	192
Questioning strategies	192
The contradiction of `rapport` in interviewing violent fathers	193
The use of violence and abuse checklists	195
Interviews with mothers	196
The use of checklists with mothers	197
The impact of the interview process with fathers and mothers	197
Data analysis and interpretation	198
<i>Epistemological approach to interpretation</i>	198
<i>Overall approach to the data analysis</i>	199

Chapter 5 Abusive fathering	203
<i>Part 1 The material context</i>	<i>204</i>
Introduction	203
Fathers' history of violence	204
'Serious' domestic violence	205
Forms of violence	207
Children's observation of violence	207
Sexual violence	208
Psychological/emotional abuse and strategies of coercion	208
Post-separation violence and abuse	210
Direct violence and abuse towards children	210
<i>Physical and intimidatory violence towards children</i>	<i>211</i>
<i>Emotional abuse of children</i>	<i>212</i>
Fathers' own experiences of childhood abuse and violence	212
Fathers' familial circumstances and connections to children	213
Fathers' living situations at time of interview	215
Contact arrangements	215
Contact and ages of the children	217
Contact with children from second and third relationships	218
Conclusion	218
<i>Part 2 The fathers' accounts</i>	<i>219</i>
Fathers' accounts of their violence when living with women and children	219
Minimisation and limited definitions of violence	219
'A few serious incidents'	220
<i>Denials and definitions of violence</i>	<i>221</i>
<i>Minimisation – mutual arguments and reciprocal violence</i>	<i>222</i>
<i>Mental abuse</i>	<i>223</i>
Fathers' explanations for violence towards women	224
Contradictory rationalisations for violence	225
Violence towards women and men's perceptions of themselves as fathers	227
Fathers' violence and the division of labour in the home	227
Children as observers of fathers' violence	229
Fathers' conceptualisations of using children to control mothers	231
Fathers' conceptualisations of their abuse of children	232

<i>Simultaneous abuse and interconnections with the abuse of mothers</i>	232
Childcare and the abuse of children	233
<i>Fathers' views on childcare</i>	233
Mental cruelty and dominance	238
Authoritarian practices and discipline	239
Fathers' views about the impact of their violence on children	241
<i>Abuse towards mothers</i>	241
Fathers' views of harm in relation to the direct abuse of children	242
Fathers' love cancelling out the violence	243
Fathers' views on child contact	244
<i>'Rights and responsibilities'</i>	244
<i>Fathers' views on limiting contact</i>	246
<i>Accounts of manipulation and use of children against mothers</i>	248
Accounts of abuse during child contact	250
<i>Fathers' accounts of abusive contact practices</i>	251
<i>Fathers' perceptions of children's fears</i>	253
<i>Fathers' reasons for wanting contact</i>	254
<i>Fathers' discourses of rights</i>	255
<i>Fathers' discourses of love</i>	255
<i>Fathers' accounts of their 'needs' for contact</i>	258
<i>Familial ideology and 'responsible' fatherhood</i>	259
Chapter 6 The Impact of perpetrator programmes	261
Introduction	261
<i>Limitations in the analysis</i>	262
<i>Section 1 Approaches of the different programmes</i>	263
<i>Types of programme</i>	263
<i>Overall philosophies and theoretical frameworks</i>	263
<i>Length of programmes</i>	265
Women's safety	266
Children's safety and child abuse	268
Approaches to father-child contact	271
Risk assessments	271
<i>Father-child contact and programme content</i>	273
Programme effectiveness	275

<i>Section 2 The fathers' accounts of change</i>	278
<i>Changed understandings or talking the talk</i>	278
<i>Changed understandings of the impacts of their violence on children</i>	279
<i>Understandings in relation to the direct abuse of children</i>	281
Programmes as support groups for violent men	283
Violent men as victims	284
Responsible fatherhood, reparation and child contact	286
Resentments about being on a programme	286
Resentments about being on a programme	286
The contradictory impacts of programmes	288
<i>Violent fathers' resistance to change</i>	288
Contact and 'responsible' fatherhood	289
Chapter 7 Mothers' accounts of violent fathering	292
Introduction	292
<i>Part 1 The material context</i>	292
Mothers' living situations and familial relationships	293
Contact arrangements	295
The extent and forms of violence mothers and children experienced	297
<i>Forms of men's violence experienced by women</i>	298
<i>Sexual and reproductive abuse of women</i>	299
<i>Forms of psychological abuse and control</i>	300
<i>Financial abuse</i>	301
Combined abuse of mothers and children	301
Post-separation harassment and violence against mothers and children	302
Direct physical violence post-separation	303
Litigation abuse	304
<i>Part 2 The mothers' accounts</i>	305
Children witnessing and combined abuse	305
Simultaneous abuse – fathers' deliberate abuse of mothers in front of children	306
Combined abuse and the differential treatment of children	307
Fathers' violence and abuse when involved with children	309
Fathers' abuse and neglect of children during childcare	310
Fathers' extreme cruelty, maltreatment and sexual abuse of children	314

Fathers' harmful 'care' of children	316
The impact of abuse	317
Abusive fathering practices in the context of child contact	318
mothers' understandings of the abuse of children during contact	318
Fathers' cruelty and emotional harm to children during contact	320
Emotional harm and the differential treatment of children during contact	325
The quality of contact – emotional and physical neglect	326
Fathers' abuse of mothers and children at contact centres and during 'supervised' contact	327
Abuse during contact and the overall impact on children	331
Mothers' views about fathers' contact	335
Mothers' views of professionals in relation to fathers contact	337
Chapter 8 Conclusions	340
Key themes	340
Shifting discourses and practices of violent fathering	340
Abusive childcare and discourses of dominant masculine practices	341
Violent fathers' constructs of children	342
Children as unconditional providers and objects of love	343
Discounting of children's own feelings and fears of their fathers	343
Violent fathers' own moral rightness and sense of entitlement	344
Discourses of violent fathers as victims	344
Discourses of minimisation, omission and contradiction	345
Dominance and superiority	346
Implication for policy and practice in relation to father-child contact	346
Violent fathers and change	348
References	350
Appendix	380

Chapter 1 Fatherhood and family law policy

But the law of England has recognised the natural rights of a father, not as guardian of his children but as the father because he is the father... (Brett MR *Re: Agar-Ellis v Lascelles*. Court of Appeal. 1883).

Introduction

Historical feminist and critical masculinity analyses focussing on the nineteenth century, have looked at the role of law in constructing men's privileged social status in relation to women and children and how these have been challenged and reconstructed (see, for example, Dobash and Dobash, 1980; Smart, 1989; Collier, 1995). Such analyses have highlighted the legitimisation of male physical violence in marriage, where, under the common law, women and children were regarded as the property of husbands and fathers and neither had separate legal status (see Blackstones Commentaries, 1765, cited in Hoggett and Pearl, 1987: 32). Both could 'within reason' be legally beaten and physically confined and their own earnings could be taken from them by force (see, for example, Cobbe, 1868). Moreover, the common law gave husbands unlimited sexual access to the wife's body, whilst the weak canon law prohibitions on incest, meant that daughters in families could be sexually abused with impunity (see for example Gordon, 1988; Hooper, 1992). At the beginning of the nineteenth century married fathers also had absolute custody rights over their children on separation (see for example Smart, 1989)

Feminist campaigning and emerging discourses about children's welfare, together with changing constructions of fathers and mothers and the way they interacted with broader social changes in the 'public' sphere throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries began to challenge these absolute rights (Jeffreys, 1985; Gittens,

1985; Smart, 1989; Hooper, 1992; Tosch, 1996; Davidoff et al., 1999). However the nineteenth century remains an important reference point for developments in the construction of what has been conceptualised as 'modern' fatherhood. Collier (1995) for example, has suggested that there are patterns of continuities as well as differences in the way fatherhood has been constituted and institutionalised through law at the end of the twentieth century. Although it is not within the scope of this study to look at these patterns in discussing constructions of contemporary fatherhood, their relevance will occasionally be referred to in the following analysis. In this, I look at the way changing discourses of fatherhood have informed the direction of family law policy in the contemporary period from the 1970s to the beginning of the twenty-first century. I focus specifically on the connections between constructions of fatherhood, motherhood and children's welfare and social power relations between these different constituencies and look at the way this has been affected by the activism of women and men and emerging discourses of children's rights.

The earlier context

By 1925 partially as a consequence of feminist campaigning, married fathers' 'superior' claims to custody of their children in legal disputes following separation were finally abolished (Guardianship of Infants Act, 1925). But mothers' claims were attached to changing notions of children's welfare, which was made the paramount consideration in court decisions at this time (Smart, 1989). Thus, naturalised discourses of motherhood which had gained increasing significance throughout the nineteenth century contributed to notions that young children were better off being cared for by them, in what came to be defined as the 'tender years doctrine' (Brophy, 1985). However as was illustrated in the case law following these

changes, patriarchal definitions of good mothering could challenge this doctrine, particularly where mothers left the family home (see for example *Re L (infant)* 1962, cited in *Rights of Women*, 1984).

Until the *Guardianship of Minors Act* (1973), all parental rights and authority in marriage remained invested in fathers although looking after children was still generally perceived as mothers' responsibility (Smart, 1989). Such rights were reinforced by post-war sociological and psychological discourses that stressed the functionalist and naturalised roles of men as breadwinner fathers and women as carers of children within families (Parsons, 1951; Bowlby, 1953). Whilst during the war, the state had stepped in to provide some collective childcare provision for the children of working mothers, Bowlby's maternal deprivation thesis was utilised ideologically to diminish such provision and to encourage married women to stay at home and look after children and free up employment opportunities for men (Walby, 1986). The establishment of the post-war welfare state and the principle of universal welfare provision, also institutionalised this version of the family where women were viewed as economic dependents; although it was differentially applied to black migrant families from the Commonwealth (Mama, 1989; Williams, 1989). This social context began to change with the rise of the new social movements and in particular the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in the late 1960's and the increasing demands for women's paid labour (Williams, 1989).

Family law policy changes

Legal changes, which gave women equal rights to guardianship of their children in the 1973 *Guardianship of Minors Act*, were also accompanied by the liberalisation of the divorce laws and by easier access to legal aid for divorce, which enabled far

more women than previously to end violent and oppressive marriages (Hoggett and Pearl, 1987). Feminist activism once again placed domestic violence on the public policy agenda and brought about some legal changes which on paper at least made it easier for women to obtain injunctions against violent partners (Barron, 1990; Hague and Malos, 1993). Changes in attitude brought about largely by the WLM diminished the stigma attached to never married motherhood and mothers who became single as a result of divorce or separation. Social welfare reforms particularly in access to public housing and housing benefits also enabled more lone mothers to live independently (Keirnan et al., 1998; Land, 1999). Concurrently, women were demanding equal pay and challenging the sexual division of labour in paid work and the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts were limited responses to these pressures. Women were also analysing the way motherhood was controlled and defined by patriarchal discourses and institutions (Rich, 1976) and highlighting the exploitation of women's labour in the home (see for example, Oakley 1974). Some women were also demanding that men should share childcare in the home, although as Williams (1998) has noted women's demands at this time were more frequently for collective childcare which should be provided in the public sphere. Women's collective and individual agency during this period, although not necessarily unitary, was represented not only in discourses of equality, but also in those of autonomy and independence and the need for women to be able to have control over their own lives. It did however also produce male resistance, with fathers' rights being one major area of contestation.

Fatherhood and custody decisions

By the early 1970s and mainly in the face of uncontested applications by fathers, and informed by the 'tender years doctrine,' heterosexual mothers would usually get

custody of the young children, (Eekelaar and Clive, 1977). Neale and Smart (1998) suggest that this was supported by psychological discourses (see for example Goldstein et al, 1979) which defined the welfare of the child in terms of continuity of care and emotional security with their psychological parent (usually their mothers) and the restabilisation through remarriage and the creation of a step family,' (Neale and Smart, 1998: 7). Within these discourses the emphasis was on social rather than biological fatherhood, where the new husband would take on the fatherhood role in second families. It is interesting to note that in some court decisions over access to children, social (married) fatherhood continued to take precedence over biological fatherhood into the early 1990s (Smart and Neale, 1997). However, such discourses were also complicated by maintenance issues and men's resistance to paying maintenance to their ex-wives (Brophy, 1985). The emphasis on the importance of fathers' presence in families was underlined by the courts' opposition to granting custody to lesbian mothers during the 1970s and 1980s. In this context, decisions often focussed on the 'inability' of the lesbian mother to provide a 'normal' family with a father and mother and the absence of male role models, as much as on her 'deviant sexuality' (Rights of Women, 1984; Harne and Rights of Women, 1997).

Fathers' rights movements

Fathers' rights movements emerged not only in the UK, but also in North America, Australia and in some European countries, in the 1970s as a response to women gaining equal guardianship rights over children in married families and unmarried mothers sole custody rights (Graycar, 1989; Smart and Svenhuijsen, 1989; Bertoia and Drakich, 1995). In the UK, the pressure group Families Need Fathers (FNF) which was founded in 1974, utilised and inverted feminist discourses of equality as well as arguments that fathers' traditional authority and power were being

undermined, by contending that the divorce courts were operating discriminatory practices in awarding sole custody of young children to mothers (Harne and Radford, 1994). In addition, it argued that mothers with sole custody were blocking fathers' access to children and limiting their traditional decision-making rights. These contentions were embodied in their main aims for joint custody of children and ongoing access for fathers whatever the circumstances (Brophy, 1989). Another main and ongoing campaigning aim has been to argue that unmarried fathers are denied equality in law through unmarried mothers having sole custody rights to their children (Harne and Radford, 1994).

Despite its rhetoric of inequality, FNF clearly represented the concerns of some men over their perceived loss of power and control over women and children and the diminished social status of men as fathers articulated through women's increasing 'flight from marriage' and a refusal by some women to marry at all (Graycar, 1989; Land, 1993; Bertoia and Drakitch, 1995; Simpson et al., 1995). Their arguments did, however, begin to resonate in socio-legal discourse and can be seen to connect in different contexts with New Right concerns over perceptions of men's marginal role in families and more liberal discourses on men's participation in parenting (Brophy, 1982, 1989; Smart, 1989). But socio-legal research which was undertaken to address FNF's contentions that fathers were being unequally treated in custody and access disputes by the courts did not find much evidence of such discrimination (Maidment, 1976; Eekelaar and Clive, 1977). As has been noted earlier, the vast majority of fathers were found not to contest custody of their children and, in the few cases that were contested, not disturbing the 'status quo' (i.e. where the children were living at the time of the divorce) appeared to be the main principle operated by the judiciary. In only two cases was this principle overridden in favour

of the mother (Eekelaar and Clive, 1977). Further, the few, later mainly US studies that looked at divorced fathers' contact with their children (for example, Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980) found that paternal interest in contact declined over time and when they repartnered. This research therefore suggested that fathers' failure to maintain contact was more about their own choice, rather than legal discrimination or mothers refusing access (Smart, 1989). However, despite the apparent lack of empirical evidence, the notion of joint custody began to be taken up by socio-legal theorists such as Maidment as a solution to addressing these fathers' concerns (Maidment, 1981).

Nurturing fatherhood

Running concurrently to discourses of unequal treatment and men's loss of control and authority in families, a somewhat different approach to fatherhood was being developed by men from what has been characterised as the 'new men's movement', including by groups such as 'men against sexism' which began to question normative male sex roles and sex role identity (Collier, 1995). Collier suggests that a key focus of this movement was what was defined as men's 'emotional impoverishment' and men being 'out of touch with their feelings' (1995:19). Brittan (1989) argues that the 'new men's movement' can be viewed as one of the early formulations of the 'crisis in masculinity' thesis where men were questioning what it means to be men, motivated by dissatisfactions with the workplace, and seeing the home and the care of children as a means of redefining individual masculine identities (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1992; Westward, 1996). One outcome of this has been a focus on intimate and 'nurturing' rather than 'distant' fatherhood, in which 'emotional investment' in children is sometimes equated with a surrendering of

patriarchal power where male/ female relations and male/ child relations can be transformed (Pringle, 1995, 1998; Lupton and Barclay 1998).

In some early conceptualisations of this discourse it was argued that, through taking on the nurturing 'feminine' role, heterosexual men could discard their oppressive sex roles, and also liberate their own (male) children from these roles through example (Collier, 1995). This coincided with the development of some feminist theories of gender identity, which reworked psychoanalytic object relations theory, and contended that it was mothers' sole responsibility for childrearing that has shaped male domination (Dinnerstein, 1976; Chodorow, 1978). Critiques of feminist object relations theories have, however, argued that they locate men as the 'victims' rather than as the agents of patriarchal domination and focus the blame on women as the sole rearers of children and the perceived holders of emotional power (Connell, 1987; Segal, 1987; Brittan, 1989; Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994). Further, the idea that men's increased emotional involvement with children equates with a lessening of patriarchal authority in families has been challenged by recent detailed historical studies on fathering practices in the nineteenth century, based on autobiographical material (Davidoff et al., 1999; Tosch, 1999). For example, Tosch, in his study of middle-class fatherhood and the construction of masculine identities in this context, found that, in the first half of the nineteenth century, such fathers were often centrally involved with the emotional 'nurturing' of their children, but such 'manly' nurturing was also integrally connected with ideas about paternal moral authority and ensuring sons acquired the appropriate 'manly' characteristics. Similarly, in discussing changes in 'fatherly care' in the nineteenth century, drawing on working class fathers' accounts, Davidoff et al. (1999) described examples of both more 'benevolent' practices, where fathers could enjoy the company of

children and 'transmit their own knowledge about the world' and strict authoritarian practices which involved severe physical punishment. However they stress that such fatherly duties were underlined by the 'widely accepted authority' accorded to fathers in families (1999:150) and suggest that:

the pervasive influence of individualism in understandings of the self has masked the continuing importance to masculinity of the successful exercise of authority over women and children (1999:157).

Connected to discourses about the growth of individualism and the process of individualisation in every day life, Beck (1992) views men's interest in gaining custody of children on the ending of heterosexual relationships as signifying a 'new' arena of contestation between men and women. Drawing on the arguments of fathers' rights movements, he suggests that men now see women as having an unfair advantage with the decrease in 'economic inequality' and some recognition within law that 'the woman has possession of the child as a product of her womb' (Beck, 1992:113). With the lack of permanence in heterosexual couple love relationships he argues that men are turning to children in order to provide themselves with some permanent emotional bond. These arguments were reflected in much later contentions by Families Need Fathers who stated that separated fathers were 'grief stricken,' at the loss of their children (see, for example, Parton, 1998: 775)

Fathers' participation in childcare

Discourses which draw on women's 'unfair advantage' in relation to emotional involvement with children have also been used ideologically to claim that it is women's 'power' within the home that is one of the main obstacles to men becoming more involved in their care (Backett, 1987; Pleck, 1987; Burgess, 1997).

Backett, for example, who undertook research on how fatherhood was 'negotiated' in 22 heterosexual families suggested that, because there was a 'fundamental assumption' that mothers would take the major responsibility for childcare, these responsibilities gave them a 'hidden power,' over the choice of children's activities and routines. Further, even though her research indicated that men's participation in childcare was generally based on their own discretion, she argued that it was mothers' responsibility 'to allow men to develop paternal competencies' (Backett, 1987: 81-87). However, such definitions of women's power appear strangely defined when it is recognised that motherhood and the conditions of mothering throughout the twentieth century have been circumscribed by patriarchal prescriptions including social expectations that mothers *should* take responsibility for childcare (Nicholson, 1993). For example, Brannen and Moss (1987), in their study of two earner families, describe the dilemmas and difficulties for women in trying to encourage men to take more responsibility for childcare when they wished to return to work. Nevertheless, as Williams (1998) noted, discourses of mother-blame, where mothers were seen as preventing fathers' involvement in childcare, increased throughout the 1990s and were adopted by some influential New Labour feminists (Williams, 1998).

The social value of father involvement

The late 1970s and 1980s witnessed a plethora of new sociological and psychological studies on fatherhood from a number of different perspectives, that focussed on the 'constraints' to father involvement. Such studies indicated that 'fatherhood had become a distinctive and prestigious substantive issue' and 'mother-focused research programmes had become increasingly outmoded and criticised' (McKee and O'Brien, 1982: 3). Many of these were imbued with the social values of the 'new

nurturing man', who wanted to 'participate' in the birth of his (sic) child and was involved in the intimate care of the young infant (Beail and McGuire, 1982). Whilst a few studies emphasised the similarities in the care of young infants provided by mothers and fathers others stressed the differences (Beail, 1982; Lewis, 1982). These latter studies argued that fathers' involvement was important to children's emotional and cognitive development, particularly for boys, often drawing on the feminist psychoanalytic frameworks discussed earlier and emphasising discourses of the effect of father deprivation on children (Richards, 1982 a.b). Moreover, although these early studies demonstrated differences in their theoretical perspectives, methods and findings, they were used to support the ideology of the new father who increasingly participates in childcare. Such discourses were accompanied by popular representations of the caring new man holding a baby or toddler, which, by the late 1980s, had become a style accessory for fashionable young men (Rutherford, 1988) and, as Smart noted, also signified virility and the 'proprietary relationship between men and their offspring' (Smart, 1989: 14). These images further related to the increasing cultural significance of biological fatherhood.

Feminist challenges

However, some feminist and pro-feminist researchers were beginning to argue that such representations did not reflect the 'new' man's actual involvement in childcare. Lewis and O'Brien (1987) in their review of fatherhood research, for example, suggested that 'evidence for the existence of [the new caring and nurturant father] is less than convincing', and recognised that 'accounts of fatherhood should be replaced by an understanding of paternal involvement in the context of the continuing domination of women by men in the public sphere, and in certain respects within the family itself' (1987: 2).

Sexual division of labour analyses

Empirical studies in the 1990s also emphasised that shifts in the sexual division of labour in the home were small, with mothers still shouldering most of the labour of childcaring, although father involvement was greater where both partners worked (Gilbert, 1993; Ferri and Smith, 1996; Burghes et al; 1997). These latter studies also suggested that there were some gendered differences in caring activities undertaken, where core activities such as cooking and washing were more likely to be undertaken by mothers and fathers were more involved in leisure and play activities. Some studies have also identified the significance to men's fathering identities of demonstrating their fatherhood in public leisure settings where they are observed by others (see, for example, Lewis, 1997; Warin et al., 1999). Other studies undertaken from a feminist perspective have looked at how father care may reinforce gendered inequalities between boys and girls, more so than does that of mothers (McGuire, 1982; Sharpe, 1994), whilst one of the few studies to look at the impact of paternal authority on children has argued that fathers appear to regulate the sexual behaviour of girls more frequently than that of boys (Mann, 1996).

The latter studies suggest that discourses asserting the need for fathers' involvement in childcare may overlook the way such care may be used to perpetuate hierarchical gendered relations through the reinforcement of masculinist values. This is supported by evidence from comparative research in developing countries, which indicates that boys brought up in woman-headed households where father involvement is absent may learn greater respect for women and show a greater willingness to share household tasks, previously regarded as women's work (Chant, 1997).

There has also been an increasing emphasis on the value of the differences in father 'involvement' with children in fatherhood studies looking at the gendered division of labour, and less emphasis on equality discourses which were initially a part of some of the early 'men against sexism' and feminist approaches in arguing that men should share childcare (see Pringle, 1998). This emphasis on difference is indicated in a review of the evidence by Burges et al. (1997) referred to above, where it is suggested that the paucity of evidence for increased father involvement 'may reflect the [different] nature of paternal care rather than the lack of it' (1997:3). Some studies have also emphasised the different and, by implication, the superior ethical values involved in father care. For example, the US researchers Hawkins and Dollahite (1997) drawing on feminist discourses of domestic labour as work, argue that father involvement is about 'generative father work', in which fathers have an ethical responsibility for future generations. The most important aspects of this specific father work are:

ethical work, stewardship work [providing material resources] development work [maintaining supportive conditions] and relationship work [building lasting relationships] (1997: 21).

They state that 'fathers are not mothers and shouldn't try to be' and fathers' most significant role is in providing material resources; in their physical presence, and the intellectual stimulation they give to children through play. There are some parallels to this approach in Maclean and Eekelaar's socio-legal study (1997) which drawing on the work of Finch and Mason (1993) on family obligations mainly focuses on absent fathers' perceived social obligations towards child contact and child support and the connection between the two. The latter draw heavily on their own definition of social capital which encompasses fathers' level of commitment to the child and

the provision of material resources. Interestingly, however, these ethical discourses circumvent and submerge gendered social power relations and their emphasis can be seen as a return to ideas of the 'equal but different' contributions of men and women in families, resonant of some feminist discourses in the nineteenth century which tended to disguise the superior social value accorded to the 'manly' characteristics accorded to fathers (see, for example, Maynard, 1989; Tosch, 1999).

The New Right

These shifts towards constructs of fatherhood which emphasised the value of father difference connected with discourses and social policies that were influenced by the New Right since the mid-1980s in the UK and earlier in the US. Although focussing mainly on fathers' contributions as economic providers the New Right also addressed the question of men's perceived loss of authority in families. At an ideological level it posed a 'crisis of masculinity' in which it was argued that men had lost their rightful place 'at the head of the table' in the family and in society, through feminism and women's 'selfish bids' for more autonomy and independence (Abbott and Wallace, 1992). New Right discourses, comprising both economic liberal and more traditional 'family values' arguments sought to influence economic policies in cutting back the welfare state and in strengthening the heterosexual nuclear family structure through social policies (Abbott and Wallace, 1992).

Within this set of not necessarily unitary ideas, 'single' mothers, including young never married and divorced mothers, were targeted as being a drain on social welfare resources, (particularly in relation to income support and housing) and as responsible for marginalising men's role in families (Duncan and Edwards, 1994; Laws, 1996). Coming from different political persuasions, New Right theorists such

as Murray (1990) and those from the Christian ethical socialist tradition (Halsey, 1992; Dennis and Erdos, 1992), viewed the visible increase in never married women who had children as salient in the growth of an underclass where young males were 'weakly socialised and weakly socially controlled' (Halsey, 1992: xiii). As Laws (1996) points out, this view attributes young men's criminal behaviour in areas of high unemployment to a lack of 'proper patriarchal control in the family' and sees women as inherently incapable of 'exerting parental authority' (Laws, 1996: 65). This connects to the second line of argument in the New Right thesis, which relates to the idea that fatherhood civilises men and gives them their sense of masculine identity (see also Williams, 1998). For example, Murray stated,

Supporting a family is a central means for a man to prove to himself that he is a 'mensch'. Men who do not support families find other ways to prove that they are men, which tend to take various destructive forms. As many have commented through the centuries, young males are essentially barbarians for whom marriage - meaning not just the wedding vows, but the act of taking responsibility for a wife and children - is an indispensable civilising force (Murray, 1990: 22-3).

Interestingly, the extent of men's violence towards women and children *in families* is ignored in such constructs of 'civilised behaviour' for men. Nevertheless, these discourses resulted in policy changes aimed at controlling and limiting autonomous motherhood, as well as attempts to socially engineer notions of the responsible 'breadwinner' father (Collier, 1995). Thus, the Child Support Act (1991) brought in changes whereby lone mothers who were on social security benefits were now coerced to be dependent on their children's biological fathers for maintenance. However, feminist advocates representing abused women and children did manage to get exemptions made to the Act which recognised that there could be exceptions where mothers feared that they or their children would be harmed (Child Support Act, 1991: section 6(2)).

Father deprivation and children's welfare

Psychological constructs of father deprivation in the form of father absence and its effect on children are not new and have surfaced at various times during the twentieth century (Lewis and O'Brien, 1987). As seen above, they achieved a different salience during the 1980s, in conjunction with the concerns raised by fathers' rights groups and discourses of fathers' increasing participation in childcare in the home. Such constructs have therefore continued to play an increasing role in informing social policy changes and legal decisions that aim to construct father presence as essential to children's well being (Smart, 1989; Hooper, 1994; Collier, 1995).

By the 1990s, it was partially recognised by some US psychological researchers (at least) that many of the early studies were imbued with ideological considerations about children needing fathers in discourses of child development. In addition, there was also some limited recognition that these constructs of fathers' roles needed to be placed within their social and cultural and historical contexts and that father absence in itself did not affect children's well being (Marsiglio, 1995; Lamb, 1997).

There are numerous reviews of this evidence some of which, as has been seen above, aim to present a more 'balanced' picture. They have also taken place in different contexts and may overlap with other discourses such as the impact of divorce on children. Thus, some studies look at the significance of fathers' presence in families *per se* (see for example, Mott, 1993; Lamb, 1997) whilst others look at father absence in the context of father-child contact (usually post-separation) often in combination with the impacts of divorce and the 'conflicts' surrounding this (see

for example, Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Maclean and Eekelaar, 1997; Rogers and Pryor, 1998; Richards, 1999). However, most of these studies focus on similar issues, which relate to three main discourses. Firstly, they involve ideas about fathers providing appropriate role models for children, with some claiming a particular importance of this for boys, which also connect to arguments about the development of gendered and sexual identities. Secondly, they stress the significance of a father's emotional relationship with his children, embodied in notions of 'emotional attachment' and 'emotional deprivation' but which can be combined with arguments about fathers' 'special' and implied, superior contribution in giving children emotional support and approval. Thirdly, they relate to discourses of identity which have developed in relation to genetic fatherhood which concern arguments that children have problems if they do not 'know' their genetic parents (see, for example, Sturge and Glaser, 2000).

Over and beyond these three areas, as has been seen earlier, such arguments can be combined with other different and 'special' contributions that fathers make, for example, in the impact on children's cognitive development (Mott, 1993) or in relation to material resources for families (see, for example, Maclean and Eekelaar, 1997). Not surprisingly, perhaps, these reviews have highlighted the ambiguous and contradictory nature of the evidence, where there are no clear conclusions that father presence or absence makes a difference (see also Hooper, 1994). Moreover such studies may contradict some of these assumptions. For example, Lamb (1997), in his review of the evidence on the significance of father presence to boys' masculine identities (which in themselves have been problematised by feminists), suggests that,

The validity of the interpretation [that boys could not acquire strong masculine identities in lone mother families] is challenged by the fact that many boys without fathers seem to grow up quite normally, so far as sex role development and achievement are concerned (Lamb, 1997: 11).

This is a finding that has been confirmed by studies of children growing up with lesbian mothers where there has been no father presence from birth (Tasker and Golombok, 1997).

Moreover arguments that father presence is essential for children's cognitive development has been challenged by Mott, who states that,

the presence or absence of the father matters less for cognitive development for black and white children than does the quality of the child's environment - the presence of caring individuals and the extent to which they are willing to work and stimulate their children (Mott, 1993: 123).

In addition, Quinton et al., (1998) in a review of the research evidence in relation to children looked after away from their birth families, have challenged the notion that a child's identity and development are affected by not knowing his or her genetic parents. Further, in his general overview, Marsiglio (1995) states that 'fathers' greater involvement with their resident and non-resident children does not necessarily enhance children's wellbeing at the aggregate level'. Moreover he acknowledges that father involvement may have a harmful impact where they are 'abusive and /or intensify friction within their children's home through negative impacts with their mother' (Marsiglio, 1995: 10).

The impacts of divorce and separation

Other studies have focussed on the relational, economic and structural factors that are viewed as affecting children after the break-up (often through divorce) of heterosexual nuclear family formations. However, as Neale and Smart (1998) point out these discourses invariably take a negative approach that regards all children as the 'vulnerable and damaged victims of family breakdown,' regardless of individual circumstances (see, for example Cockett and Tripp, 1994). Such studies have looked at factors such as: the 'emotional stress' on children caused by 'conflict' within heterosexual relationships both before and after divorce (Amato and Kieth, 1991); the 'benefits' of father-child contact and the effects of 'material deprivation' on the children of these families (Maclean and Eekelaar, 1997). Maclean and Eekelaar (1997) provide one review of the research evidence in this area and in the ensuing discussion, I shall draw heavily on their account in looking at the purported effects of divorce on children.

Interparental conflict

In addressing relational factors, Maclean and Eekelaar (1997) suggest that it is 'family processes' which are important to a child's emotional well being and that these are worsened in relation to 'conflict' between parents during marriage and may be further aggravated post-separation (Camera and Resnick, 1989; Hess and Camera, 1989; Kline et al., 1991; cited in Maclean and Eekelaar, 1997: 53-55). These are confirmed with evidence from longitudinal studies that looks at factors of 'impaired behaviour' in children, pre and post-divorce (Elliot and Richards, 1991; Cherlin et al., 1992). What is not apparent, however, is what conflict between parents actually means in this context. Clearly at times it seems to include 'verbal

attacks' and 'physical anger' and here it is suggested that the impact on children is greater (Camera and Resnick, 1989: cited in Maclean and Eekelaar, 1997: 55). On the other hand these and other forms of conflict are presented in a gender neutral context, so that the unequal power dimensions between men and women in interpersonal relations, particularly in relation to domestic violence, go unrecognised. This in turn can lead to interpretations which suggest that, in the post-separation context, the impact on children can be lessened mainly through the 'cooperation' of separated parents and the adoption of conflict resolution strategies (Maclean and Eekelaar, 1997: 55).

Father-Child Contact

At best, the evidence presented on this issue appears contradictory and ambiguous. Maclean and Eekelaar (1997) refer to a number of studies that find no association between father child contact and children's well being, and some which include negative effects of such contact. For example, they cite Furstenburg et al.'s US study (1987), which looked at a number of different factors on children's well being, where there was no evidence that father-child contact benefited children. These conclusions were based on a random sample of 227 children who were interviewed post-divorce, as well as interviews with their teachers and mothers. Moreover, this study found that those who had no paternal contact for five years did better than those who had 'up to 13 days contact' in the previous year (cited in Maclean and Eekelaar, 1997:54). Such findings were also confirmed by Kline et al (1991). Maclean and Eekelaar also cited other studies where paternal contact was associated with poorer outcomes for children where there was a high level conflict between parents (see, for example, Johnston et al., 1989; Buchanan et al., 1991). Further, from their own research Maclean and Eekelaar (1997) concluded that the

quality of contact was affected by conflict and that children were least likely to benefit where this was high.

Despite the ambiguous nature of the research evidence overall on father-child contact and some minimal recognition that there are circumstances where it may not be desirable (see, for example, Marsiglio, 1995; Rogers and Pryor, 1998; Richards 1999), fathers' presence has come to be seen as 'vital' to children's welfare (Neale and Smart, 1998). In addition, Neale and Smart point out that this is 'regardless of what (if any) kind of relationship they may have previously shared with the child,' (1998: 7). Thus, even where children have never had any previous relationship with biological fathers, it is considered desirable that they should do so, and this is reflected further in changes to family law policy, discussed below.

Moreover as Hooper (1994) highlights, concerns about child abuse by fathers and the impact of domestic violence on children are at best marginalised and at worst made invisible in this hegemonic premise. In her review of the evidence of the impact of divorce and parental relationships post-separation, whilst recognising that some children might benefit from father-child contact, she argues that,

Children's needs must be detached from their current conflation with ongoing relationships with their fathers; they must be addressed in their own right. At the moment, contact too often provides a means for children to meet the needs of fathers rather than vice versa (Hooper, 1994: 98).

The idea of children meeting fathers' needs, as highlighted by Hooper, has often been central to discourses of fatherhood in relation to child contact, but has been submerged in ideas of paternal deprivation and loss and will be addressed further in ensuing chapters.

Family law policy changes

The demands of fathers' rights groups, together with changing discourses about fathers' involvement with children and discourses of paternal deprivation, were eventually institutionalised in the Children Act (1989). This Act gave both married fathers and mothers automatic shared 'parental responsibility' on divorce and made it easier for unmarried fathers to apply to the courts for parental responsibility. The notion of shared parental responsibility between married parents addressed the concerns of groups like Families Need Fathers who had wanted joint custody on divorce; although it should be noted that parental responsibility was defined slightly differently from previous concepts of custody and gave each parent the power of independent action, when the children are with them (see Bainham, 1990). Section eight of the Act also provided for new orders for residence and contact, which could be made by the courts where there were disputes between parents. However, underlined in the act is the principle that the courts should not interfere with the notion that parental responsibility continues beyond divorce. This was based on assumptions that parents should cooperate and agree about arrangements for the children and the courts should only intervene to protect the welfare of the child (Bainham, 1990). Thus, ideas of continued parental responsibility allied with the court's discretion to interpret children's welfare, have been central to the way the case law has developed in this area. This has been informed by assumptions which brought about the Act, namely that fathers were being unfairly treated on divorce by mothers who were regarded as 'unreasonably' denying them contact and that (as in the father deprivation thesis) it is 'almost always' in the best interests of children to have ongoing contact with fathers (see *Re O (Contact: Imposition of Conditions)* [1995] 2FLR 124) (Smart and Neale, 1997; Hester and Harne, 1999).

Discourses of children's welfare and rights

The Children Act (1989) also encodified earlier case law on the meaning of children's welfare as the 'paramount consideration' for the courts and introduced a welfare checklist, to which the courts should 'have regard,' (Children Act, 1989, s.1.3). These included various factors such as: 'any harm which he [sic] has suffered or is at risk of suffering,' and 'the capabilities of each of his parents,' in 'meeting his needs.' Although, as Smart and Neale (1997) noted, these different factors were mainly ignored by the subsequent case law. For example, they indicated that when legal practitioners attempted to 'resurrect' the welfare checklist in a particular case, this was seen as placing too great a burden on the 'non-residential parent,' who 'would have to 'prove his worth' (Re M (Contact: Welfare Test [1995] 1FLR 274) cited in Smart and Neale, 1997: 335).

However, the welfare checklist also gave some limited recognition to children's 'participatory' rights in the form of having regard to 'children's wishes and feelings.' (Children Act, 1989, s.1.3.a). This recognition indicated a slight shift from earlier family law discourses of children's welfare where children had been perceived mainly as dependents and lacking the competence to express their own needs (Piper, 1996). It also reflected to some extent, changing social ideas about children, childhood, and children's social status, which have been emphasised in the work of sociologists, rather than psychologists (see for example James and Prout, 1990; Qvortup et al., 1994; Hill and Tisdall, 1997). Hill and Tisdall, for example, drawing on these sociological ideas have highlighted the tensions between social constructions of children which regard them, on the one hand, as 'deficient in terms of adult capabilities' and as 'passive objects' who need to be 'moulded through

adult socialisation processes', and on the other, as agents who are 'competent' to define their own interests and needs within their own terms (Hill and Tisdall, 1997: 13). They also highlight the connections between these constructions and the social status of children and their relative lack of social power. Thus, how far the voices of children may be listened to and given credence within legal and social welfare discourses, relates to the social status accorded them by adults, and how far children's interests are perceived as conflicting with adult interests. However, as has been seen earlier from feminist analyses, both children's and adult interests are informed by gendered, as well as other social relations of power and these also affect the status accorded to children's wishes.

In this latter respect, Freeman (1998) has noted that the English courts have been generally reluctant to take account of children's views and has argued that the move to give them more participatory rights was partly a consequence of the UK government ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989. Moreover he suggested that since these rights are dependent on an interpretation by the courts on whether the child has sufficient understanding and maturity, this allows for considerable discretion in their application. Thus, whilst there are possibilities for children to be listened to, this is by no means the same as granting them self-determination.

In practice, research with court welfare and mediation services has shown that children only seemed to be consulted in half the cases where there was a welfare report ordered and often still less in in-court mediation conducted by court welfare officers (Hester et al; 1997). This research also found a huge variation between court welfare officers' beliefs about the age when a child should be consulted, with

some believing this should be at three years, whilst others thought ten years (Hester and Pearson, 1997). In addition, this study suggested that even where children's views were sought, these were often overridden when professionals believed that they did not coincide with their own interpretations of a child's longer term needs often in circumstances where children had witnessed.

Accompanying the overriding presumption of contact for the non-residential parent, in the case law following the Children Act (1989), has been a parallel development which has been aimed at diminishing mothers' concerns in child contact disputes and which has been represented in the notion of mothers' 'implacable hostility,' to contact. Smart and Neale noted, in a review of cases since the Children Act, that the meaning of 'implacable hostility,' shifted from one where it was regarded as being a 'legitimate reason,' for opposing contact, to one which 'implies' that the mother is blocking 'a child's true welfare,' for 'irrational and spiteful' reasons (Smart and Neale, 1997: 333). They indicated that accompanying this notion of mothers' 'implacable hostility,' was also the idea that the courts and legal professionals should be far more 'robust' in their treatment of mothers opposing contact, regardless of their reasons for such opposition. Thus, they identified an increasingly punitive and oppressive approach towards mothers who were opposing contact mainly on the grounds of fears of further violence from ex-partners and/or fears of child abuse, or because of fears of neglect of children due to mental illness or alcoholism.

This included the committal of two mothers to prison (see, *Z v Z*, [1996] Family Law 62; *A v N*, 1997 (Committal: Refusal of Contact [1997] 1 FLR 533) and arguments for change of residency from the mother to the father. Moreover, they

noted that the presumption of contact was operating even in the most extreme cases where fathers had served prison sentences for severe violence towards partners or ex-partners and towards children. They therefore concluded that there was a 'a new orthodoxy' in family law policy and practice where it was almost impossible to raise any 'critical questions' about men's fathering and where fatherhood was viewed as entirely separate from other aspects of a man's identity or behaviour. This was underlined by examples from their own research on parenting post-divorce. Thus, they quoted a father who said, 'well you get serial killers and rapists still have contact with the kiddies – doesn't mean to say they're a bad father' (1997: 335), and a solicitor who stated,

the only time I lay down the law and I'm heavy-handed is if I've got a mother who's not allowing contact ...I try and beat everyone into submission....I've got a particularly difficult case at the moment where the mother has ...been subject to what seems to be some nasty incidents of violence and fled the area specifically to get away. Persuading her to get contact up and running again is very very difficult' (Smart and Neale, 1997: 333).

From a different perspective, feminist researchers who have looked at the court's decisions in the context of domestic violence and/or child abuse, have indicated that it is not only difficult for mothers to raise questions about men's fathering in this 'new' context, but that they may not be believed when they do. Thus, Humphrey's (1997) noted from her own research on child abuse that mothers who raised concerns about child sexual abuse in the context of divorce were often demonised as 'falsely accusing mothers,' and regarded by the family courts as inventing 'malicious' allegations (Humphreys, 1997). In addition, Hester and Radford (1996) argued that mothers' fears of violence from their partners and its impacts on children in the post-separation context were viewed

as exaggerated and therefore they were not regarded as significant enough to affect children's welfare.

Moreover, in this context, mothers are assumed to have manipulated and coached children when the latter express reluctance to have contact with their fathers to court welfare officers (see *Re O*, 1995, as above and *Re P (Contact: Supervision)* [1996] 2 FLR 314). This idea has been further developed in the construction of a new psychological discourse - that of parental alienation syndrome (PAS), which has been imported from the US by fathers' rights groups and supported by a number of lawyers (see, for example, Willbourne and Cull, 1997; Maidment, 1998). Maidment, in promoting the need for the recognition of PAS by the courts suggests some alternative 'radical solutions' to deal with it. These include: a change of residence from the mother's to the father's home; the psychological treatment of the child to 'counter the effects of parental alienation', which could include the use of care proceedings; and more robust use of committal (to prison) proceedings for the implacably hostile parent (Maidment, 1998: 265)

In contrast, Neale and Smart (1998) indicate that, behind the idea of the parentally manipulated child, is another assumption where children in general are viewed as so intellectually and emotionally incompetent that they need to be protected from themselves as well as 'hostile' mothers (see also Fortin, 1998). Further, Piper (1997) argued that such legal practices involved a denial of the limited notion of children's agency incorporated within the Children Act and could also be viewed as being in contradiction to 'public' child protection discourses which placed more emphasis on according children a voice and gave them separate representation in child protection proceedings. In addition, Neale and Smart noted that there was a gendered double

standard applied in the case law, since fathers who had residence but opposed a mother's contact were not defined as implacably hostile, nor as parentally manipulating their children.

Children's rights and protection from harm

Although the welfare checklist in the Children Act (1989), stated that the courts should take account of the 'risk of harm,' to a child in considering contact and residence, feminist researchers on domestic violence and child abuse have highlighted the contradictory ideas contained in discourses of children's welfare and rights in this context (Hester and Radford, 1996). For example the right to be protected from harm in the form of abuse and neglect (Article 19: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) has conflicted with and been given lower priority than family law professionals' definitions of greater harms. Hester and Radford's research (1996) indicated that even where legal professionals believed there were risks to children from paternal abuse these were overridden by ideas that such contact was better for them in the long run. These views have also been evidenced in the case law (see Re O, 1995; Re P, 1996 cited above). For example, in the appeal of Re M (Contact: Supervision) [1998] Family Law: 71) the judges held that supervised contact should be granted to a father where there was a clear risk of abuse to the child on the grounds that there was a need to take a 'long term view of a child's development.' Moreover the rights of parents to inflict 'reasonable,' corporal chastisement on their children remain legal within English law (see Freeman, 1998) and can therefore be seen to conflict with children's rights to be protected from abuse.

Further policy changes

Partially as a consequence of feminist research highlighting the impact of domestic violence on children (Hester and Radford, 1996), and the activism of women's groups concerned about domestic violence and child contact (see Hester and Harne, 1999), by the late 1990s, the overriding presumption of contact was being overturned in a few cases where severe domestic violence had occurred (see, for example, *Re D (Contact: Reasons for Refusal)* [1997] 2 FLR 48) and *Re M (Contact: Violent Parent)* [1999] 2 FLR 321). The latter case in particular was significant in that the high court judge raised the question of a violent father needing to demonstrate that 'he was a fit person to have contact,' and the need for violent fathers 'to change' (Wall, 1999: 321). Such cases also challenged the idea that mothers who opposed contact were always 'irrationally' implacably hostile. By 1999, the Lord Chancellor's Department had initiated a consultation on domestic violence and child contact (Children Act Sub-committee, 1999) which included looking at changes that had occurred in other countries as a response to the problems posed by fathers' domestic violence in cases of contact.

For example, in New Zealand (Busch and Robinson, 1994; Kaye, 1996; Chetwin et al., 1999) the law was changed following a review which indicated the extreme harm to children which could occur, when violent fathers' parenting was ignored in contact and custody decisions. This review and the legal changes which followed were precipitated by the killing of three children by a father who was already charged with rape, but who had been awarded interim custody by the family courts.

The legal changes, which were enacted in the Guardianship Act (1995), included a presumption against a violent parent having custody and unsupervised access ‘unless the court is satisfied that the child will be safe,’ (Guardianship Act, 1995, s 16B (4)). Significantly, in the following section (16B (5)) it provided a checklist of risk factors that the court had to assess in relation to safety, which included:

the nature and seriousness of the spousal or child violence, how recently and frequently the violence occurred, the likelihood of further violence occurring, the physical or emotional harm caused to the child by the violence, the opinions of the other party and the child, and any steps taken by the violent party to prevent further violence (Kaye, 1996: 6)

Further, a review of this legislation indicated that children were far safer as a result of violent fathers only being allowed to have supervised contact, although this in itself was not a guarantee of safety and some children continued to be abused (Chetwin et al., 1999).

Similarly, in the US a Model Code on Domestic and Family Violence was developed in 1994 by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, which included rebuttable presumptions against a violent parent having custody or unsupervised access, and was adopted in various forms by several states (Jaffe et al., 2003). In addition, in Northern Ireland a new article was enacted in 1998 (The Family Homes and Domestic Violence Order, Article 12. A.), which required the court to take account of the impact of domestic violence on children, when considering contact or residence, when an anti-molestation order was in place (Office of Law Reform, 1998).

However, despite relevant legislative models and evidence of several children and or mothers being killed as a result of direct contact being ordered in England and Wales (see, for example, WAFE, 1999; Humphreys, 1999), the Children Act Sub-

committee decided that legal change was unnecessary and instead issued guidance for the courts to follow (Children Act Sub-committee, 2000). This was followed by decisions in four appeal cases (Re L; Re V; Re M; Re H (Contact: Domestic) [2000] 2 FLR: 334) which indicated that very severe domestic violence could be a 'cogent' factor where the courts could deny or limit contact. In addition, the appeal judgements directed the courts to pay some attention to a father's conduct and his ability to acknowledge the impact of his violence on his children. An experts' report was also commissioned to inform the judgements (Sturge and Glaser, 2000) and is discussed further below.

Nevertheless, both the appeal judgements and the conclusions of the Children Act Sub-committee, made it clear that domestic violence did not override the presumption of contact established in Re O, (1995) cited above. This stated that the courts 'should take the long term view of the child's development and not accord excessive weight to what appear likely to be short-term and transient problems' (Re O (Contact: Imposition of Conditions) [1995] 2FLR 124). Thus, they failed to set up any rebuttable presumptions in relation to domestic violence and continued to imply that except in the most severe cases of domestic violence contact should continue.

The guidance from the Children Act Sub-committee (2001) directed the courts to make findings of fact that domestic violence had taken place; to consider the safety of the children and residential parent in making orders for contact and to consider whether contact needed to be supervised. They were also directed not to reveal the address of children and parents who had fled the family home as a result of domestic violence. In addition, the renamed child and family reporters

(formerly court welfare officers) were directed to make an assessment of harm which the children had suffered and to make 'particular efforts' to ascertain children's wishes and feelings. Further, these court professionals were expected to assess the motivation of the parent seeking contact and whether he had the 'capacity to change and behave appropriately.' In addition, the courts could make it a condition of contact that violent parents had to attend local facilities to help them to address their violence. However, unlike the New Zealand legislation, one of their major shortcomings was that they gave no guidance on how to assess the impact of domestic violence on children, or the risks posed by violent fathers based on known risk factors and mothers' assessments of risk (see for example, Campbell, 1995; Radford et al., 1999). Thus they left this crucial issue to the subjective judgement and individual biases of family reporters and judges (see, for example, Aris et al., 2002). For example, the latter researchers have identified this lack of appropriate risk assessment, as a major weakness in family reporters' referrals for supervised or supported contact and suggested that orders for no contact would have been more appropriate, in several cases (Aris et al., 2002). This issue is discussed further in the ensuing chapters.

The expert report, commissioned to inform the appeal case judgements, although framed within psychological discourses of the benefits of contact discussed earlier, was much more wide-ranging and knowledgeable both about the impacts of exposure to domestic violence on children and inappropriate behaviour by violent 'parents' which could render them unsuitable to have contact. In particular, as a consequence of their review of the research in this area, Sturge and Glaser (2000) recognised that repeated exposure to domestic

violence from a violent parent and its ‘deleterious effects on children,’ (2000: 619) could render contact inappropriate. Further, in contrast to the case law and guidelines highlighted above, they stated that:

We consider that there should be no automatic assumption that contact to a previously or currently violent parent is in the child’s interest: if anything the assumption should be in the opposite direction (Sturge and Glaser, 2000: 623).

In addition, they acknowledged that children could be at risk where ‘the contact parent’ escalated the climate of conflict around the child and denigrated the resident parent. They also emphasised the relevance of the contact parent’s childcaring capacities. Thus, they argued that contact was inappropriate where this parent was ‘unable to consistently sustain the prioritisation of the child’s needs,’ or where he showed ‘little interest in the child,’ or provided ‘unstimulating experiences.’ Further, they stressed the importance of addressing children’s wishes, which included children from the age of six, and the ‘damage’ that could occur if these were overridden (Sturge and Glaser, 2000: 618-620).

Further policies on enforcing contact

Nevertheless, despite this positive recognition of the harm a violent father could inflict on children during contact, another sub-committee consultation (Children Act Sub-committee, 2001), undertaken as a response to the increasingly militant fathers’ rights movement (Guardian, 2001), looked at further measures to enforce contact. This report contained a number of mother-blaming discourses and argued that where mothers had been ‘hurt’ by their ex-partners they were unable to separate their own needs from those of the child (Children Act Sub-committee, 2001: 13) It also indicated further punitive measures to be used against mothers who refused to enforce contact on reluctant children. However

fathers were represented only as 'grieving' parents who were bereaved by the potential of 'permanent abandonment' on separation and divorce.

By the end of 2001, government statistics indicated that contact had been refused in only 1.3 per cent of cases, a decrease of over a half of cases from the previous year, (although as Humphreys noted, only a minority of contact cases came before the family courts (Humphreys, 2003: 419)). Further, a study undertaken by the National Association of Probation Officers (2002), which looked at 300 cases, found that 61 per cent involved allegations of domestic violence and that even where this was 'proved' the courts continued to order direct contact to abusive fathers in the vast majority of cases. Thus, this study indicated that the family courts were continuing to fail to address children's safety

At the end of 2002, the government also enacted an amendment to the definition of significant harm in the Children Act (1989) via the Adoption Act (2002) which included a requirement to consider the harm to children of witnessing domestic violence. This has not yet been implemented. The only other government measures to address this issue, at the time of writing, are proposals to extend the number of child contact centres and there are no further recommendations to extend the legislation (Home Office, 2003). The impact on children of government's failure to act in this area is discussed further in the next chapter.

Discussion

The policies discussed above, need to be seen in the broader context of a reconstitution of fatherhood, where men's fathering practices are viewed entirely separately from their violence and abuse (Eriksson and Hester, 2001; Scourfield and Drakeford, 2001). Thus, violent men can still be 'good enough' fathers whatever they have done to children and mothers. These discourses have partly come about because of the impact of fathers' rights movements and the way they have managed to control the meanings of fatherhood and violence (Morgan, 2002). But they are also underlined by New Labour concerns to encourage father-involvement with the children, as a means of dealing with 'problematic masculinities' in families, which remain theorised at the level of father absence and loss to children (Scourfield and Drakefield, 2001).

Chapter 2 Children's experiences of violent fathers

Introduction – the extent of domestic violence

Understandings of children's experiences of domestic violence and its impact on them are affected by how domestic violence is defined and how far it is viewed as a gendered social problem (Humphreys, 2000; Radford, 2001). As Humphreys and Radford have noted, definitions of domestic violence have become highly contested in the UK with many professional agencies using different definitions and varying their recognition of such violence as a gendered phenomenon. For example, Radford (2001), in her review of professional definitions, has indicated that there are increasing moves towards defining domestic violence in a gender-neutral way. She argues that these shifts can be seen partially as a consequence of the social power of men's and fathers' rights groups who have drawn on equal opportunities discourses and family violence research perspectives from the US (Straus and Gelles, 1986) to support claims of mutual violence between men and women (see for example, FNF, 2003).

In addition, agencies may include violence between women and between men in lesbian and gay relationships in their definitions. However, such inclusions may obscure the extent of heterosexual men's violence towards women (Pence and Paymar, 1993). Some definitions of domestic violence may also include violence or abuse from other family members and are particularly relevant to South Asian women's experiences of violence living in collective family systems.

Nevertheless, research in this area indicates that they are also likely to be

experiencing violence from their partners (Mama, 1989; Southall Black Sisters, 1993; Choudry, 1996; Mullender et al., 2002).

Further, understandings of domestic violence as a gendered social problem, depend on what counts as domestic violence and the way data is collected in different research studies. For example, US family violence researchers have tended to assess the extent of domestic violence through single physical acts based on a measurement known as the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) which has suggested that women are equally as violent as men in partner relationships (Straus and Gelles, 1986). This approach has been widely criticised by other researchers for not looking at the impact of such acts and not looking at the contexts in which such acts are perpetrated (see, for example, Dobash and Dobash, 1992). A similar approach has been taken in one of the more recent British Crime Surveys (Mirrlees-Black, 1999). This study also focussed on single physical acts and suggested almost the same rates of violence between men and women, using a computer-assisted self-report questionnaire. However, another survey undertaken in Scotland (The Scottish Office, 2000) conducted a follow-up study on men's self-reports, which suggested that one in three incidents of violence were carried out by women partners. This study (Gadd et al., 2003) found that a quarter of the 90 men who had previously stated that they experienced domestic violence in the original survey, had misunderstood the phrase 'domestic abuse' believing it to refer to property crimes committed in the home and had never experienced such abuse. In addition, half the men described their partners' assaults as rare events, which were often self-defence responses to their own domestic violence. In total,

it found that only 9 of the 90 men involved in the original survey regarded themselves as 'victims' of domestic violence who had been harmed in some way. This research therefore suggests that some of the data collected on domestic violence in such surveys may be unreliable owing to the methods used.

However, even the findings from the British Crime Survey (Mirrlees-Black, 1999) indicated that men and women were not equally harmed and found women were far more likely to experience repeated attacks as well as physical injuries. They also found that most men were far less frightened or upset by their experiences of women's violence. Similar findings have been noted more recently by family violence researchers in the US (Gelles, 1997) and by qualitative research undertaken with couples in the UK (Nazroo, 1995). This latter study found that all the 100 men interviewed used 'threatening violence,' which was based on a combination of repeated physical attacks, intimidation and humiliation of their partners and was aimed at inflicting both physical and psychological harm. In contrast, women rarely used this kind of violence. Moreover, women's violence usually consisted of one-off acts such as a slap or throwing an object or was violence used in self-defence. Thus, this study also indicated different intentionalities in the use of violence by men and women in heterosexual partner relationships and suggested that men's violence was deliberately used to inflict harm (Nazroo, 1995).

Feminist surveys on men's domestic violence have taken broader definitional approaches, noting inter-connections between different forms of abuse such as physical, sexual and emotional abuse (see, for example, Mooney, 1993; Dominy and Radford, 1996; Henderson, 1997; Stanko et al., 1998).

For example, Mooney's randomised survey of 571 women's experiences in Islington, found that a quarter had been repeatedly raped by their partners and almost 40 per cent had experienced 'mental cruelty.' This included 'verbal abuse' such as name calling and being humiliated in front of others and 'being deprived of money, clothes and sleep.' Many women were also prevented from leaving their homes (Mooney, 1993: 18). In addition, this study found that 27 per cent of women had experienced physical violence from partners at some time in their lives which involved forms of violence such as being punched, kicked, head-butted, half strangled and being 'attacked with a weapon or object' (1993: 28-30).

Mooney also highlighted the repeated features of such attacks and found that domestic violence cut across class and ethnic boundaries. Other local surveys referred to above identified similar patterns of domestic violence and taken together indicated a prevalence rate of one in four women experiencing domestic violence over a life-time (Home Office, 1999). In addition, both Mooney (1993) and Stanko et al. (1998) found a prevalence rate of one in ten women experiencing domestic violence each year.

Further, these surveys have indicated that such violence towards women does not

necessarily end on separation and that for at least a third of women it continues and may escalate at the point of leaving and in the post-separation context (Mooney, 1993; Mirrlees-Black, 1999; Kelly, 1999). In addition, as Humphreys (2000) has noted, perhaps the clearest evidence of domestic violence being a gendered social problem is indicated by Home Office statistics for domestic homicide, year on year. For example, in 2001, 108 women were killed by partners and former partners compared to 24 men killed by women partners, indicating that women are at least five times more likely to be killed in this context than men (Home Office, 2002). Moreover, as Dobash and Dobash (2001) have highlighted, women are more likely to be killed at the point of, or soon after separation, indicating that this is a particularly dangerous time for women – a finding confirmed by US studies (see, for example, Wilson and Daly, 1992).

Further, although it is not known exactly how many men are violent towards women partners since some are clearly serial offenders who are violent in several relationships (Hanmer et al., 1999), there are indications that this is extensive. For example, Mooney's Islington research (1993) interviewed 423 men about their use and attitudes towards domestic violence, and found that almost a fifth admitted to using physical violence at least once against their partners and only 37 per cent said they would never use violence in these circumstances. Thus the above studies indicate that men's violence towards women in partner relationships is commonplace and to some degree socially acceptable and has serious impacts on women in a way that women's violence towards their partners, for the most part, does not.

Feminist definitions of domestic violence

In contrast to defining domestic violence as single acts or incidents of physical abuse, feminist definitions view it as ‘a pattern of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and intimidation which escalates in frequency and severity over time...’ (Humphreys and Mullender, 2000: 6). In addition, it is viewed as a form of violence, which is used most frequently by men to establish their overall power and control of women in heterosexual partner relationships (Pence and Paymar, 1993). Such feminist understandings of domestic violence also locate it within broader perspectives of gendered power relationships and the way it has been socially and culturally legitimated and tolerated by state and other powerful social institutions (Radford and Stanko, 1996; Dobash and Dobash, 1998).

Children’s experiences

The above studies therefore indicate the extent and forms of violence against women that may be perpetrated by violent fathers or father figures and which children may be living with or experiencing post-separation in familial social contexts. Mirrlees-Black’s survey (1999) found that at least half of the women interviewed who had experienced domestic violence had children, indicating that large numbers are having to endure this situation.

In addition, there is now considerable international and UK research evidence that demonstrates that children are distressed by living with domestic violence from fathers or stepfathers (see, for example, Jaffe et al., 1990; Edleson, 1999a; Hester et

al., 2000; Humphreys and Mullender, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). This research denotes three overlapping contexts in children's experiences - the witnessing either directly or indirectly of fathers' violence towards mothers; situations where children can be 'caught up' in the violence and/or used in the abuse of the mother and situations where they themselves are being directly abused. This review therefore examines some of the key research evidence in these areas, focusing mainly on UK studies but discussing other international literature where relevant. Firstly, however, I discuss two major problems in relation to some of this research.

Developmental psychology and the lack of children's perspectives

Despite leading the way in highlighting the effects of domestic violence on children (see, for example Jaffe et al., 1990), a major problem with some of the North American research has been its reliance on the views of adults, instead of seeking children's views directly (Mullender and Morley, 1994; Mullender et al., 2002). One consequence of this approach has been a significant under-estimation of children's experiences of witnessing domestic violence (Jaffe et al., 1990; Edleson, 1999). In addition, even where research has been undertaken directly with children, it has frequently been carried out within positivist pathological frameworks which tend to rely on standardized psychological tests to assess a narrow range of 'effects' on children's 'development' rather than looking at the impact on their lives as whole, through the use of more open-ended methods (Edleson, 1999; Mullender et al., 2002).

Kelly and Radford (1998) argue that psychological frameworks which focus

mainly on 'effects' serve to exclude the broader social consequences of men's violence and fail to take account of the social and cultural contexts in which it occurs. Moreover, Mullender et al. (2002) indicate that these perspectives exclude children's individual interpretations of their own experiences, their coping strategies and their views on the most effective forms of intervention to assist them. Thus, as shown in chapter one in relation to legal perspectives, such frameworks can disempower children and prevent their voices from being heard, through assumptions that they are not competent to express their own views or that they are merely passive victims (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002).

However, a number of UK studies have specifically sought out children's accounts (see, for example, Abrahams, 1994; Higgins, 1994; Hague et al., 1996; Hendessi, 1997; McGee, 2000; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Mullender et al., 2002) and these children's voices will be emphasised in this review.

Fathers as perpetrators

Another major problem with some of the research is that it may render invisible the fact that the violent perpetrators are usually biological fathers or stepfathers who, therefore, have specific parental relationships with the children concerned (Abrahams, 1994). For example, Abrahams (1994), in one of the early UK studies which looked at the impact on children, stressed the importance of specifying the perpetrators' relationships with children, in order to 'refute the popular stereotype that men who are violent in families are often involved in transient relationships,' and are 'unrelated to any children in the household' (Abrahams, 1994: 24).

These omissions in research studies can therefore contribute to some of the ideologies discussed in chapter one, which suggest that fathers are not responsible for the violence. The invisibility of fathers as perpetrators can also lead to the failure to look at how their violence has affected their relationships with children (Edleson, 1999). For example, Edleson, in his US review on the impact of children witnessing domestic violence, noted that ‘little data exists on father child relationships in families, in which the father or another adult male is violent,’ and suggested that a ‘more careful analysis’ is needed on the impact of their violence on these relationships (Edleson, 1999: 863).

A further problem, as Abrahams noted above, is that some studies may not differentiate between fathers and stepfathers when reporting on men’s violence and its impact on children. These omissions may therefore fail to take account of children’s perceptions of different fathering relationships (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). Further, their absence may contribute to assumptions and arguments put forward by evolutionary psychologists (see, for example, Wilson and Daly, 1998), which suggest that, in the context of domestic violence, men in families are more likely to abuse directly stepchildren rather than their own genetic children.

There are, however, some US and UK studies which specify these relationships and which indicate that much of the direct physical and/or sexual abuse that children experience in this setting is perpetrated by biological fathers (see, for example, Bowker et al., 1988; Abrahams, 1994; Epstein and Keep, 1995; Farmer and Pollock, 1998; Hester and Radford, 1996; Hester and Pearson, 1998; Radford et

al., 1999; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). Moreover, even though studies undertaken directly with children indicate some differential treatment by stepfathers (see, for example, McGee, 2000) or that children have different feelings towards stepfathers (Mullender et al., 2002), no consistent patterns have been found. These aspects of children's perceptions are discussed in more detail below.

Another significant issue is that few studies have specifically focused on violent fathers' parenting practices when looking at the impact of their violence on children (Mullender and Morley, 1994; Hester et al., 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). This latter point has been emphasised by those concerned in researching child protection practice in relation to domestic violence in the UK (see, for example, Farmer and Owen, 1995; Hester and Pearson, 1998; Humphreys, 2000) where they have argued that a lack of focus on violent fathers in child protection practice can lead to unsafe outcomes for children and mothers.

However, one widely quoted study by the US researchers Holden and Ritchie (1991) looked at violent fathers' involvement in childrearing. It compared the views on aspects of fathers' parenting practices of 37 mothers of children (aged between two and eight years) living in shelters with a community sample of mothers who had not been abused. Mothers who had been abused reported that fathers were less likely to be involved in childrearing, more likely to be angry and irritated by children and more likely to over-punish children than the fathers described by mothers in the comparison group. This study has been generally used to suggest that violent fathers are less involved in childrearing activities than

other fathers (see, for example, Bancroft and Silverman, 2002). A later UK study by Radford et al. (1999) presented mothers' views on father involvement in the context of domestic violence and child contact. It reported that about a fifth of violent fathers had been involved in *some* childcaring activities. In this study, no comparison group was used but the level of father involvement did not appear very different from more general populations of fathers (see, for example, Burges et al., 1997; Warin et al., 1999). Nevertheless, Holden and Ritchies's study has been salient in highlighting violent fathers' behaviour towards children.

The other main focus on violent fathers' parenting has mainly been through the specialist literature on perpetrator programmes (see, for example, Mathews, 1995) although some literature is emerging for child welfare practitioners (see, for example, Daniel and Taylor, 2001; Bancroft and Silverman, 2002) and this is discussed further in the following chapter.

In addition, some of the UK studies cited above which have reported on children's views (although not specifically focussed on fathering practices) have described the children's feelings about violent biological fathers or stepfathers and the impact of the violent and abusive behaviour on them and their relationships (see, for example, Abrahams, 1994; Hague et al., 1996; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). Other UK studies have reported on children's perspectives on violence from fathers through their calls to a helpline (Epstein and Keep, 1995); through interviews collected from children in refuge work (Higgins, 1994) and through reports from children about contact with violent fathers at contact centres (Aris et al., 2002). Some studies have also reported very young children's feelings and

views about fathers through mothers' accounts, for example, in relation to child contact (Radford et al., 1999) or through refuge workers (Hague et al., 1996). Other studies have specifically highlighted the experiences of children from minority ethnic groups, particularly those from South Asia (see, for example, Hendessi, 1997; Mullender et al., 2002) and noted some of the differences and similarities for children in this context.

All this research is highly significant in providing rich information about children's perceptions of violent fathers and will be emphasised throughout this review. Moreover, despite the problems identified above, it will (where indicated in different studies) refer to fathers as the perpetrators in order to stress their specific responsibility for the violence and abuse and its impact on children. It will also discuss any differences in behaviour between violent biological fathers and stepfathers or other father figures, where this has been noted by researchers. In addition, whilst it is recognised that such research findings can have a number of implications for the policies and practices of different agencies, since this study is focussed on child contact, it will mainly draw out these implications in discussing the research.

Children's experiences of witnessing domestic violence

Canadian researchers Jaffe et al. (1990) emphasized that children 'witnessing' domestic violence involved a range of experiences. This included; observing fathers' being directly violent or threatening to mothers; overhearing it; seeing physical injuries and/or observing 'the emotional consequences of fear, hurt and

intimidation which may be very apparent to them.' (Jaffe et al., 1990: 17). They found that children were able to provide detailed accounts of events that parents had not been aware they had witnessed and noted that parents had considerably under-estimated children's own knowledge of the violence. In addition, they indicated that many children witnessed repeated acts of physical and emotional abuse towards mothers by their fathers and that some children observed such violence 'from multiple partners throughout their childhood' (1990:17). Thus, they highlighted that children could have different experiences of violence and suggested that prolonged exposure could have more severe impacts compared with those who have witnessed fewer violent events.

A number of UK studies which have included children's experiences of violence have noted similar findings. For example, Abrahams's study (1994), which involved a survey with 108 mothers attending family centres and indepth interviews with 7 girls aged between eight and seventeen, found that 87 per cent of mothers believed that their children had observed repeated physical and emotional abuse by violent fathers and a further 10 per cent had witnessed their mothers being raped. These mothers reported that four fifths of the violence was carried out by biological fathers. In addition, the children interviewed highlighted how witnessing fathers' often near-lethal physical violence created a climate of intimidation and fear which made them constantly anxious as they did not know what was going to happen next. As one child said, 'he just had like an aura around him, like it made you frightened all the time' (Abrahams, 1994: 33).

A later study by McGee (2000), who interviewed 54 children between the ages of

five and seventeen years as well as their mothers, found that 85 per cent of the children were present when their mothers were being physically or verbally abused; 58 per cent overheard the violence; whilst a further 27 per cent observed the consequences of the violence. She also noted that two thirds of the violence was carried out by the biological fathers of the children and indicated that over half were born into families where fathers were already violent.

One of the most recent UK studies (Mullender et al., 2002) interviewed 45 children between the ages of eight and sixteen and a further nine in groups. It found that the majority had experienced living with domestic violence throughout most of their childhoods. Two thirds of the perpetrators were biological fathers, with some children witnessing violence from second partners as well. This study aimed to explore the differences in children's experiences which had been suggested in some earlier research (Hague et al., 1996; McGee, 2000). It therefore sought to interview siblings in families and to look at age-related differences. It also set out to represent children's experiences from a range of ethnicities as well as abilities (since this diversity had been significantly under-represented previously) and included a sub-sample of 14 South Asian children. Moreover, since much of the previous research on children's experiences has been conducted in refuge settings (see, for example, Jaffe et al., 1990; Hague et al., 1996), half of the children in the sample were found from other settings. Further, where possible, children were tracked over the 18 months of the project, in order look at their 'changing situations and views' (Mullender et al., 2002: 40).

As a consequence of this approach, the authors were able to highlight the

complexity of children's experiences of observing violence. For example, they noted that the severity of the violence varied and that some older children in families remembered times when there had been less violence, whereas mothers reported that very young children had 'known nothing but a household ruled by fear and insecurity' (Mullender et al., 2002: 92). Thus, these authors warned against setting up 'models' which could over simplify such complexity.

In addition, they suggested that, whilst prolonged exposure could have a severe impact, some children's experiences indicated that living with shorter periods of escalating and near-lethal violence could be just as traumatic. Several children in this study described fathers' attempts to kill their mothers, as is illustrated in the following example:

He tried to get her to drink bleach, to pour it into her mouth while he held her there and, when he couldn't make her, he poured bleach all over her face and hair. He was trying to kill her. (15-year -old white boy) (Mullender et al., 2002: 94)

Witnessing other forms of abuse

These two latter studies also emphasised that children's experiences of non-physical forms of abuse, such as threats to kill, could create a similar atmosphere of intimidation and unpredictability as witnessing the physical violence and that whole families could become the targets of such threats, as is illustrated in the following accounts from children:

He used to always say that he was going to kill my mum, he used to always say that he was going to kill all my family and if like, and he really sounded serious like he would do it. (Mona, aged 17) (McGee, 2000: 62)

He used to say he was going to put petrol in the house and burn it whilst we were asleep.

We were always frightened he was going to do that. (8-year-old Asian girl) (Mullender et al., 2002: 183)

Further, both McGee and Mullender et al. stressed the frightening impacts for some children who directly witnessed or observed the consequences of their fathers' ongoing destruction or damage to property in the home, including their own possessions and toys. Such behaviour involved violent fathers throwing objects and furniture and inflicting damage to walls, doors and windows, with some fathers deliberately destroying children's own forms of decoration in their bedrooms or repainting rooms which created an atmosphere of intimidation and fear.

Witnessing emotional and psychological abuse

In addition, both the above studies emphasized that witnessing the emotional abuse and psychological control of their mothers could be just as frightening and disturbing to children as witnessing other forms of violence (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). For example, children described overhearing the constant shouting at, swearing and belittling of their mothers, by their fathers. The latter often took the form of criticizing a mother's ability to parent and this could be particularly disturbing and frightening for children, as indicated in the following account of a white girl aged twelve:

He was just hitting her with his hands and shouting and swearing at her - saying that she's horrible, she's wicked and that she's not a very good mummy. Just saying all horrible things to her and really hurting her making her cry and Mum couldn't do anything. I called the police. (Mullender et al., 2002: 183)

Using children in the emotional abuse and psychological control of their mothers

Moreover, these studies indicated that mothers were often deliberately humiliated and undermined in front of the children and that children could be drawn in to participating in such abuse as part of a strategy to undermine and destroy their relationships with their mothers (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). Both mothers' and children's accounts indicated that children could be very confused and upset by such strategies, as illustrated in the following example from a mother's account of her 8-year-old son's reactions to this form of abuse:

He just said to me last night, he said, 'Mum, my brain feels like a volcano as though all the lava is going to erupt and he said, 'I've only got a little brain, Mummy, why is he doing this to me? Why is he saying all these things?' (Kim) (McGee, 2000:70)

Another account from Mullender et al.'s study indicated that fathers' actions in trying to implicate children in the abuse of their mother, combined with witnessing physical violence towards her, could be equally disturbing:

One night he was proper bugging me, asking me all these questions about her: 'Was she this? Did she that?' And he got really angry and jumped out of bed and slapped my mum really badly. I was crying and crying....(16-year-old white boy) (ibid, 2002: 163).

These latter studies also demonstrated that fathers could try to implicate different siblings in families in the emotional abuse in order to create alliances against mothers, with the consequence that some younger children were left feeling emotionally confused or guilty that they were to blame for the abuse (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). McGee's research, for example, indicated that, even where young people had never witnessed the fathers' violence or been implicated in the emotional abuse of the mother, seeing it happen to other children in the family could still have lasting memories for them, as illustrated in the

following example:

I mean I had experienced verbal things he was saying to [my younger sister] like 'Call your mum a slut. Your mum's a f***** c***' I witnessed all that, but not actually any violence towards her. (Hannah, aged 15) (McGee, 2000: 63).

Other UK studies with mothers, which have looked the abuse of children in the context of domestic violence and child contact, have found that fathers can attempt to involve children not only in verbally humiliating mothers but also in participating in their physical violence when they were still living with them (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999). For example, Radford et al.'s survey with mothers involved 193 children, mainly under the age of five, who 'had known or lived with fathers prior to their parents' separation' (Radford et al., 1999: 15). It reported that fathers had attempted to use 43 per cent of children in the abuse of their mother. This included involving children in 'spying' on their mothers and getting them to join in the verbal abuse. A further 9 per cent were coerced or incited into participating in more physical forms of abuse, as illustrated in the following example.

(They were) encouraged to repeat 'your mother is a stupid woman, we'll spit on her. He had my daughter by the hand – she spat. (Radford et al., 1999: 15-16).

Mullender et al. (2002) point out that such attempts by violent fathers to undermine young people's respect for their mothers and mothers' parenting abilities do have an impact and, whilst some children as they get older see through their fathers' manipulations, others do not. Moreover, in the longer term, some children's confidence in their mothers may be undermined and their relationships destroyed (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). Yet, this profoundly destructive

aspect of violent fathers' parenting practices often goes unrecognized by professionals (Bancroft and Silverman, 2002).

A second major way in which these studies described fathers' use of children in the psychological control of mothers has been through threats of harm or through actually harming the children (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). Both these studies included examples of mothers being assaulted themselves when they tried to protect the children from their fathers' abuse and, in the latter study, one mother described being told that if she did not smack her child, the father would do so. Thus violent fathers could coerce mothers into participating in the physical abuse of children.

Another common method of controlling women and preventing them from leaving the relationship was through fathers threatening to abduct children or actually abducting children (McGee, 2000). Moreover, if mothers did leave home to escape the violence, threats to harm or kill the children could force them to return (Radford et al., 1999; McGee, 2000). In addition, mothers in some studies described fathers who always left the house with one child from the family because they knew that mothers would not leave without all the children (Hester and Radford, 1996; McGee, 2000). A further method identified in some studies involved fathers threatening or making actual allegations to social services that the mothers were 'unfit' (Mullender et al., 2002; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002). In the latter study, the authors reported that several women had had this experience and they noted that:

(this) is a particularly powerful threat as the woman will often be aware of the perpetrator's very convincing public face and fear that completely false allegations will be taken seriously. (Humphreys and Thiara, 2002: 86)

Moreover, some mothers may fear contacting social services themselves about a father's abuse of children because of fears that children will be taken into care or that they will be blamed for failing to protect the child (Hester et al., 2000).

All the forms of abuse discussed above need to be recognized as simultaneous emotional and psychological abuse of mothers and children where both are used and controlled by violent fathers (Kelly, 1994). Yet they may be accorded little significance by professionals in the family courts when addressing violent fathers' contact with children.

For example, the Canadian researchers, Jaffe et al.,(2003), referring to the lack of attention paid to violent fathers' parenting in relation to contact and custody decisions, state:

The impact of a batterer goes beyond the trauma of exposure to violence and tension in the home and involves undermining the other parent's authority...sowing divisions in the family, and using the children as a weapon...These issues are rarely addressed by custody evaluators and judges. (Jaffe et al., 2003: 31).

Links and overlaps with physical abuse of children

Humphreys and Mullender (2000) indicate that children can be physically abused in the context of domestic violence in a number of different ways. These include children being directly abused by fathers in separate contexts from the abuse of mothers; being 'accidentally injured' when caught up in the violence against the

mother and sometimes experiencing 'greater levels of physical punishment or abuse' from 'over-stressed mothers' (Humphreys and Mullender, 2000:59).

Fathers' direct physical abuse of children

A number of significant US studies have found that a father's chronic violence towards mothers is a key indicator of the likelihood that he will also be physically abusing the children. An early US study which focused on fathers' physical abuse of children in the context of domestic violence was that undertaken by Bowker et al. (1988). It found that 70 per cent of mothers and children living with domestic violence reported fathers as physically abusing their biological children (non-biological children were excluded from the sample (1988: 163). It also suggested some associations between the frequency and severity of fathers' domestic violence and the frequency and severity of physical child abuse and noted a pattern between violent fathers' levels of dominance in the family and their levels of violence and abuse. However, this study was based on 750 mothers' self-selected responses to a questionnaire in a women's magazine and was widely criticized for not using a randomised sample and for not addressing mothers' abuse of children (see, for example, Mullender and Morley, 1994). Nevertheless, it did throw some light on the patterns of power and control used by violent fathers in families and on the connections between the severity of domestic violence and the severity of abuse to children (Mullender, 1996; Edleson, 1999).

Stark and Flitcraft's study (1988) overcame some of the methodological problems identified in Bowker et al.'s study by matching the hospital records of children

identified as at risk of abuse with those of 116 mothers who were viewed as being likely to have been physically assaulted by partners. They identified 45 per cent of mothers with medical records which suggested a history of domestic assault and a further 5 per cent where there were indications of marital conflict and possible domestic violence. They also compared this group of women with a comparison group of mothers attending the hospital who were not identified as experiencing domestic violence. They found that children of mothers who had experienced domestic violence were twice as likely to be physically abused in this context, in contrast to mothers in the comparison group. Moreover, violent fathers were identified as being three times more likely to be the main abusers of children than those in the comparison sample. As a consequence of these findings, the authors argued that '[woman] battering is the most common context for child abuse' and 'the battering male is the typical child abuser' (1988: 7). Further, as in Bowker et al.'s study, they regarded the key factor in fathers' abuse as being 'male authority...directly expressed in violent control over women and children' (1988: 97).

Another US study based on a random community sample of 3,363 parents (Ross, 1996), using aspects of the CTS as its main measuring instrument, found that the more violent the father was to his partner, the more likely he was to physically abuse the children. A correlation of almost a 100 per cent in cases of ongoing male to female violence was indicated. This study also found a relationship between 'wife to husband violence' and the physical abuse of children (1996: 59) but as in Stark and Flitcraft's study, the relationship between domestic violence

and child abuse was found to be ‘three times higher for husbands than for wives.’ (1996: 595). Thus, this latter study tended to confirm findings from the two earlier studies discussed above and has been considered highly reliable, since it used a randomised sample. Further, Edleson’s review of 54 studies (1999) suggested that the level of overlaps between fathers’ abuse of women and their physical abuse of children ranged between 30 to 66 per cent.

In the UK context, several studies of child protection records have found links and overlaps between physical abuse and domestic violence, ranging from a third to almost two thirds of cases (Maynard, 1985; London Borough of Hackney, 1993; Gibbons et al., 1995; Farmer and Owen, 1995; Brandon and Lewis, 1996; Hester and Pearson, 1998).

Humphreys and Mullender (2000) have suggested that the variation in the connections between child abuse and domestic violence in child protection cases can depend on ‘who is looking for it; how knowledgeable they are about domestic violence; and whether active questioning occurs’ (2000: 59). For example, in a follow-up study of 44 files of cases of physical and emotional abuse of children carried out mainly by fathers and stepfathers, Farmer and Owen (1995) found twice the amount of domestic violence than was noted in the original case conferences. In a later study to assist the practice of NSPCC workers in this area, Hester and Pearson (1998) found that the overlaps between domestic violence and physical, sexual and emotional abuse increased by two thirds from the beginning to the end of the research project as practitioners became more aware of the links.

These overlaps were even clearer where the violent father was the main abuser of the children.

UK qualitative studies and surveys with children and/or mothers have also found clear overlaps between violent fathers' abuse of women and the physical abuse of children (see, for example, Abrahams, 1994; Epstein and Keep, 1995; Radford et al., 1999; McGee, 2000; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Mullender et al., 2002).

In Abrahams's questionnaire survey of mothers' experiences, more than a quarter of respondents said that their children had been 'hit or physically abused by the violent man who was usually their (biological) father' (Abrahams, 1994: 30). Further, this figure was seen as a probable under-estimate, due to mothers' fears of disclosing child abuse or because of different understandings of what the term 'abuse' might mean.

Epstein and Keep's study (1995) involved an analysis of a random sample of 126 calls from children over a six month period to ChildLine about domestic violence. They found that 38 per cent of their callers said that they or their siblings had been physically abused mainly by biological fathers in the context of domestic violence. Children described 'being hit with slippers, belts, poker, bottles and furniture' and 'being banged against walls or stairs' (Epstein and Keep, 1995: 53).

Moreover, several children had called the line because the physical abuse was so severe that they were too frightened to return home but did not know where to turn for help.

McGee's research indicated a higher level of physical abuse (52 per cent) than some earlier studies, owing to 'a broader definition' based on behaviours that 'produced feelings of intimidation' rather than 'actions narrowly defined as violence' (McGee, 2000: 52). Thus, in contrast to some US studies (see, for example, Ross, 1996, which generally did not include the physical punishment of children, unless it involved use of fists or a weapon), her definition took more account of the impact of various behaviours on children and included excessive physical punishment, such as hitting children too hard or around the head; throwing things at children and throwing children out of the way for some perceived misdemeanour as well as various other actions such as hanging children out of windows, pushing a child's head in the dishwasher and strapping a child to the bed.

In addition, McGee's research reported some differential treatment towards siblings in relation to 'harsh discipline', based on children's accounts, depending on whether they were the father's own biological children or stepchildren. However, no consistent pattern was indicated and stepchildren might be 'disciplined' more or less severely. This differential treatment of siblings was also identified in some children's accounts in the research by Mullender et al. (2002). Although in this study children did not necessarily refer to differences between fathers and stepfathers, they talked about fathers either favouring other siblings or specifically targeting them for abuse, as is illustrated in the following account from a South Asian child:

[He] didn't like my mother or my sister...He used to shout...He threw hot coffee on my sister. he used to bang her head on the floor and on the wall. (8 -year-old Asian girl)
(Mullender et al., 2002: 187)

When a range of intimidatory and harmful behaviours is included in the definition of abuse, other research with mothers has also found a high level of physical abuse of children by violent fathers (Radford et al., 1999). This study indicated that 53 per cent of children had been physically abused. It also reported on the abuse of very young children 'in the guise of discipline' when fathers were involved in looking after them (Radford et al., 1999: 14). For example, one mother described a toddler being 'shouted at and hit hard' for 'missing the potty and wetting the carpet.' Another related how her young daughter was 'grabbed by the back of the neck,' 'had her head 'repeatedly banged on a table,' and 'was called a 'stupid little shit' for misspelling a word (Radford et al., 1999:15). In addition, Humphrey and Thiara's research (2002), which interviewed mothers and children in relation to their experiences of domestic violence and their use of outreach services, highlighted that most of the 13 children interviewed had been physically abused or injured by violent fathers or father figures.

These studies therefore emphasise the inter-connections between domestic violence and child abuse and the importance of recognizing fathers' risks to children where they are domestically violent towards mothers. Further, as Farmer and Owen (1995, 2000) have noted, there is a specific need to focus on violent fathers' parenting practices in this context. However, their own research on child protection practice indicated that there could be different standards of what is regarded as acceptable behaviour towards children between fathers and mothers in

regard to physical abuse. For example, they described male social workers who, in two cases:

became strongly identified with the father's view of the family situation, taking on his viewpoint that the children were disobedient, and did not take action when the children were physically abused. The father's abuse was reconstructed as discipline, albeit occasionally excessive' (Farmer and Owen 2000:362).

In addition, Humphreys (2000) research on child protection practice found cases where a father's abuse was not challenged because he was seen as 'the cornerstone of the family' (2000: 11). Thus, both these studies indicated that practitioners' approaches to child abuse in the context of domestic violence could be highly gendered, where fathers' behaviour was excused and mothers were blamed.

Children being harmed when 'caught up' in the violence towards mothers

A number of the above studies also indicated that children were hurt when 'caught up' in the violence against their mother (see, for example, Abrahams, 1994; Radford et al., 1999; McGee, 2000). Both Abrahams' and McGee's research contained accounts from children who described being physically harmed when they had tried to intervene to protect their mothers. In addition, McGee described circumstances where children were harmed because fathers were 'reckless as to children's safety' when assaulting mothers, even if they had not intentionally set out to hurt the children. For example, a child was scalded when boiling water was thrown over the mother (2000: 53). Radford et al.'s survey with mothers, cited above, also described children being hurt through being too close to the violence and mothers being physically assaulted whilst they tried to shield children or infants who were in their arms.

Mothers' physical abuse of children in the context of domestic violence

Some studies have noted that, whilst violent fathers are more likely to physically abuse children, the stress of living with domestic violence can also increase the risks of abuse by mothers (see, for example, Holden and Ritchie, 1991; O'Keefe, 1995; Brandon and Lewis, 1996). Brandon and Lewis's child protection research discussed two case studies where mothers had been identified as physically abusing their children. However, it was noted that, once the mothers were away from their violent partners, the abuse stopped. This study emphasised the significance of protecting mothers in addressing the protection of children and demonstrated that their interests were inter-linked.

Pregnancy

An overview of research undertaken on women's experiences of domestic violence in pregnancy indicated that this was a key point when physical attacks on women could begin or when the violence could escalate thus increasing the risks to the unborn child (Mezey and Bewley, 1997). Further, a later survey of women in GP surgeries (Stanko et al., 1998) reported that 2 per cent of women believed they had suffered miscarriages as a consequence of the abuse experienced from their violent partners. Eight women in McGee's study (2000) reported that their partners' violence had started in pregnancy and they suggested that one reason for this was their partners' jealousy of the unborn child. Moreover, ten mothers described the physical violence being directed at the pregnancy itself where partners tried to force them to miscarry. Other studies have indicated that fathers'

violence against mothers can increase soon after birth, resulting in increased risks and, in some cases, the deaths of newly born children (see, for example, Gielan et al., 1994).

Child deaths

As seen above, the overlap between a father's or step father's domestic violence and physical abuse can, in its most extreme form, result in child deaths (James, 1994; O'Hara, 1994). Yet, in discussing the deaths of Sukina Hammond and Toni Dales, O'Hara noted that social services had already been working with their families and were aware of the domestic violence. They had, however, failed to take this context into account in assessing the dangers to child (1994: 57). In both these cases, it was recognized that mothers were experiencing severe physical violence from their partners who eventually killed the children, but the violence was seen as 'acceptable' and, because of this, the children were not viewed as being at risk. Moreover, although there is increasing recognition that living with domestic violence can be a context of risk to children by child protection agencies (see, for example, Department of Health, 1999; Humphreys, 2000), this recognition does not usually extend to the risks posed by a violent fathers' contact with children post-separation. The killings of children in this context are discussed in further detail below.

As seen above, chronic domestic violence indicates increased risks to children in the form of physical abuse. Further, some US studies, which compared children who had 'only' witnessed domestic violence with those who had also been physically abused, suggested that the latter group were worse affected (Hughes,

1988; Sternberg et al., 1993; O’Keefe, 1994). McGee (2000), however, from her depth study with children argues that the impacts of witnessing physical and psychological violence towards mothers combined with fathers’ extreme control and mental cruelty towards children can be equally severe.

Violent fathers’ mental cruelty and extreme control of children

A number of the UK studies with mothers and children have indicated that some violent fathers’ engage in extreme forms of control and mental cruelty towards children (Abrahams, 1994; Hague et al., 1996; Mullender et al., 1998; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). For example, Abrahams’ study included mothers’ reports of extreme control of children, as illustrated in the following account:

It would be 11 o’clock at night....he wouldn’t let my daughter go to bed. He made her just sit there all evening, and I kept on saying to her go to bed, and he’d say. ‘She’s not f...ing well going anywhere...she will go when I tell her (Abrahams, 1994: 32).

The research with mothers and children in refuges (Hague et al., 1996) also indicated that aspects of violent fathers’ control, although it fell short of physical abuse, could be extremely damaging to children. For example, one mother stated:

He never hit K, but, every time he cried or anything he used to put him in his pushchair and make him sit there all day long. So he wasn’t allowed to walk around. He was very quiet... he never used to bother playing he just used to sit (Hague et al., 1996:44).

Similar forms of control were described by mothers in Mullender et al.’s study:

They were never allowed to talk, they were never allowed to play, they had to be quiet. My son did not talk until a year after we left the refuge, because that’s what they did at home. He [the father] always slept on the settee ...in the daytime....We used to have to

keep it very, very quiet They knew what he was like, I never had to say anything. Sometimes I made excuses. (white mother) (Mullender et al., 2002: 159)

McGee's research indicated that children's movements could be controlled to such a degree that, in any other context, it would be regarded as imprisonment. For example, children described being locked in their rooms, or only being allowed out of their bedrooms to eat:

I wasn't very happy and we [my sister and I] wasn't allowed down in the front room at all, we had to stay in our bedrooms. We had to stay, the only time we could come out was when we eat. (Ralph, aged 9) (McGee, 2000: 54)

Her study also highlighted several other forms of controlling and cruel behaviour some of which was reflected in the other studies cited above. These included sleep deprivation; destroying children's toys; harming pets; destroying school work and reports; not allowing children to play outside the home; not allowing them to speak to their mother and not allowing friends to phone or come to the house.

In addition, she stressed that some children were directly emotionally abused by their fathers by being criticized and undermined in a similar way to their mothers. This included calling children names and deliberately humiliating them and some fathers making fun of children's disabilities. In both McGee's and Mullender et al.'s studies, older girls described being called 'slags' and 'sluts' by their fathers, and, for Asian young women, this could have particular impacts as is illustrated below:

He has never liked me. He has always threatened me and said I will do badnaami [get a bad name] – bring shame on the family. He used to say I slept around. Really Auntie [to the researcher] my own father! He also called my mum names... (16-year-old South Asian girl) (Mullender et al., 2002:141)

As a whole, these studies suggest that some violent fathers' extreme control of children followed similar patterns to their extreme control of mothers - children had little freedom of movement or speech, they were isolated from others and their lives at home were restricted in many ways. Yet, when considering fathers' contact with children, legal and social welfare professionals may not generally recognize this aspect as a harmful form of maltreatment which limits children's lives and undermines their identities (Radford et al., 1999).

Links and overlaps with the sexual abuse of children

As the US practitioners Bancroft and Silverman (2002) note, there is less recent knowledge and understanding that fathers who are domestically violent may also be sexually abusing children in the families, although, as seen in chapter one, these connections were made by feminists in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see, for example, Jeffreys, 1985; Gordon, 1988). This may be partially due to the fact that, in the late twentieth century, men who sexually abuse have been socially constructed within pathological medical frameworks as 'abnormal men' and are therefore perceived as being substantially different from more 'normal' men in families (Kelly and Humphreys, 2000). Daniel and Taylor (2001), for example, in looking at fathers 'as risks,' argue that 'the characteristics of sexual abuse perpetrators are in some ways different from the characteristics of perpetrators of other forms of abuse,' and they suggest that this is because their 'planning' and 'seductive behaviour' indicate that they are 'addicted' to sexual abuse (Daniel and Taylor, 2001: 156).

In contrast, Bancroft and Silverman indicate that there are a number of similarities

between those fathers who perpetrate violence against mothers and their sexual abuse of children. For example, drawing on research by Groth (1982), they suggest that their sexual abuse of children is partially based on their sense of 'entitlement as head of the family' to sexual access of their daughters and is similar to beliefs of entitlement to sexual and other services from their wives (Bancroft and Silverman, 2002: 91). Thus, these latter ideas relate to highly gendered ideas about violent men's perceptions of 'ownership' of women and children in families and are discussed further in chapter three.

However, despite the lack of public attention to connections between domestic violence and child sexual abuse until fairly recently, Hague et al., (1996) noted that such links were being made by refuge workers since the early 1980s in the UK. Studies of child protection records and practice during the 1990s (Farmer and Owen, 1995; Farmer and Pollock, 1998; Hester and Pearson, 1998) have also strengthened knowledge about these links and overlaps.

For example, Farmer and Owen (1995) found that domestic violence by fathers and stepfathers was evident in two fifths of cases of sexual abuse in their study of 44 case files. In a more extensive study (Farmer and Pollock, 1998) where the researchers looked at the case files of 250 children in care, it was found that 38 per cent of 96 sexually abused and/or sexually abusing children, had previously been living with domestic violence. In the more detailed follow-up sample of 36 sexually abused children, the number who had been living with domestic violence rose to 55 per cent and the authors stated 'this is likely to be an under-estimate as violent relationships often go unreported' (Farmer and Pollock, 1998: 54).

However, whilst the above studies identified links between domestic violence and sexual abuse, the perpetrators of sexual abuse varied. In the Farmer and Pollock study, for example, 16 per cent was carried out by biological fathers and 14 per cent by stepfathers and the rest was mainly perpetrated by other males.

A further study by Hester and Pearson (1998) found direct connections between sexual abuse carried out by fathers or father figures and their domestic violence. These authors looked at 111 case files and discovered that 83 sexual abuse cases had involved children living with domestic violence and, in 69 per cent of these cases, the abuser was the father or father figure. In addition, they found that children who were identified as being sexually abused by violent fathers also experienced physical and emotional abuse from the same men. Sexual abuse of children by violent fathers or stepfathers has also been indicated in studies that have focused specifically on issues of child contact (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999). In the Hester and Radford study, cited above, five children were reported as being sexually abused by fathers when still living with them. In Radford et al.'s survey (1999), 27 children (14 per cent of the 193 children living with violent fathers) were reported as being sexually abused by their fathers, which included: 6 children who were forced to watch pornography; 5 who were forced to watch sexual acts; 11 who were sexually penetrated, and 27 who were abused through touching, with some children experiencing more than one form of abuse (1999: 38)

McGee's qualitative study (2000) provides some direct accounts from children

about their experiences of sexual abuse in the context of domestic violence, even though they were not directly asked about this in their interviews. In this research, six children disclosed that they had been sexually abused (11 per cent of the whole sample)- three by their biological fathers and three by stepfathers. In addition, these accounts illustrated how hard it was for children to disclose sexual abuse when violence was being perpetrated against their mothers. They echoed mothers' perceptions of children's difficulties in disclosing sexual abuse whilst still living with a violent father (see Forman, 1995, discussed below). For example, one girl related how her father had told her that he would kill her mother if she told anyone and backed up this threat by 'holding a knife to her throat' (McGee, 2000: 56). Another girl recounted how the emotional manipulation by her father made it more difficult for her to tell anyone about the abuse:

He used to touch me like that when I was in bed. He used to always sort of sit down and go on about how we didn't love him and things and he was going to die and stuff like that. (Fiona aged 15) (McGee, 2000: 56).

Small scale qualitative studies which have been undertaken with mothers experiencing domestic violence have also identified links with the sexual abuse of children where violent fathers or father figures were usually the main perpetrators (Hooper, 1992; Forman, 1995). In Hooper's study of 15 mothers, it was found that their experiences of violence, served to prevent them giving support or protection to their children. Further, some fathers were described by mothers as deliberately sexually grooming teenage daughters in front of them, as a form of abuse (Hooper, 1995). Moreover, Forman's research with mothers (1995) indicated that there were a number of children who had not disclosed sexual abuse by fathers, prior to

separation, due to children being threatened that their mothers would be killed if they told anyone about the abuse. In addition, children were described as wanting to protect mothers' feelings by not disclosing the abuse when the family was still living with the violent father.

This latter research evidence is highly significant in the context of post separation contact decisions, since, as noted in chapter one, mothers who raise the risks of sexual abuse by fathers are often regarded as making false allegations by the family courts (Humphreys, 1997; Radford et al., 1999; Brown et al., 2000). In this context, professionals may have little understanding that children are too fearful to disclose sexual abuse because of threats of further violence towards mothers or themselves whilst they are still living with abusive father (Hester et al., 2000).

This issue is discussed further in the section on contact.

The above studies indicate that a significant minority of violent fathers may be perpetrating a range of different forms of abuse against children, including sexual abuse. Thus, assumptions made by practitioners (for example, Daniel and Taylor (2001) highlighted above) that such men are unlikely to sexually abuse their children can be dangerous when considering risks to children in the post-separation context. On the contrary, they suggest that the realistic possibility of sexual abuse needs to be considered when addressing issues of child contact in the context of domestic violence (McGee, 2000).

Overall impacts of living with fathers' violence

As seen above, children experience domestic violence in a variety of ways. How

far they are negatively affected can depend on the nature and different forms of abuse witnessed; the extent of a violent father's control over the whole family; how far children are also being directly abused and the father's different treatment of children. However, the research also indicates that these experiences are mediated by children's own individual coping strategies and resilience, as well as characteristics such as their age, ethnicity, abilities/disabilities and how much support they get from others. This suggests that there are different impacts for individual children which can change over time (see, for example; Jaffe et al., 1990; Edleson, 1999; Hester et al., 2000; Humphreys and Mullender, 2000; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002).

There are also indications that some children at least recover fairly quickly the longer they are away from exposure to their fathers' violence and where they are in safer, more stable environments (Wolfe et al., 1986). However, this is less likely to be the case where unwilling and fearful children are forced to have contact with fathers, post-separation (Church, 1984; Mertin, 1995). Perhaps not surprisingly, this is a hugely under-researched area, given the hegemonic discourses discussed in chapter one, which suggest that father presence is always good for children. This area is addressed in more detail when looking at fathers' contact.

Impacts for younger children

Whilst this review has indicated that an overwhelming response for many children is that of fear, several studies have suggested that such impacts can produce more physical and mental reactions in very young children. For example, Jaffe et al.,

(1990), in their review of ‘effects’ observed in shelter contexts, included babies having ‘weight and eating problems, sleep problems and lack of responsiveness to adults’. Problems for large numbers of children over 18 months included ‘anxiousness, crying and sadness’, as well as some having difficulties relating to peers or adults, and a third having ‘health and sleep’ problems (Jaffe et al., 1990: 35).

UK studies with mothers and refuge workers have indicated similar responses but view these as coping strategies, rather than as passive reactions (Hague et al., 1996; Radford et al., 1999; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). For example, refuge workers in Hague et al.’s study (1996) noted that some babies had learnt to stay quiet as a coping strategy. In addition they found that many children up to the age of six had developmental delays in relation to speech and attention span. One refuge worker said:

Our worse case was a child who hadn’t developed physically – a six year old in nappies and not talking, unable to communicate. But in the refuge the child developed well eventually. (Hague et al., 1996: 32).

Abrahams’ study also gave some first hand accounts from children:

I kept on going to the toilet and things like that.

I wouldn’t eat for weeks on end. And then he would make me eat. and I would go to the toilet and make myself my sick. I lost a lot of weight, but I wasn’t anorexic really because I would eat at school. I just wouldn’t eat at home. (Abrahams, 1994: 35-36).

As can be seen from the examples above children’s accounts put their responses to the violence in context indicating its direct connections to a violent father’s

behaviour. This was further suggested in the following accounts from young children in McGee's study, talking about their memories of nightmares, sadness and crying:

Well one [nightmare] was that when I was asleep he [my father] got a knife and stabbed me, that was the other one I had. I had some more but I've forgotten them. (Gerrard, aged 5) (McGee, 2000: 71)

Sad. (Francis aged 6) (ibid)

Upset, and Paul and Tracy were crying and I was...we was all crying, because we could hear our mum crying and screaming. And our dad shouting at her. (Glenda, aged 9) (ibid)

In addition, this research stressed that some younger children had self-harmed, were depressed and had suicidal thoughts even though these are commonly believed to be 'symptoms' of 'adolescents and teenagers' who experience domestic violence. One seven-year-old child wrote a letter to her parents, 'telling them she would kill herself if the violence did not stop' (McGee, 2000: 73).

Impacts for older children

Further, older children indicated that they continued to experience problems with sleep and nightmares, which related to their fears of being attacked, long after they had separated from violent fathers (Abrahams, 1994; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). In addition, Mullender et al.'s study suggested that most of the South Asian children sampled had developed problems speaking in English, even though they had grown up being fluent in two languages, as a result of the violence. This was a particular problem for children who had to move away from their communities where their experiences of domestic violence could be compounded by racism.

Edleson's US review (1999) of 54 research studies undertaken from a psychological perspective focused on the behavioural effects and the emotional and cognitive functioning of children mainly above the age of four, using standardized tests with mothers and some older children. A large number of studies were, however, excluded because of methodological problems such as not using comparison groups or because they had not distinguished between 'child witnesses,' and those who were 'directly abused,' although, as seen earlier, these two categories are not always clearly distinguishable. Thirty-one studies were analysed in more detail because they fitted the methodological criteria. They indicated that child witnesses could display more 'externalized behaviours' such as aggression and more 'internalized behaviours' such as fearfulness and withdrawal than other children (Edleson, 1999: 846).

Further findings from Edleson's review included child witnesses being more anxious, depressed and traumatized than other children (see, for example, Hughes, 1988; Sternberg et al., 1993). However studies disagreed about whether children's cognitive development was affected. One study found that children's prolonged exposure to domestic violence lowered children's cognitive abilities (Rossman, 1998) whilst another study indicated it made no difference (Mathias et al., 1995). These differences may depend on how far children's education is disrupted and is illuminated further in children's accounts in this regard. Moreover, whilst some earlier studies had suggested stereotypical differences in terms of gender (girls having more internalized problems) (Carlson, 1991), later studies indicated that girls could be equally as aggressive as boys, particularly as they got older

(Spaccarelli et al., 1994).

Edleson (1999) acknowledged, however, that the over-reliance on behavioural measures such as the Child Behaviour Checklist meant it was not possible to reflect the 'uniqueness' of children's different experiences. Nevertheless, the UK studies with refuge workers, mothers and some children's accounts cited above indicated that some children did have behavioural and emotional problems along the lines suggested in this review (Abrahams, 1994; Hague et al., 1996; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002).

However, Mullender et al. (2002) stressed that over and above their need for themselves and their mothers to feel safe, children's accounts in their study frequently showed that they were more concerned about the social consequences and disruption to their lives brought about by their fathers' violence. These aspects of children's concerns were also highlighted in Abrahams' and McGee's studies, where, for example, children talked about the embarrassment and social stigma they experienced, as a consequence of their fathers' violence. This meant it was difficult for them to have friends around and could cause them social embarrassment at school as illustrated below:

I used to think to myself, What's my friends at school going to say with my mother with all marks on her face. (Abrahams, 1994: 39).

I remember it was my tenth birthday party. I just remember being in the kitchen, crying my eyes out that he had embarrassed me so much in front of my friends. (ibid).

McGee noted that some teenage accounts indicated that, whilst their fathers would not allow friends to come to the house, they also made it difficult for teenagers to

go out and meet friends. In addition, several younger and older children felt stigmatised by their fathers violence and ‘degraded and humiliated’ when others knew about it. Thus, these children’s experiences indicated that it was hard for them to have a social life and this in itself could also reduce their self-confidence in making friends. Some older girls in Abrahams’s and Mullender et al.’s research also said that the violence had made them lose trust in having relationships with others, particularly with boys/men. However, there were also young people in both these latter studies who indicated that living with domestic violence had ‘toughened’ them and strengthened their ability to survive. Some children in Mullender et al.’s study (2002) said that they had got support from other siblings or from friends or a particular friend who had had a similar experience at school, and this research emphasised the significance for children of getting support from their peers. But even where children had good friends, they could be too embarrassed to bring them home.

In addition, children in this study emphasized the further disruptions to their friendships, when they had to leave home to escape the fathers’ violence, as well as other losses, such as pets and valued possessions which could vastly increase children’s resentment against their fathers, as illustrated below:

He made me leave my home. He made me leave all my best friends. He made me leave all my things behind. (9-year-old white girl) (Mullender et al., 2002: 108)

Another major concern indicated by children in all three studies was the impact on their education. In McGee’s study, children frequently talked about being unable to concentrate at school because of fear of what was happening to their mothers.

For some children, this in turn could lead to their failure to go to school:

When I went to school it affected me a lot because all day I was thinking about what would happen when I got home. So at school my work dropped for quite a bit... (Regina aged 9) (McGee, 2000: 79)

McGee emphasized that, where children were deliberately deprived of sleep by violent fathers, their school work could also be affected. Moreover, this research indicated that, in the longer term, due to the violence, their failure to be able to concentrate on their school work either at home or at school meant that some teenagers failed their exams and others failed to access tertiary education and they clearly blamed their fathers for this:

[I] failed all my exams, I put it down to him, what had happened at home... (Karina, aged 16) (McGee, 2000: 81)

Children in a number of studies also indicated that disruption to their education could be caused by families having to move constantly to escape their violent fathers, post-separation, with children frequently having to change schools several times (McGee, 2000; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Mullender et al., 2002). In Mullender et al.'s study, mothers' and children's accounts illustrated that, for a few South Asian children, having to move to new neighbourhoods and schools where they could experience racial harassment also affected their educational experiences:

Sometimes people tease me and call me names, especially white people in the area....Mum is trying to get me a transfer to another school. I am just worried about being teased by white people – they do it because they don't like black people and can cause

problems and be violent so you can feel really unsafe. (10-year-old Asian boy)
(Mullender et al., 2002: 139)

The impact on relationships with mothers

Given the research evidence outlined earlier, it is not surprising that some children were affected by their fathers' constant undermining of their mothers and using them in the abuse. McGee, (2000) described a few very young children as imitating their fathers and being abusive towards their mothers and other small children avoiding their mother in order to protect themselves, a finding also found in an earlier study by Hilton (1992). In addition, all three studies discussed in this review found some children who blamed their mothers for putting up with the violence and staying or returning to the relationship. As McGee noted, this was 'sadly ironic' where mothers had stayed with children's fathers because they believed it was in the children's best interests (McGee, 2000: 97). Mullender et al. (2002) suggested the social pressure from familiarist ideologies which argue that it is better for children to live in stable relationships with a father and mother together with reduced resources, can keep mothers in relationships. In addition as McGee (2000) noted, some mothers may not be aware how far children are affected by their fathers' violence.

Mullender et al.'s study also indicated that a few young children were confused about who was responsible for the violence because of what their fathers had told them. Other children blamed their mothers for not standing up to him or, contradictorily, for not being subservient enough (see also Abrahams, 1994). Nevertheless most children were clear about their fathers' responsibility and this

understanding increased as they got older. Further, this research found that older boys, although sometimes having fears that they would end up like their fathers, were 'sensitive and thoughtful' and concerned about the well being of their mothers and younger siblings (Mullender et al., 2002: 113).

Overall, McGee's and Mullender et al.'s research indicated that the majority of children had close relationships with their mothers and, as Jaffe et al. (1990) suggested, this could serve as a key protective factor. This was further illustrated when they had escaped from violent fathers, and children and mothers were able to learn 'a new way of being together' in a context of safety (McGee, 2000:84).

However, in Mullender et al.'s study, at least one mother interviewed felt that her grown-up children had been turned against her by their father. Other studies which have looked at children's contact (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002) also found a few children who chose to live with their fathers due to an undermining of mothers' relationships with their children – these cases are discussed further below.

Children's coping strategies

As it has been seen in some of the earlier examples from children's accounts, they may cope in a variety of ways, in both the long and short terms. Even very young children may intervene to try and protect their mothers and some may confront violent fathers directly, or call the police.(Abrahams, 1994; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). However, children in McGee's study also emphasized their 'lack of power' in this context and their own fear to act because they were

too young. In these circumstances, children might try and shut themselves away from the violence, although some indicated that not knowing what was happening to their mothers was particularly traumatic for them. Other children indicated that they tried to avoid their fathers. Some used school as a refuge and stayed there as long as possible; others described just accepting the violence as part of daily life (McGee, 2000).

In addition, McGee noted that children used varied emotional strategies to cope with the violence and emphasized that even apparently destructive strategies such as denial and self-harm needed to be acknowledged as part of their ways of coping. The study stressed the necessity for professionals to recognize that these strategies would be unlikely to end until children felt safe from violent fathers.

Mullender et al. (2002) also found some age-related differences between siblings, and suggested that, although older children had more experiences of violence, they had 'more resources to draw on [than younger children], both to make sense of what was happening and to protect themselves physically and emotionally' (2002: 93). Further, in looking at the way children cope emotionally with domestic violence, this latter study found that South Asian children in particular were able to draw on their own collectivist values and religious beliefs to survive. For example, it was suggested that these young people 'seemed quite clear that adults in the family were responsible' (2002: 149), in contrast to other studies which have found that some children internalized self-blame for the violence (Jaffe et al., 1990).

Nevertheless, although children developed various strategies to cope and survive, these studies indicated that there were various deleterious longer term impacts which were a direct consequence of fathers' violence. Mullender et al. found that a minority of children had sustained such 'extensive damage' that it would be 'difficult' to repair (2002: 111). Moreover, both Abrahams's and McGee's studies found that some young people's loss of self-esteem and damage to their educational opportunities had had profound long term impacts.

Children's understandings of their fathers' violence

Mullender et al. (2002) indicated that many children had quite sophisticated understandings of the gendered power relations involved in their fathers' motivations for carrying out violence. For example, children described the self-centred interests of fathers in being violent when they were jealous of mothers' paying attention to children, or going out with their friends as illustrated in the following examples:

[W]hen it was my birthday my mum took bought some clothes and stickers and he wasn't there when I was opening them and he threw the table and bashed her head on the unit. (10-year-old mixed race girl) (Mullender et al.,2002: 184)

When my mum went out [with her women friends on her birthday], I reckon Dad was jealous because Mum was having a good time and I don't think he liked it. (10-year-old white girl) (ibid: 185)

Children's feelings and perceptions of their relationships with fathers

Moreover the children's accounts in this study indicated that where they had a clear understanding of their father's violence this could induce feelings of extreme

hatred and resentment towards them. This and some of the other studies which explored children's feelings about their violent fathers' indicated that they could experience a range of feelings from fear, anger, sadness and shame which could change over time (Abrahams, 1994; Higgins, 1994; Epstein and Keep, 1995; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002).

It needs to be recognized however, that children's willingness to report feelings about fathers to researchers can be affected by the research process and their own motivations or abilities to talk about often very painful emotions or remembered emotions (Mullender et al., 2002). In the latter study, for example, it was reported that it 'appeared easier' for some children to express 'mainly negative feelings,' about step-fathers rather than biological fathers and that other children just wanted to avoid talking about violent biological fathers 'altogether' (Mullender et al., 2002:188).

Hatred, resentment and wanting nothing to do with violent fathers

Some very limited earlier research in this area has been used to suggest that children invariably have ambivalent feelings about their fathers and usually miss them when they have to leave the family home (see, for example, Saunders, 1995; Peled, 1998, 2000). In addition, such research may be used to support the overriding presumption of contact by professionals and practitioners, underlined by the ideological dominance of attachment theory where it may be argued that children always have an emotional attachment to both parents, whatever they have done (see, for example, Daniel and Taylor, 2001; Bancroft and Silverman, 2002; Jaffe et al., 2003).

However, several children's accounts in a range of different studies clearly indicated that, as a consequence of their fathers' violence, they had no feelings of affection towards their fathers and that they wanted nothing more to do with them. This is illustrated in some of the earlier research which has reported children's views (see, for example, Higgins, 1994; Epstein and Keep, 1995) as well as the later qualitative studies with children (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002). For example, a 14 year old, Asian/Caribbean boy who was an ex-resident of a refuge in Higgins's study stated:

My Dad cut my Mum with a knife; children left and went to Auntie. I was there – I used to hear arguments and shouting and drinking ('Alcoholic!') Unhappy I felt – I'd go to my room and play, I was ten years. Domestic violence is horrible – not worth it, people getting hurt. I never see my dad – I saw him once a year ago, walking down the street; we just walked on. I don't feel anything for my dad. (Higgins, 1994: 20)

The ChildLine study reported that many children who called for help 'talked of hating him [their father] and wishing he would just go away, out of their lives' (Epstein and Keep, 1995: 52). They also gave some examples of such feelings, reported to the helpline, as illustrated below:

I hate my dad and I want to leave home.
My dad is a power maniac.
My dad behaves like a mad dog. (Epstein and Keep, 1995: 52).

Similar views were expressed by some teenage girls in McGee's study, where hatred of their fathers could also be mixed with fear in case they have to see him again:

Complete pig...And I just, I don't want to even to be in the same country as him, I think he is a complete psycho. (Hannah, aged 15) (McGee, 2000:84-85)

Can't stand him. Can't stand him at all. I'm scared though because, he's everywhere. (Mona, aged 17) (McGee, 2000: 84-85).

Mullender et al.'s study indicated that similar feelings were expressed by boys, including one 11-year-old white boy's advice to violent fathers, which was to 'go and die in the gutter' (Mullender et al., 2002: 188).

Moreover, some younger children's accounts illustrated that their own fear of their fathers and feelings of powerlessness were often combined with fantasies of killing them. Higgins's refuge study indicated that such fantasies could be combined with children's fears of having to have post separation contact with fathers, illustrated in the following account of a six year old Asian boy still living in the refuge:

My Dad really wants to kill us and shoot us. He will lock us in a room and we will never get out and have nothing to eat. I must look after my Mum, my Dad is really bad. When I am big, I could be Batman and go and kill my Dad and throw him in a dustbin....I am scared when I have to see my Dad sometimes, that he will hurt me and shoot me. He said lots of times he would do that to all of us. (Higgins, 1994: 20)

Other children's accounts indicated that any feelings of love, affection and respect they might have had for their fathers had been destroyed by paternal violence. For example, McGee indicated that children's feelings towards fathers could change after witnessing violence, as is illustrated in the following:

I didn't talk to him much after that [witnessing my father's violence] I felt he wasn't worth talking to. (Tracey, aged 15) (McGee, 2000: 85)

Further, Mullender et al.'s study suggested that, although some younger children

had spoken of their early affection for their fathers, any feelings they had for them were often progressively destroyed by 'paternal authority exercised in the form of naked power' (Mullender et al., 2000: 190). Such views were also supported in mothers' accounts, where one mother indicated that her children had struggled to get some 'love and affection' from their father without success and one very young child was still trying to do so.

In addition, this study indicated that only one child expressed any sorrow about missing her father, when leaving the family home but that her feelings were also affected by the need of safety for her mother.

McGee's study also indicated that some children did not miss their fathers because they paid them no attention and had favoured other siblings in the family:

I didn't like it ...it just felt like I wasn't there at all...I don't know why but he wasn't really interested in anything I done good. Whereas Oliver [my brother] he would have a lot of interest in and I think it's probably because he was a boy. When we weren't seeing him I didn't feel that I missed him a lot, because he didn't show much appreciation of anything I did or show that he loved me or that he cared or anything like that. So I didn't actually miss him. (Regina, aged 9) (McGee, 2000: 87)

Happiness at leaving violent fathers

Many of the children's views highlighted above were also underlined when they talked about their happiness at being away from their violent fathers, as seen in these examples from Mullender et al.'s study:

I'm happier. (8-year-old African girl)

I am very happy. I feel very comfortable and happy. (14-year-old East Asian boy)
(Mullender et al.,2002: 188)

I feel really different. I can sleep without any fear. I can really live like any other young person in the community.....Now he is not around to terrorise me I can get on with my studies. (16-year-old Asian girl) (Mullender et al., 2002: 196)

Shame, anger, sadness, dislike and loss of respect

Other children's views, although not always expressed in terms of such extreme hatred and resentment, indicated that they were ashamed of their fathers and this could invoke a complex range of other feelings, such as dislike, anger, sadness and loss of respect (McGee, 2000;Mullender et al., 2002). Feelings of being ashamed of their fathers were also reflected in children's calls in the ChildLine study:

I am ashamed of him- I can't tell anyone because then they will know I haven't got a proper father. (Epstein and Keep, 1995: 48)

Ambivalence and divided loyalties

Other children indicated more ambivalent feelings towards their fathers in the studies cited above, and, in McGee's study, children from five families indicated that they had close relationships with their fathers (McGee, 2000: 87). A child in Abrahams' study described her conflicted feelings about her father but also stressed her concern that her siblings should not have to live with his violence:

I love him in a way because he's my Dad... he's what I've always lived with all my life, but I mean I hate him for what he's done to my mother and put me through and I just don't want him to put my brother and sister through that. (Abrahams, 1994: 42)

Mullender et al.'s study indicated that, for some South Asian young people, although collectivist values meant that they had to retain respect for their violent fathers, this remained difficult for them, as indicated in the following account of a 14-year-old South Asian boy, who talked about seeing his father occasionally

following separation:

We go to his shop sometimes, go to the movies. He is okay with us, Dad. I have to respect him, not for the violence [but] because he is my dad. It is against my religion [not to]. I have to respect my parents. If I was gora [white], I don't think I would have [to].
(Mullender et al., 2002: 148)

Again, however, this latter study indicated that, even where children had divided loyalties, this could change over time where their fathers' violence escalated, as indicated by this 13-year-old African girl, who was having continuing contact with her father, post-separation:

I had no idea it was going to be this bad... Up until then...from when I was a little baby. I always wanted my dad. Then when I started to go with mum he started getting angry... M [her 12-year-old brother] preferred my mum to dad, and my dad would beat him for no reason. (Mullender et al., 2002: 192)

Significantly, this study indicated that children experienced more positive feelings about their fathers only when the fathers demonstrated that they had changed.

The children's accounts discussed in the studies above demonstrate that their feelings about their fathers are rarely unaffected by the violence, as is argued in some of the legal discourses on child contact highlighted in chapter one. They also show that individual children differ in their feelings towards fathers. For example, some are quite clear that they want nothing more do with their fathers and do not have ambivalent feelings towards them as has been suggested in the earlier research cited above. In addition, for those children who had extreme fears of their fathers and were fortunate enough not to have any further contact with them, their accounts illustrated that they felt a great sense of relief that they were away from them.

Crucially, however, even where children were more ambivalent about continuing relationships with their fathers, safety for their mothers, other siblings and themselves were key considerations in whether they wanted to maintain any relationships with them post-separation. Only where children felt that fathers had changed and stopped the violence did this cease to be a problem. These findings, therefore, have significant implications for policies and practices in relation for violent fathers' contact post-separation (Mullender et al., 2002) and are discussed further below.

Post-separation violence and harassment

A number of the studies already discussed indicated that several children did not feel safe from their fathers' violence and abuse and that their feelings of extreme fear of fathers could continue as a consequence of continuing harassment and violence post-separation. Children frequently experienced a range of post-separation harassment alongside their mothers and often had to witness extreme violence towards their mothers, as well as being at risk of being directly attacked themselves (Abrahams; 1994; Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999; McGee, 2000; Aris et al., 2002; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Mullender et al., 2002;). For example, mothers in Humphreys and Thiara's study (2002) reported experiencing threatening phone calls; threats to neighbours; the abduction of children; their homes broken into and being directly attacked. One mother described a particularly violent event, where both herself and her three-year-old son were beaten up by a man who had been sent by the violent father to harm the family because she would not return to the relationship. Both were described as

having such serious injuries that they had to be hospitalized as a result of this attack in their own home. In addition, several children in this study described being threatened after they had left refuges or being fearful that ‘dads’ would come back to the house.

Moreover, several studies indicated that post-separation harassment could lead to even more disruption to children’s lives, when families had to keep moving in order to escape a violent father’s destructive behaviour (Abrahams, 1994; McGee, 2000; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Mullender et al., 2002). The impact this could have for children was illustrated by a 12-year-old white girl, interviewed for the latter study:

I hate him. We’ve been in three refuges. When I was in the second one I liked it. One day, when I was coming home from school – he knew which school I was at – I turned round and saw him following me... (Mullender et al., 2002: 108)

As a consequence of this father’s ‘stalking’, the family had to move on to yet another refuge, with further disruptive consequences for the children.

Father-child contact and post-separation harassment and violence

A worrying number of studies found that violent fathers used contact applications through the courts to discover the address of where mothers and children lived, which then provided opportunities for post-separation harassment. A Women’s Aid survey of 54 refuges in England, found that eight refuges reported that court orders for contact had given out the address of the refuge (Debbonnaire, 1997). In Radford et al’s study (1999), which involved 121 court hearings, a third of mothers stated that violent fathers had found out where they and the children lived as ‘a

consequence of the case going to court' and this included nine cases where families were living in refuges (Radford et al., 1999: 4). In this study, 90 per cent were so fearful that they had moved away from the family home. In addition, mothers in Humphreys and Thiara's study (2002) indicated that 14 of their partners had tracked them down through contact applications. One of the most recent surveys to date, undertaken with staff at women's refuges (Saunders, 2003a), indicated that contact applications were used to track families in 46 per cent of cases, despite the fact that professionals were supposed to be following guidelines (discussed in chapter one) which indicated that they should not reveal the address of mothers and children.

Hester and Radford described a range of post-separation harassment linked to contact arrangements which made life 'intolerably difficult' or 'left mothers and children in constant fear' (Hester and Radford, 1996: 9). Further, a hundred mothers in Radford et al.'s study reported post-separation violence, as a consequence of orders for direct contact. These included threatening phone calls and following and stalking, as well as threats to kill or harm the children.

Abduction

Some studies have also indicated that fears of abduction could be particularly acute for minority ethnic mothers whose children's fathers had families and contacts abroad, post-separation (Hester and Radford, 1996; Anderson, 1997). For example, Hester and Radford's study, which interviewed 15 black and Asian women, indicated that two black women had had children taken but had managed to get them returned and another Asian father had threatened to take his three

daughters and get them married off when they were old enough in Pakistan. In addition, Aris et al.'s study (2002) on the use of contact centres in the context of domestic violence, indicated that several mothers, feared the abduction of their children and a few had already had previous experiences of their children being abducted.

Contact handover

In Hester and Radford's indepth study (1996) all but 3 out of 53 mothers interviewed had been violently assaulted during contact handover, which the children witnessed. In many cases, this had included near-lethal violence towards mothers. Most subsequent studies have indicated similar findings (Anderson, 1997; Radford et al., 1999; Aris et al., 2002; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Mullender et al., 2002).

For example, Radford et al.'s survey of 129 mothers indicated that 38 per cent had been violently attacked when handing over the children; 28 per cent had been assaulted when collecting the children from contact, and 14 per cent had been attacked at contact centres. In addition, Aris et al.'s study indicated that 33 per cent of the 70 mothers surveyed had experienced post-separation violence and this was 'mostly' at the point of contact handover, prior to using a contact centre. Mullender et al.'s study (2002) also found that some children had witnessed life threatening violence as a consequence of contact arrangements.

Children's experience of contact arrangements

The research in this area indicated that children could experience different kinds

of contact arrangements and that these changed over time. Most of these studies relied on mothers' accounts, although two studies have reported children's views directly in this area (Aris et al., 2002; Mullender et al., 2002). However, the former is limited to children's views in situations of supported and supervised contact at contact centres.

Two studies found that most contact was initially set up informally, often because mothers initially wanted their children to see their fathers (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999). However, Radford et al.'s detailed survey indicated that 65 per cent of mothers were unwilling to agree to initial contact mainly because of concerns for children safety and wellbeing. Over two thirds felt they were pressurised into agreeing to informal contact by solicitors. Both these studies highlighted that when contact failed to be safe, mothers stopped contact and fathers then frequently initiated contact applications through the courts. Hester and Radford's study, which tracked contact arrangements for 53 individual women and children over a two and half year period, indicated that a pattern of stop/start contact subsequently ensued, following court orders. For example, mothers described stopping contact when fathers continued to be abusive and fathers would then return to the courts to get orders enforced. By the end of this study, contact was said to have worked in only seven cases, due to fathers' ongoing abusive behaviour. In the meantime, children had been subjected to a variety of abusive contact arrangements in order to meet the requirements of the courts.

Radford et al.'s study found that a third of children initially wanted contact,

according to mothers, but their views changed as contact became abusive. This study also indicated that most informal contact arrangements did not work because of fathers' continuing abuse. However, direct contact for the vast majority of children in this study was ordered by the courts within six months of separation. For 42 per cent of children, this initially involved some form of supported or supervised contact either at contact centres or by family members or social workers. Nevertheless these arrangements were invariably viewed as temporary and over 73 per cent of these children were said to be having regular visiting or staying contact with fathers within six months of experiencing supported or supervised contact. Other studies also noted the short-lived nature of such arrangements (Furniss, 2000; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002, Aris et al., 2002) and the problems this can engender are discussed further below.

Mullender et al.'s research (2002) was one of the few studies involving mainly informal contact arrangements for the majority of those interviewed. Children in this study described a range of different contact experiences. The study included older children who chose to have infrequent contact with fathers and others who had stopped contact altogether when fathers had become physically violent, as illustrated in the following accounts:

We used to [see him] up until about around ten months ago. He started getting violent with me and my sister which he'd never done before...He started doing that and it was getting worrying because he was quite violent so we haven't seen him since. (16-year-old white boy speaking about himself and his 11-year-old sister) (Mullender et al., 2002: 197)

I used to visit a lot, but then my mum just ran into my dad not long ago and he hit her. He tried to smash a bottle round her face or something' (12-year-old white girl, who said she now hated her father and was afraid of seeing him) (Mullender et al., 2002: 197)

Further, the children in this study indicated that increased contact happened in only a very few cases and this was where fathers' had changed their behaviour or were no longer felt to be such a threat to families. In addition, several children in this study had refused any contact and these were usually those who said that they hated and resented their fathers and/or were too afraid to see him (see above), as illustrated below:

We don't see my dad now and don't want to see him. I am happy about not seeing him. (8-year-old Asian girl) (Mullender et al., 2002: 195)

I don't want to see him because he makes me upset. (9-year-old Asian boy) (Mullender et al., 2002: 195)

No. What he did to my mum – I don't really want to see him. I don't forgive him. (9-year-old white boy) (Mullender et al., 2002: 195)

A few children were also described as being ambivalent about having contact in the future, with some children stating that they might want to see their fathers, but being uncertain, because of fears of further violence.

In contrast, studies where most contact was decided by the courts suggested that very few children were allowed to have no contact with violent fathers (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999). For example, Radford et al.'s research, involving 120 court applications between the years 1993-1998, indicated that 70 per cent of the children who were said to be opposed to seeing their fathers were compelled to have contact through court orders. This was indicated by the fact that there were only 8 orders for no contact and a further 16 orders for indirect contact via phone calls or letters. In addition, Humphreys and Thiara's study

(2002) indicated that out of 32 cases involving court applications, only 6 fathers were denied contact.

Later national surveys undertaken by the Women's Aid Federation of England with refuge workers (Saunders, 2001; Saunders, 2003a) indicated a worsening situation for children who did not want contact with violent fathers and suggested this was a direct result of further family law policies to enforce contact.

Fewer problems over contact

Humphreys and Thiara's study indicated that for 33 per cent of mothers and children, contact was not (yet) a problem for various reasons. This was either because the family had escaped to a secret address and the father had not been able to track them down or because, in a few cases, fathers were not interested in pursuing contact. Moreover, as in Mullender et al.'s study discussed above, some contact had stopped, either because of abuse or because the child no longer wanted it. In addition, a small minority of mothers (4) indicated that contact was not a problem because the father had ceased to be abusive. A further 14 who had had initial problems said these had reduced over time, sometimes due to supervised contact arrangements, or to a lessening in the father's abusive behaviour. As the authors note, slightly more mothers in this study described contact 'working relatively well,' than in Hester and Radford's study (op.cit) and they suggest that this difference may be due to different interpretations of 'safe and non-abusive contact' (2002: 91).

Fathers' unreliability in relation to contact

Other studies also indicated that some violent fathers either lost interest in maintaining contact arrangements or failed to keep to arrangements (Hester and Radford, 1996; Debbonaire, 1997; Mullender et al., 2002). For example, Debbonaire's survey of workers from 54 refuges (1997) found that several fathers failed to maintain contact, sometimes only a few weeks after gaining a contact order. Mullender et al.'s study found that, whilst mothers often subjected themselves to life-threatening risks to give children 'the opportunity' to maintain contact with fathers, fathers frequently failed to 'keep to their part of the bargain', by not turning up for arranged contact visits or turning up uninvited to the family home (Mullender et al., 2002: 201).

Children separated from their mothers

The above studies also indicated that some mothers had 'lost residence' of their children. Hester and Radford's research found that 7 children ended up residing with their fathers, and, in five instances, this was because of the fathers' abusive and manipulative behaviour. For example, in two cases, fathers had 'threatened suicide' and, in another two cases, they had established 'special relationships' with the children through sexual abuse (Hester and Radford, 1996: 10). Radford et al.'s study indicated that 11 children ended up living with their fathers and, in three cases, mothers specifically stated that this was a punishment by the family courts for failing to enforce their children's contact.

Humphreys and Thiara's study (2002) found that a fairly high number of mothers (11 per cent of the whole sample) did not have their children living with them for

various reasons. These included mothers having to send their children to previous non-abusive fathers in order to keep them safe; mothers who were unable to manage the aggressive behaviour of adolescent children and mothers who could not look after the children as a result of mental health problems associated with their experiences of violence. A few women also had children who were taken into care as a consequence of their partners' violence. Further, as in Hester and Radford's study, a small number of children had 'chosen' to live with their fathers, often because these men had threatened to commit suicide if they left. In addition, this study emphasised that mothers who had lost their children to violent fathers found it very difficult to obtain any contact with them at all, either because fathers would not allow it or because they had turned the children against the mother. Other studies suggested that mothers had been forced to leave older boys behind with violent fathers, because they were not allowed in refuge accommodation (Mullender et al., 2002) or that the courts had awarded residence to violent fathers because refuges were not considered secure accommodation (Saunders, 2003a). Thus, the above studies indicate diverse arrangements for children following separation, with some experiencing a variety of arrangements over time, mainly because of fathers' continuing violence and abuse, or unreliability in relation to contact. How far contact 'worked' for children was therefore dependent on fathers' rather than mothers' behaviour. These studies also indicated that fathers' violence and abuse could be responsible for children no longer living with their mothers and, in some cases, being permanently separated from them. Further, they suggested that, whilst some children had choices around contact, particularly in informal settings as indicated from one study (Mullender et

al., 2002), many did not.

Contact applications and problems for children

As seen above, contact applications through the courts could be a particular problem for children who did not want to see their fathers (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999). Such problems could begin with the court welfare investigation and the failure of court welfare officers to accept children's reluctance. For example in their interviews with professionals, Hester and Radford (1996) found that some court welfare officers believed that, even where children had been directly abused and expressed fears about seeing their fathers, it was still better for them to confront their fears by having direct contact with these abusive men. Radford et al. (1999) reported that only one in five children were consulted by court welfare officers and, whilst this could have been because the majority of children were under five, 36 per cent were over this age. Further, where children were consulted, it was found that their views were more likely to be taken into account, where they said that they wanted contact than where they continued to oppose it. Some older children's views from this study were featured directly in a Dispatches programme for Channel 4 television (Channel 4, 1999) and this programme clearly indicated that those who opposed contact were put under considerable pressure by court welfare officers to change their minds. Similarly, Mullender et al.'s study (2002, 2003) highlighted the experience of one fifteen year old boy who was re-interviewed several times because he said he did not want contact with his father:

To be honest, I used to not know what to say. I used to think I was saying the wrong thing.... The worst thing I could think of was actually having to see him again.... I don't

think most of them believed me. I thought that after saying it once, that would be it. But it happened about six times. Each time the main question was if I wanted to see him again.....Maybe it's just because I'm a child and they probably think my mum got me to say whatever...One of them asked if it was my own views or not (Mullender et al., 2003: 33).

More recent research has looked at children's experiences of court welfare investigations in cases where parents cannot agree about contact arrangements (Bretherton, 2002). This study interviewed 30 children and 56 mothers, 78 per cent of whom reported that they had experienced domestic violence (Bretherton, 2002). It found that less than half the children interviewed felt that their views had been taken on board in decisions about contact. It also emphasised the pointlessness of children's participation where court welfare officers 'had already decided that the best outcome will be one that includes direct contact' (Bretherton, 2002: 455).

Bream and Buchanan (2003), reporting on the effects of court proceedings on children and parents from the same study, found an exceptionally high level of distress experienced by children who had lived with domestic violence and argued that contact proceedings themselves could exacerbate such distress. Parents and children over eight, were interviewed at the start of court proceedings and 21 months later. The findings indicated that over half the children who had lived with domestic violence were 'three times more likely to have borderline and abnormal age-related adjustment problems' (2003: 230) compared with general populations of children. For some younger children, this had increased rather than lessened at the time of the second interview.

Litigation abuse

Some research indicated that violent fathers could make repeated contact applications specifically as a form of abuse and control of the mother. This could also impact on the children (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002). For example, in the latter study, two mothers had over 20 court hearings, and one of these mothers stated:

My-ex partner has repeatedly said he will use contact as a way of fighting me over the next 10 years. Prior to us separating he was completely disinterested in the child and took no part in his care. I live in constant fear that as a way of getting back at me he will harm our child (Humphreys and Thiara, 2002: 94)

The Australian research in this area has defined this kind of legal harassment as ‘litigation abuse’ (see, for example, Rendell, 2000). As has been seen above, such abuse can be very distressing for children where they are constantly re-interviewed about their views and feelings for fathers and subjected to pressure to agree contact. It may also mean that they are subjected to various ‘experimental’ contact arrangements in order ‘to test’ whether contact will work (Hester and Radford, 1996: 28).

The presumption of contact and the failure to protect children

Australian research has indicated that policies and practices based on an overwhelming presumption of contact with non-resident parents frequently result in the failure to protect children from harm and can subject them to a broad spectrum of risks (Rendell et al., 2000). Research in the UK has suggested that children are exposed to similar risks and this is discussed further in the following section.

Children killed by violent fathers during contact

Although relatively rare, at the extreme end of this spectrum are children who are killed by violent fathers during contact or contact handover (Saunders, 2003b).

By early 2003, the Women's Aid Federation of England had documented 23 child homicide cases reported in the national press since 1994 where children had been killed by violent fathers during contact visits. Moreover, in at least two of these cases, news reports indicated that fathers had been granted direct unsupervised contact by the courts when they were already facing criminal charges assault or threats to kill their ex-partners. These publicised cases demonstrate the ultimate failure of current family law policies to protect children in the context of domestic violence and point to the need for specific legislative changes to prevent violent fathers having direct contact with children unless it can be shown to be safe.

Violent fathers' direct abuse of children during contact

Apart from witnessing often life threatening violence towards their mothers and being subjected to post-separation harassment, some UK studies based on mothers' accounts have indicated that many children are at direct risk themselves from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse during contact with violent fathers (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002). Hester and Pearson's study (1998), focusing on child protection practice, also highlighted the continuing abuse of children in this context.

In their study of 111 child protection case files, Hester and Pearson (1998) found that 15 children were abused during contact with violent fathers. This included

nine children who were being sexually abused and, in two cases, grandfathers had also sexually abused children during a father's contact, suggesting that 'supervised' contact by grandparents was not a safe option. Hester and Radford's (1996) study also indicated that 18 children continued to be abused during contact visits, including three who were being sexually abused. Radford et al.'s study (1999) indicated that most children who were reported by mothers to have been physically or emotionally abused whilst still living with fathers were said to be abused during contact visits. Children were reported as being particularly at risk of physical harm when informal contact was set up soon after separation.

Further, 19 of the 27 children who were reported as being sexually abused by fathers prior to separation were described as continuing to be sexually abused during court-ordered contact. In addition, this study highlighted that mothers who raised concerns about their children being physically and/or sexually abused to the courts were 'slightly' more likely to receive orders for direct contact than mothers who did not raise such concerns. In these circumstances, mothers were less likely to be believed by the courts and 32 'were accused of making false allegations of child abuse' (Radford et al., 1999: 24).

In addition, mothers who raised child abuse concerns reported that fathers frequently retaliated by alleging that they were harming the children themselves and 18 mothers were accused of having the purported 'mental illness' Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy in this context. In many of these cases, mothers were required to undergo psychiatric assessments to demonstrate to the courts that they were not 'unfit' to look after the children.

However, although no independent research has been undertaken to assess the level of false abuse allegations in this country, the Australian researchers Brown et al., (2000), in a study of abuse allegations in the family courts of Melbourne and Canberra, found that most were eventually substantiated by the family courts and, in half of these cases, mothers were experiencing domestic violence. Moreover, they noted that these allegations involved children who were found to have experienced 'multiple forms of abuse' which included 'physical and or sexual abuse' and 'witnessing domestic violence' (Brown et al., 2000: 854). They also stressed the negative impacts for children who had to endure several court hearings and often direct contact with abusive fathers, during the extremely lengthy process of substantiating that abuse was occurring:

the process involved many expensive legal hearings with each hearing raising the possibility of substantial change for children; furthermore the process took a very long time, too long when one considered the very young age of children, who proved to be seriously affected by these experiences. (Brown et al.,2000: 857).

In addition, they noted that the nine per cent of abuse allegations which were 'found to be false' were no higher than false allegations raised in other contexts (ibid: 852).

In the UK context, Radford et al.'s survey (1999) indicated that court professionals were in general more likely to believe fathers' counter allegations of mothers' abuse of children and, with a few exceptions, gave far less consideration to the risks posed by the fathers' violence and abuse when this was raised by mothers. For example, mothers' concerns about fathers' direct abuse of children were not

generally assessed and existing evidence, such as medical reports of injuries, previous child protection investigations and convictions for child assault against fathers appeared not to have been taken into account when the court was considering mothers' allegations of abuse.

Thus, in this study, although in a few cases contact was eventually denied on the basis of mothers' allegations or because abuse was found to have happened during contact, the authors argued that, since there were no guiding principles to assess the risks of these fathers to children, the courts operated on the basis of 'trial and error' and therefore many children 'needlessly suffered further harm' (Radford et al., 1999: 26).

Humphreys and Thiara (2002) also reported mothers who felt that court welfare officers and social services did not believe them when they raised child abuse concerns during child contact, as exemplified below:

Social services and court welfare made aware of it. They did an investigation and believe him rather than the children. (Miranda) (Humphreys and Thiara, 2002: 95)

I told the social worker about concerns, but they found no case to answer. The child living with me has told me about the physical abuse of herself and her two sisters by their father. (Simone) (ibid: 95)

This study also indicated a failure of some child protection workers to oppose contact when they had already been involved in identifying child abuse by violent fathers prior to separation. These researchers found that, although some social workers could be supportive to mothers when they were still living with violent men, they generally faced negative responses when they requested their help in the

context of child contact. Moreover, mothers indicated that social workers themselves could become involved in setting up unsafe contact arrangements.

Similarly, Humphreys (2000), in her detailed study of child protection practice of 32 cases in relation to domestic violence, found that social workers could fail to protect children when it came to issues of contact with abusive fathers. For example, she noted that child contact was not always considered in case conferences to protect the child and 'there were many informal arrangements in place' (Humphreys, 2000: 31). In a few instances, supervised contact was organized but in one case, it appeared to be particularly inappropriate, since it was arranged for a father who was facing charges of physically abusing his child so badly that 'permanent brain damage had resulted' (ibid: 31).

National Women's Aid surveys have also indicated that an increasing number of children were being ordered to have direct contact with fathers who were already identified as child abuse perpetrators, by agencies. For example, a nationwide survey of women's aid refuge workers by Saunders (2001) found that contact had been awarded by the courts in eight cases where fathers had convictions for child abuse offences and in a further 15 cases where children were on the Child Protection Register. In five of these 23 cases, the order was for unsupervised contact. A later national survey (Saunders, 2003a) indicated that direct contact was ordered in 18 cases, where fathers were already identified as Schedule 1 offenders and in a further 64 cases where children were already on the Child Protection Register. In 21 of these cases, the contact ordered was unsupervised, thus leaving these children totally unprotected.

This research suggests that the principle of contact in relation to fathers is operating to such an extent that, as in the Australian context indicated above, child protection agencies and the family courts are often disregarding any other legal requirement to protect children from significant harm.

Fathers' neglect of children during contact

The studies already discussed also indicated that children were often neglected during contact visits (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Mullender et al., 2002) with Radford et al.'s study indicating several different examples of neglect and poor parenting. These included failure to pay attention to children's basic health needs, such as not changing nappies; children being left alone for hours and, in a quarter of cases, fathers getting drunk. In addition, fathers who were alcohol and drug users, were particularly identified by mothers as neglecting children.

One mother whose child's father was a drug user described what happened during her child's contact:

He had our child overnight and locked (the child) in a bedroom with a bucket to wee in. All this because he was using heroin downstairs with partner and friends. (1999: 22).

In addition, Radford et al. raised the issue of the quality of the contact that some violent fathers were offering to children. Yet as mothers in Humphreys and Thiara's study indicated, the neglect of children and the quality of contact appeared to be an irrelevant issue in the view of professionals. For example, one mother in this latter study was told by her solicitor, when she informed him that

her child was returned, 'tired, dirty and hungry' that 'differing levels of parenting' were 'acceptable' (2002: 95).

Fathers' manipulation and emotional abuse of children during contact

All the above studies gave examples of children who were emotionally abused and manipulated during contact where they could be subjected to hearing constant insults and undermining of their mothers; used to carry abusive messages back to mothers; quizzed to get information and used to try and get mothers to reconcile with their fathers. In some cases, fathers' had also tried to persuade children to leave their mothers. Mullender et al.'s study (2002) found that, for some children, such strategies could be used in indirect telephone contact.

The impact of abusive contact on children

These studies indicated that children who were experiencing abusive contact through witnessing violence towards their mothers and/or being directly abused themselves displayed many of the same behavioural and emotional problems as they had when still living with violent fathers (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002).

In Radford et al.'s study, which involved a large number of younger children, mothers reported a range of problems when children returned from contact, including behavioural problems such as uncontrollable anger and aggression; stress-related problems such as anxiety and fear; nightmares; self harm; inappropriate sexual behaviour; delayed speech problems and physical symptoms such as 'nausea and vomiting and skin disorders and hair loss' (1999: 21). Where

children were being directly abused, the most common problems identified by mothers were nightmares, bed-wetting and stress-related illnesses.

However, Humphreys and Thiara's study (2002) found that during the first six months after separation, children who did not have contact with fathers also experienced behavioural and emotional problems. Nevertheless, after six months, whilst a third of mothers indicated that these problems had reduced, children who were continuing to have contact with violent fathers were significantly 'overly represented in ongoing behavioural and emotional problems' (2002: 93).

Similar findings have been observed by New Zealand and Australian researchers (Church, 1984; Mertin, 1995). Church explored children's behavioural problems and anxieties and fears about their fathers at the time of separation and 12 months later, with 51 mothers of children aged between six and 12 in New Zealand.

At the time of separation he found that 83 per cent were frightened of their fathers but a year later, the 23 per cent of children who had continuing emotional and behavioural problems, were those who were having ongoing direct contact with their fathers. He stated:

the children who recovered most rapidly tended to be those who had no further contact with their violent fathers.....the children who showed the least improvement following separation were the children who although frightened of their father, were forced to regularly visit him regardless of their own fears. (Church, 1984: 79)

Mertin's later Australian study set out to look specifically at whether children benefited from having no contact with fathers. It involved direct interviews with 34 children aged between 7 and 12 years and the use of some psychological tests.

He compared children's emotional and behavioural problems at the time of separation and ten months later. All the children except three, who had no fear of their fathers, did not have contact during the intervening period. He found significant reductions in children's fear and anxiety when they had not seen their fathers for ten months. Moreover, although there was no control group, Mertin suggested that these findings were similar those of Church (1984) and indicated that children were more likely to recover from the impacts of domestic violence when they were not forced to have contact in circumstances where they were still afraid of their fathers.

Supported and supervised contact

As indicated in chapter one, supported and supervised contact in contact centres has increasingly been viewed by policy makers as a solution to enforcing children's contact with violent fathers, whilst at the same time addressing issues of safety (see, for example, Home Office, 2003). Nevertheless, research in this area has indicated that, in practice, there is a huge variation in levels of safety offered, often putting children and mothers at further risk (Radford et al., 1999; Furniss, 2000; Aris et al., 2002). Further, Radford et al. (1999) noted that the term 'supervised contact' could be used 'loosely' to refer to different contact arrangements which vary in their degrees of vigilance in terms of 'child safety' and the abuse of mothers (1999: 27). Thus, supervised contact could be used to describe supervision by relatives such as grandparents; low vigilance contact in a supported contact centre facilitated by volunteers or contact which is supervised by professionals, often at a contact centre which offers these facilities. The above study indicated that children continued to be abused during supported or

supervised contact at centres where seven children were said by mothers to have been abused in this context. Moreover a further eight were reported as being abused when contact was supervised by court welfare officers or social workers (Radford et al., 1999). Hester and Pearson (1998), in their research on child protection practice, also indicated that a few children were sexually abused during supervised contact. Further, as indicated by the New Zealand research (Chetwin et al., 1999) supervised contact, cannot guarantee that children will not be abused and enforcing contact in these circumstances can merely result in further failures to protect children. In addition, research on contact centres has indicated that most do not provide close supervision of violent fathers' contact with children and many are unable to offer safe facilities during contact handover (Furniss, 2000; Aris et al., 2002).

For example, Furniss (2000), in her national research on contact centres in 1997, noted that the vast majority of the 174 centres surveyed offered only supported contact and only 12 per cent reported that they offered a higher vigilance service with facilities for one to one supervision. Furniss related this to the history of voluntarily-run contact centres, since these were set up as 'neutral meeting places' rather than for the purposes of the protection of mothers and children. These centres were contrasted to those that had been designed specifically to deal with issues of violence and abuse, as had happened in other countries such as the US, New Zealand and Australia.

Later research by Aris et al. (2002), found that the number of centres providing

high vigilance contact had increased to 19 per cent but that this was still a small proportion of the 86 centres surveyed, thus indicating that the vast majority of centres were still facilitating low vigilance contact. Moreover, this latter study indicated that, even in the centres offering supervised contact, several had no basic safety features, such as separate entrances or video cameras for the protection of mothers and children arriving and leaving the centre.

These studies also demonstrated that those who referred mothers and children to contact centres, such as solicitors and court welfare officers, often had little idea about whether the centre could 'provide the level of safety required' (Furniss, 2000: 276). In Aris et al.'s later research, one centre co-ordinator stated:

There are a lot of people who don't understand what a supported centre is. They refer to supported centres but order supervised contact. We have judges and solicitors who still don't know what it is and that makes it difficult. (Aris et al., 2002: 38).

This latter study also found some court welfare officers knew that a local centre could not provide high vigilance protection but misled mothers about the level of safety. Moreover, both Furniss (2000) and Aris et al. (2002) indicated that a majority of centres did not organize pre-contact visits, so expectations of mothers and children about the level of vigilance could be compounded on the first visit.

Screening and risk assessments

Both these studies found that some referrers and centres (including some which offered supervised contact) failed to screen for domestic violence or assess the risks to children or the resident parent. Aris et al.'s research indicated that centre co-ordinators were often critical of what counted as risk assessment of violent

fathers by court referrers:

The courts are sending people off to risk assessment by a psychiatrist. In other words what we are doing is making domestic violence a mental health problem. When no mental health problem is found, they are then making a statement to the effect that a person has no problems... (2002: 50)

This study found that a very few centres, mainly in London, were using more adequate forms of risk assessment in combination with assessments of offender progress on perpetrator programmes, such as the 'Safe Contact Project'. This issue is discussed in more detail in chapter three, when looking at measures to address fathers' violence.

Mothers' and children's experiences of supported and supervised contact

Aris et al. (2002) surveyed the experiences of 70 resident mothers and found that their sense of safety was dependent on their previous experiences of violence. Some said that contact centres made them feel more secure. However, there were also mothers who had experienced life-threatening violence and abduction threats and who continued to feel unsafe. These mothers experienced such contact as continuing abuse. In addition, mothers described several violent incidents taking place inside the centres themselves, during violent fathers' contact with children, where children or mothers were threatened. They felt that other children were affected by witnessing these ongoing incidents of violence from such fathers. One mother with supported contact felt that all the courts were doing were telling children that it was 'okay' for fathers to be violent, as is indicated in the following account:

You know there is a room full of men, who ... are dysfunctional, let's say, and we're bringing our children...into a situation of dysfunction which is what we're trying to escape from.....What's glaringly obvious to me is that the court has not caught up with the evidence.....children are suffering and mothers are sufferingif you have a dysfunctional domestic violence past, the best way to prevent that from continuing is to protect the child and not show them that it's okay. By bringing them to see that parent in a sense we're saying 'it's okay'. (Mother supported contact) (Aris et al., 2002: 96)

Some mothers in this study also reported that violent fathers were using contact to manipulate children and to carry abusive messages to mothers and that the lack of observation of fathers in some centres meant that they could continue to abuse the children, particularly in outside play areas. In addition, mothers highlighted concerns when babies and toddlers were forced to have contact in these circumstances, as this meant that the mothers often had to be in same room as violent fathers in order to cope with upset and crying babies. Thus, in these situations, mothers could continue to experience abuse and threats from fathers. Aris et al. argue that this form of contact may be particularly inappropriate for very young children.

Further, several mothers in Aris et al.'s study described difficulties in forcing reluctant children to attend the centres and indicated these children's ongoing unhappiness with such contact. Moreover, many mothers felt that contact centre staff were hostile toward them when they raised concerns about their own safety or about fears of abuse or neglect of children when supervised or assessed contact was expected move on to unsupervised visits. In these circumstances, mothers felt that far from being neutral, co-ordinators tended to favour fathers and listen to them more, as indicated in the following accounts:

They favour the father. Throughout the observed contact I felt these two women were

unprofessional. For example he used to cry and they wanted a happy ending. They came and told me he still loved me, 'He's crying and finding it difficult' etc.... (Mother supported contact) (Aris et al., 2002:92)

I don't think they listen to mothers. They only listen to fathers. I feel judged. It's supposed to be neutral. (Mother supported contact) (ibid)

Interviews with co-ordinators, including with some running supervised centres, confirmed that they regarded mothers as being unreasonably obstructive to contact when they raised issues of safety. One co-ordinator described the mothers derogatorily as 'a witches coven.'

This latter study also sought the views of 21 children, mainly aged between five and ten through a questionnaire, since non-resident fathers withheld their consent for the children to be interviewed (Aris et al., 2002). As in Mullender et al.'s research (2002) highlighted above, children presented a variety of views, with some being pleased to see fathers and others stating that they did not want to see him or that they did not want contact to take place outside the centre. Moreover, whilst 14 children said they felt safe during contact 'the remaining seven said they were unsure or did not feel safe' (Aris et al., 2002: 104). In addition, two-thirds of the children indicated they felt safe only because their mothers were nearby, suggesting that they would not feel safe if contact moved on to unsupervised or unsupported visiting contact.

Contact: moving on

This latter research also confirmed Radford et al.'s earlier study (1999) which indicated that many referrers viewed such arrangements as a short term measure,

although a few court welfare officers and contact centre co-ordinators who had been interviewed recognized that contact was never going 'to work' outside their centres because of fathers' ongoing violence and abuse (Aris et al., 2002).

However, this study indicated that there was considerable pressure on mothers and children to agree to unsupervised contact, because of under-resourcing and the need to take on other clients. Aris et al. argued:

In this sense contact in a centre was, often accurately, interpreted by women as 'the thin end of the wedge' – a temporary arrangement during which they would be increasingly pressurized to allow more frequent and more open contact. (Aris et al., 2002: 114)

As Radford et al. (1999) suggested, this could frequently happen when contact was set up for the purposes of observation and assessment. In these circumstances, indications of 'good behaviour' by fathers during such observed contact sessions could be taken as the only evidence that these fathers were no longer a risk and any supervision could quickly be withdrawn, as was indicated by one mother in Humphrey and Thiara's study:

Despite the very clear, documented evidence of long term, severe physical violence towards myself the court still ordered contact. The contact was initially highly supervised but that all stopped after four sessions. Both the children and I are frightened for days before and after contact. (Rosalind) (Humphreys and Thiara, 2002: 96).

Fathers' pressure for direct visiting contact

Radford et al., 1999 suggested that fathers' applications to the courts could also ensure that contact moved quickly from supervised/supported contact to direct visiting. Unsurprisingly, fathers, whose views were sought in Aris et al.'s study

(2002) wanted contact to move outside the centres, as soon as possible, with many indicating that they believed having to have supported or supervised contact in the first place was unreasonable. In the main, Aris et al.'s study indicated that, although there were some exceptions many children's and mothers safety continued to be put at risk, whether such centres were set up specifically for supervised contact or not. Moreover, there were clearly circumstances when any form of contact should not have been ordered because it was apparent that some fathers were never going to change. Further, although some referrers and contact centre staff talked about recognizing the impact of domestic violence on children, this understanding did not translate into practice. This was indicated in general by continuing to regard mothers as obstructive when they raised concerns about the safety of their children and in the pressure to force more open contact. Thus, in this respect, as the US practitioners, McMahon and Pence (1995) have argued, far from acting neutrally, professionals involved in organising such contact, whether intentionally or not, can operate against the interests of children and ally themselves with the powerful social interests of violent fathers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the studies discussed in this chapter have indicated that a father's violence can impact on children's lives in several negative and disruptive ways. This has profound implications for children's views and feelings about their fathers and whether they want to have any connections with them once the family has separated. In contrast to discourses which suggest that a father's violence towards mothers, does not affect his relationship with his children, children's

accounts indicate that this is far from the case. Some children's extreme fears of their fathers, their loss of respect and affection, as well as their awareness of fathers' self-centredness and their experiences of authoritarian, abusive and neglectful parenting practices and undermining of mothers, can mean that many would choose not to have contact if allowed this choice. Moreover, the limited research in this area suggests that for those children who are permitted to make this choice, their wellbeing is increased. Yet the studies on contact indicate that children are often forced to have contact with chronically violent and directly abusive fathers through family law policies and practices by professionals, who, through their actions oppress children and put them at further risk of severe harm (McMahon and Pence, 1995).

Chapter 3 Violence, masculinities and fatherhood

Introduction

This chapter discusses, firstly, some key explanations for men's violence towards women in intimate and familial relationships. It also addresses some of the limited literature on violent fatherhood from critical masculinity perspectives. In the second part it discusses two practice-based approaches to addressing men's violence, looking specifically at research on risk assessments and perpetrator programmes, and analyses their relevance to violent fathering.

Part 1 Violent masculinities

Biological explanations

As Stanko (1994) has highlighted, biological explanations may be drawn upon both to normalise men's violence or to suggest its aberration. For example, she indicates that discourses which suggest that men are 'naturally' more aggressive than women remain popular within westernised cultures. On the other hand, men's 'excessive' violence may be explained through an over-abundance of 'male' hormones such as testosterone, or explained genetically in terms of faulty chromosomes (see, for example, Bowker, 1998). More elaborate biological explanations which both normalise and universalise men's violence, have been developed through discourses of evolutionary psychology. These argue that men's violence has a specific evolutionary function in promoting 'fitness' for natural selection and reproduction (see for example, Wilson and Daly, 1998). Wilson and Daly (1998) have developed a complex 'taxonomy' of psychological evolutionary discourses to explain men's violence towards women in familial relationships. For example, having

observed that violent men often appear self-interested and controlling in marital-type relationships, they argue that one apparent motivation for their violence is 'sexual propriety' which they view as an 'adaptive mental mind-set' to 'deal with the problem of paternity uncertainty' and of 'male to male reproductive competition' (1998: 213).

Whilst extreme violence, such as the killing of wives, can be seen as partially maladaptive to evolutionary purposes, they suggest that this can still be explained through the psychological mechanism of 'sexual propriety' 'since such killings prevent other men having access to them. The abuse and killing of a father's own children is far harder to explain in this framework. However, as seen in chapter 2, they argue that the research evidence indicates that violent fathers are far more likely to kill stepchildren because they interfere with the marital solidarity necessary for reproduction. As Brittan (1989) notes this kind of biological determinism is more sophisticated than in the past, since it argues that certain social phenomena are informed by underlying biological processes, but such explanations still serve to 'naturalise male domination' (1989: 4).

Psychological and psycho-social explanations

As with biological explanations, psychological explanations may both normalise and pathologise men's violence towards partners. For example, psycho-social theories of social learning and socialisation may draw on role theory to normalise men's violence through arguing that gendered identities are learnt through social scripts. Edley and Wetherell (1996) indicate that role theory developed out of the formulation of masculine and feminine personality types or traits in the 1930s, which constructed gendered identities as opposites. Thus the masculine role was associated with qualities such as 'aggression'

'roughness' and 'self-reliance' and the feminine role with 'timidity' 'tenderness' and 'dependence' (Edley and Wetherell, 1996: 101-102). Using the metaphor of actors taking on a role in the theatre, role theorists argue that sex positioning as a boy or a girl socially prescribes a set of already scripted gender roles, based on socially defined norms and expectations (Edley and Wetherell, 1996). However as the Australian critical masculinity theorist, Connell (1987), has highlighted, although role theory moves beyond the purely biological as a form of explanation, it cannot explain how such gender roles are reproduced, nor why it is the masculine role which is defined as dominant and aggressive, unless it falls back on biological frameworks of gender differences.

Inappropriate role models in families of origin, where boys both witness domestic violence towards their mothers and may be physically abused themselves by violent fathers, are common explanations, which support inter-generational transmission of violence theories (Straus et al., 1980; Saunders, 1995). However, as Stark and Flitcraft (1996) argue, such explanations were not supported by the empirical evidence, since 80 per cent of all the children from Straus et al.'s study (1980) who either witnessed violence and/or were directly physically abused themselves, were found not to engage in domestic abuse as adults. Thus, as Connell (1987) notes, role theory assumes that there is some mechanical transmission of specific role models to children, rather than viewing them as conscious social actors, who interpret and act on their experiences in different ways. In addition, such explanations deny and open up arguments that men are not responsible for their violence, because they suggest that men equal victims of the sex-role system (Adams, 1988).

Socialisation theories of gender may also be combined with social strain theories to argue that men use violence against their partners, as frustration responses to blocked goals, when they are unable to meet social expectations of themselves as men (Gelles, 1983; Smith, 1989). Such explanations may be particularly applied to working class or unemployed men, where it may be suggested that because of their lack of power in the workplace, or because they cannot fulfil their expected role as breadwinners, this may lead them to take out their frustrations on women in the home. However, these explanations do not tend to fit the empirical evidence, which suggests that domestic violence can be carried out equally by men who have more social power (Mooney, 1993). Moreover as Mullender (1996) has noted they do not explain why other marginalised men do not use violence.

Psychological models may also regard domestically violent men as having particular psychological and/or pathological characteristics (Saunders, 1995). For example, Saunders (1995) argues that although violent men are not very different from 'other men' and only 'a small percentage have severe mental disorders, broad definitions of psychopathology may be applicable to most abusers' (1995: 72). Moreover they may include typologies of violent men based on their levels of violence (Saunders, 1995). However, such typologies may be too static and can ignore the way men's levels of violence can change situationally (see Messerschmidt, 1993).

For example, increases in men's levels of violence have been noted when there are perceived threats to men's power and control, such as when women are pregnant or threaten to leave relationships (Walby and Myhill, 2001). In addition, apart from the limitations already identified, psychological models and social learning theories miss out any understandings of men's social power

and fail to recognise how men's power over women in partner relationships is increased and reinforced through the use of violence. Thus, as sociological feminist and critical masculinity theorists have noted, they fail to acknowledge that violent men gain certain benefits from using violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Connell, 1987; Ptacek, 1988; Kelly, 1998; Hanmer, 1996, Hearn, 1998).

Feminist sociological perspectives

UK feminist perspectives have mainly located men's violence towards women in intimate and familial relationships within sociological analyses of gendered and patriarchal social relations of power. They have also been grounded in feminist research on women's, and more recently, children's experiences (see, for example, Hester et al., 1996; Radford et al., 2000). One of the earlier studies on domestic violence taking this approach was that undertaken by Dobash and Dobash (1979). This study, based on 109 women's experiences living in refuges, focussed on analysing men's violence through women's accounts by looking at relational and situational factors which were involved in violent 'events'. From this research, Dobash and Dobash (1992) argued that men's violence towards women in this context was a consequence of:

men's possessiveness and jealousy; men's expectations concerning women's domestic work; men's sense of the right to punish women for perceived wrong doing. and the importance to men of maintaining or exercising their position of authority (Dobash and Dobash, 1992: 4).

In addition, drawing on a historical analysis of patriarchal social relations, they argued that men's violence against women was maintained by patriarchal social institutions, cultural ideologies and male socialisation, which supported and legitimised men's domination particularly in the family since 'it is in the

family where men's "right" and privileges are given the most free reign' (Dobash and Dobash, 1988: 57).

This framework for understanding men's violence in familial heterosexual relations has come to be seen as too static and monolithic in terms of its formulation of patriarchal structures, and its failure to recognise the constitution of different cultural and historical forms of patriarchy as well as differences in women's experiences of violence (Hearn, 1998). Nevertheless, it has served as a template for later analyses undertaken from critical masculinity perspectives and highlighted the particular significance of violence in maintaining 'private patriarchies' (Hearn, 1998a; Tosch, 1999).

Other UK feminist theorists and researchers have taken a broader approach to theorising domestic violence within perspectives of men's violence towards women more generally (Radford et al., 1996). Much of this analysis has drawn on work undertaken by the US feminist theorist MacKinnon (1982, 1989) who centralised men's sexual violence of women and girls as the key aspect of men's power. MacKinnon has argued that sexuality as a 'social construct of male power' is 'constitutive of the meaning of gender' and in modern western societies is the means through which gendered power relations are reproduced (Mackinnon, 1989; 128). Thus, in this perspective domestic violence is viewed as always sexualised and in familial contexts is based on men's presumptions of sexual ownership and rights of sexual access to women and girls (Mackinnon, 1989). Kelly (1988), drawing on MacKinnon's perspective and her own research on women's and girls' different experiences of male sexual violence, located domestic violence as part of a continuum of different forms of sexual violence that women and girls experience in various contexts, and which operates as a key means of social control of women. Thus, her concept

of a continuum of sexual violence recognises that men's violence is both 'a gendered phenomenon within the context of patriarchal social relations' and 'likely to be sexual as in rape and sexual assault, or sexualised that is a 'power turn on for men' (Radford et al., 1996: 3). Yet, whilst highlighting the significance of men's sexual violence towards women and sometimes children in intimate and familial relationships, these perspectives may be seen as being too monolithic in explaining men's violence (Walklate, 2001). In addition, they may be viewed as obscuring other aspects of men's use of violence which are not specifically sexual and have been particularly critiqued from black feminist perspectives for this reason (Mama, 1989; Southall Black Sisters, 1993; Bhatti-Sinclair, 1996).

Recent UK feminist theorising and research on domestic violence from structural perspectives has become more complex, nuanced and context specific; recognising that forms of domestic violence vary in different social and cultural contexts and taking into account differences as well as commonalities in women's experiences and inter-relations between different hierarchical structures of power (see for example, Hester et al., 1996; Radford et al., 2000). This has partly been as a consequence of black feminist research and theorising on domestic violence and the need to take account of and produce more global feminist analyses (see, for example, Radford et al., 2000). Thus, domestic violence has been redefined as one aspect of men's gendered violence against women and children. These later perspectives have combined contextual and structural approaches and involved more complex analyses of the constraints on women's agency and commonalities and differences between women across cultural boundaries (see, for example, Hanmer, 1996). In addition, as has been seen in the last chapter, there has been a more intensive focus on the inter-connections between violence towards women and

the abuse of children by violent men within a heteropatriarchal analysis and the way these social relationships of power operate to oppress mothers and children in familial contexts (Mullender and Morley, 1994; Hester and Radford, 1996, Hester and Harne, 1999; Eriksson and Hester, 2001). There has also been an emerging focus on violent fathering from the children's anti-oppressive standpoints (Mullender et al., 2002). Yet, in many ways, these feminist perspectives on fatherhood as a social institution of male power and fathering as specifically masculinised practices and their interconnections to men's violence towards women and children, have been under-theorised, partly as a consequence of there being less specific focus on men's meanings and understandings in this area (Mullender et al., 2002).

Further, although there has been some focus on the social construction of masculinities (or what it means to be men) in the context of feminist psychosocial models developed through practice-based approaches to challenging men's violence (Pence and Paymar, 1993), this has until fairly recently only addressed violent fatherhood and violent fathering in a limited way. For example, Pence and Paymar's (1993) US model of the strategies violent men use to control women represented through the 'power and control wheel' (1993: 3) only recognised one aspect of violent fathering, through their use of their children against mothers. In general, however, this model did not refer to fathers' direct abuse of children, nor the particular impact of fathers' violence on children, except as 'inappropriate role models.' (1993: 3). Moreover, the solution offered in relation to their fathering practices was to share 'parenting' without recognising that this could increase their power and control over children as well as mothers.

Thus, in these early formulations, there was little critique or recognition that fatherhood and fathering, specifically, were connected to the social construction of gendered relations of power. Later analyses, based on experiences of running a contact centre for violent fathers to visit their children (McMahon and Pence, 1995), did however begin to develop these understandings. For example, these authors recognised a need 'to develop a clearer understanding of the role that violence and power play in shaping the social relationships of families' (1995: 187) and its use in constructing such men's social identities as fathers where 'assumptions of authority and control' are 'embedded' in such constructions (McMahon and Pence, 1995: 196). In this analysis, they drew on Arendell's research on post-divorce fathering (1992, 1995) where she argued that 'fathers expended major efforts to re-establish and reassert their identities as men' through discourses of fathers' rights to children (Arendell, 1995: 14). Over half the 75 divorced fathers in this study, used post-separation violence and litigation battles for custody and/or increased visitation rights, in order to re-assert their control over women and children, post-separation and argued that they were justified in doing so, in asserting their rights as fathers. Moreover, like other studies with violent men (see below) most deflected blame onto their ex-partners and argued that women had driven them to it (Arendell, 1995). Similarly, UK studies on post-divorce fathering, although not specifically focussed on domestic violence, have also indicated that what concerns the majority of fathers on separation is their perceived loss of direct power to control mothers and children and the threats this therefore poses to their dominant masculine identities (Simpson et al., 1995; Smart and Neale, 1999).

Masculine identities as violent social practice

Critical masculinity social theorists have drawn on feminist perspectives on the inter-connections between men's violence and hierarchical gendered power relations, by looking at the inter-relationships between power and the construction of masculine identities as socially based practice. Thus, in some ways they fill a theoretical gap in feminist theorising about men's domestic violence on an individual level and its relationship to patriarchal power structures (see for example, Connell, 1987; Morgan, 1992; Messerschmidt, 1993; Pringle, 1995; Hearn, 1998a). In particular, the work of Connell (1987, 2002) has been crucial in developing understandings that gendered identities are constructed through social power struggles between men and women and men and men, rather than being the outcome of biological 'sex differences' or 'sex roles' learnt in childhood. For example, Connell (1987) has argued that socialisation perspectives are limited because they ignore 'both choice and force in social life' (1987: 195). Significantly, in this perspective, gender is viewed as being actively constructed through individual and collective social practice through the concept of 'doing gender'. He also theorises the connection between individual and collective social practices and social structures through drawing on Giddens' structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) to account for the way practices become institutionalised and the way social practices are constrained by institutionalisation (Connell, 1987). For Connell, institutionalisation creates continuities and routines of social practices over time and space and produces hegemonic forms of masculinity which become *embedded* in different societies and cultures, although he emphasises that these are historically variable and can change and be reconstituted through social practice. His concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' as a 'social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces' which extends into the organisation of

private life and cultural processes' (Connell, 1987:184) is relevant here to the construction of masculine identities in specific social contexts. For example he argues that:

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept which may function in a number of ways in analyses of violence. Used with awareness of historical context and not as a catch-all formula – it may help explain the cultural embedding and specific shape of violence in communities where physical aggression is expected or admired among men. It may help explain broad differences in rates of violence between men and women. It may help understand motive and emotion in domestic violence and homophobic violence..(Connell, 2002: 93).

Thus, along with other critical masculinity theorists (see for example, Pringle, 1995; Hearn, 1998a), Connell (2002) suggests that although the use of violence in the construction of masculine identities is contingent, contested and open to change, it can be deeply embedded or 'entrenched' through wider cultural practices.

In looking at the application of such theoretical formulations to specific practices of masculinity construction through the use of violence, the US criminologist, Messerschmidt (1993, 1997) has indicated that these are situationally accomplished. Much of Messerschmidt's work on masculinities and crime has focussed on the use of violence as a resource in the practices of doing masculinities between men, or in more public and collective forms of sexual violence against women, such as gang rape. For example, he argues that gang rape is 'a spectacular masculine display of sexual conquest' (1993: 115) which is as much about demonstrating masculinity between men as it is about degrading and humiliating women. However, he suggests that men's use of violence towards women in familial settings is different and is more about defending traditional patriarchal rights and authority in the home, rather than accomplishing masculinity through public display. More problematically, as in social strain theories, discussed above, he also relates different forms of male

violence to men's different social positioning within the gender order and draws on the work of Tolson, (1977) and Segal's (1990) socialist feminist analysis, to argue that working class and other marginalised men are more likely to be domestically violent because of their lack of power in other public spheres. In addition, he argues that there is less likely to be violence amongst middle class men due to their different social positioning and the more equal division of labour in middle class households. Messerschmidt's formulations on the social constructions of masculinities through the use of violence can be viewed as being overly deterministic in relation to men's social positioning. Nevertheless, his analysis on the use of violence as a resource to accomplish masculine identities in different situational contexts, has been significant to later theorising in this area (see Hearn, 1998a).

Dobash and Dobash (1998), drawing on the work of Toch (1982) take a similar approach to Messerschmidt and argue that there are differences in the way men's use of violence constructs masculine identities when it takes place between men and when it is used in encounters with women in partner relationships. Thus, from their research on violent men's accounts, they suggest that violence between men is viewed as 'heroic' and 'valorises masculine identity' (Dobash and Dobash, 1998: 165). In contrast, they suggest that men's accounts of violence towards women, tend to merely 'confirm masculine identity' 'to the extent that a man is not subordinated to a woman,' and are not spoken about 'with pride' (Dobash and Dobash, 1998:167). In addition, they argue that the accomplishment of masculine identity in this context 'lies not in the encounter itself, but in the outcome,' such as 'winning an argument, putting the woman in her place and showing her who is the boss' (1998: *ibid*).

Yet, whilst masculine identities may be constructed differently in men's talk about violence against their partners in research contexts, in other contexts they may also be practiced through informal masculine cultures. For example, Wilson, (1996), in describing working on the 'Change' men's perpetrator programme, related how men's talk of their partners in the group was imbued with the language of misogyny and degradation of women. Further, covert research on masculine work cultures, such as the police, has noted similar degrading and often sexualised constructions of women as wives and girlfriends (Walklate, 2001). Connell (2002) also argues that certain informal masculine cultures such as 'neighbourhoods, workplaces and pubs' contribute to affirming hegemonic violent masculinities through domestic violence, since 'husbands are expected to keep wives in their place' and a 'controlled use of force' is 'widely accepted as part of men's repertoire in dealing with women and children' (Connell, 2002: 94). Similar masculine cultures have been noted by feminist and critical masculinity researchers in school contexts (Lees, 1993; Connelly, 1995; Harne, 2000).

Hearn's analysis of men's accounts of domestic violence, is far more complex than earlier studies and involves looking at the way men's identities are constructed through material practices as well as symbolically and discursively. Thus, for Hearn 'men's doing of violence to women simultaneously involves "being a man" and symbolically showing "being a man"' (Hearn, 1998a: 37). Further, he argues that 'in some cases such violence may be 'constitutive' of masculinity but in other cases it may be 'less obviously' and 'more subtly related' to the construction of men's identities (1998a: *ibid*). Moreover, his more detailed qualitative research with 60 violent men, found that whilst their violence was often viewed as a means to an end – such as having power and control over the woman, for some men it was also

‘an end in itself.’ Thus, some men ‘simply’ enjoyed the violence or said they did (Hearn, 1998a: 36). The idea of domestic violence as being constitutive of masculine identity has also been developed in one of the few feminist studies with violent men undertaken by Lundgren (1995), where she focussed on men’s violence in an extreme religious sect. In this context, Lundgren argued that the constitution of masculinity through the use of violence was accomplished through a continuous process of domination, which involved the gradual increase of control over women’s bodies as well as their minds.

A number of common themes arise out of these and other studies which indicate ways in which violence becomes routinised and embedded in masculine identity construction. Firstly, all these studies identify men’s violence as purposeful and premised on the perceived benefits from their use of violence for themselves, even though various discursive strategies such as denial and minimisation may be used to disguise such purposes and neutralise its impact (see Ptacek, 1988; Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Hearn, 1998a).

Secondly, they indicate that whatever the differences between men and the multiple reasons they may give for their violence, there is a sense of their superiority, as men, and of their own rightness, or what might be more aptly termed ‘self-righteousness’ in practising violence towards women (Ptacek, 1988; Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Hearn, 1998). Thus, women are usually blamed for causing men’s violence, whether it is about women not conforming to men’s expectations, or the quelling of women’s resistance, or dealing with women as threats to their sense of themselves as men (Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Hearn, 1998a). Thirdly, men’s accounts of their violence are often suffused with discourses of emotionality and feeling. Thus, these studies indicate that men’s violence may be about the deliberate expressions of

feelings (Lundgren, 1995; Hearn, 1998a) and suggest that emotions can be specifically masculinised through the practices of doing violence. Hearn (1996, 1998a) for example, suggests that the ideology of love can be contained in discourses of sexual violence towards women partners and towards their sexual abuse of children. These studies therefore challenge some psychoanalytic perspectives, which may associate men's violence with repression of emotions (see, for example, Gadd, 2003). Finally, men's discourses of violence are centred on themselves and their own lives. Thus, women are often objectified in their talk of violence (Hearn, 1998a).

These themes relate to another way of theorising masculine identity construction through violence, based on an ethical model (Stoltenberg, 1990). Stoltenberg has argued that masculinities in westernised societies are enacted through a sense that men's actions as men towards women are always morally right. This allows for the discounting of the impacts of their violence on others and for attributing responsibility to women for their violence. Stoltenberg also argues that in perpetrating violence against women a moral transaction takes place which 'obliterates' the identities or personhood of their victims. Such an analysis also relates to earlier feminist theorising on the way men have in different ways constructed women as others (see, for example, De Beauvoir, 1949, 1970).

Another crucial aspect of these perspectives is that, whilst they may draw on elements of post-structural theorising in recognising difference and ideas from Foucault (1979) about men's accounts as discourse production, they retain notions of men's social practices of violence as being embodied and lived in a social reality outside of discourse, as well as being institutionalised through gendered structures of power. In other words, they emphasise the materiality

debates about fathers and fatherhood need to be more explicitly gendered and explicitly about power. Fathers need to be understood as gendered and *as men* [his emphasis] and fatherhood needs to be understood as an institution, historically constructed as a form of certain men's power (Hearn, 2002: 245).

Hearn also notes that there has been and 'often still is an implicit coalition between the state and fathers in not intervening against their violence to children and women' (Hearn, 2001: 88-89). In addition, both Hearn (1998a) and Morgan (2002) highlight that fatherhood and fathering need to be viewed as being practised through social relations of power with mothers as well as with children.

However, within the critical masculinities literature as a whole, there have been increasing moves away from viewing fatherhood and fathering as being constructed and practised through gendered social relations of power. In contrast, it has been argued that there has been a loosening of patriarchal social relations in familial social practices and an ending of 'patriarchalism' in this area (Castells, 1997). Thus, in many ways, theorising about fatherhood and fathers in this context has followed the policy discourses discussed in chapter 1, where the ideology of 'involved fatherhood' has constructed the practices of fathering as being outside of men's practices of violence and abuse towards children and mothers in families (Eriksson and Hester, 2001; Scourfield and Drakeford, 2001). Thus, theorising on masculinities and fathering has often uncritically viewed 'involved fathering' as a positive development without recognising that it can also be a means to reconstitute men's social power over women and children (see, for example, Ferguson, 2001; Kimmel, 2001). Moreover, although there has been some critical analysis of fathers' rights movements and father responsibility movements as new ways of constituting

of men's practices of violence and its impacts on women and children and its inter-relationships with institutionalised practices.

They therefore contrast with much post-structuralist theorising on men's violence, which may argue that institutionalised structures of gender inequality no longer exist in late or post-modern societies, and which view power as operating only through individual subjectivities (see, for example, Featherstone and Trinder, 1997). In other post-structural perspectives gendered identities are regarded merely as stylised gender performances (Butler, 1990) which are constantly destabilised through competing discourses (Anderson and Umberson, 2001). However the latter researchers found that they were unable to discard structural and cultural perspectives of gendered power, in analysing how men construct gender through their accounts of violence towards women. For example, they highlighted that several men in their study, drew on the ideology of 'victimised manhood', and noted that this ideology as been successfully promoted by fathers' rights groups and men's movement advocates to challenge feminist perspectives on domestic violence, to construct rational masculinities in explaining their violence. (Anderson and Umberson, 2001: 375). Some post-structuralist perspectives also draw heavily on psychoanalytical frameworks and these are discussed further below.

Violent masculine identities and fatherhood

The critical masculinities literature developed within material perspectives has, to a limited extent, focussed on the social construction of fatherhood as a gendered social relation of power and fathering as a specifically masculinised practice which can be connected to violence towards women and the abuse of children (Hearn, 1998a, 2001, 2002; Pringle, 1995, 1998). Hearn (2002), for example, has argued that:

hegemonic masculinities, father-involvement discourses have not been seen in the same way (Morgan, 2002).

Hearn (1998a), in his research with domestically violent men, is one of the few researchers on men's violence who comments on violent men's practices as fathers. For example, he notices that such men, rarely acknowledge the presence of children when perpetrating violence against mothers, or the impacts on children of witnessing such violence, or the interconnections between their own abuse of children with their violence towards mothers (Hearn, 1998). In addition, Pringle's work provides some critique of father involvement discourses and notices their dangers to mothers and children (Pringle, 1995; 1998).

Sexual division of labour analyses and psychoanalysis

As Pringle (1995) highlights, the idea of involved fathering as being a positive development is often connected to sexual division of labour analyses, where men's lack of involvement in childcare has been seen as a means of creating dominant and sexually abusive masculinities. As has been seen in chapter 1, such arguments often draw on feminist psychoanalytic perspectives and in particular that of Chodorow (1978). Chodorow (1978) has argued that men's dominance, is connected to boys having to separate from their mothers and reject perceived 'feminine qualities' such as empathy and nurturing in order to construct 'defensive' masculine identities (Chodorow, 1978). Thus, it is argued, that in the case of violent men, 'overmothering and underfathering' can create 'excessive dependence on women' and lead to 'compensatory hypermasculinity' (Hearn, 1996: 31). This 'hypermasculinity' can lead to 'forms of violence when women cannot or do not satisfy men's dependency needs and misogyny itself' (Hearn, 1996:31). These theories are not

explanations of men's violence or abuse as such, but rather they focus on childhood experiences as contributory factors to dominant masculinity identity construction where domestic violence and/or the abuse of children may be concerned, focussing on childhood family experiences (Pringle, 1995). In this regard, they can also be viewed as inter-generational transmission theories of domestic violence and have been critiqued at a number of different levels. At one level they have been critiqued for being universalising and ahistorical. They do not for example, address cultural and historical diversity in childrearing, where mothers may not be central figures, nor do they explain how many men who have grown up in families where fathers were absent, avoid being violent or abusive (Pringle, 1995). Another critique has come from practice-based approaches to challenging men's violence, where it has been argued that a focus on men's 'insecurities' is frequently used as an excuse by violent men to deny their responsibility for their own violence and the benefits they gain from it (Adams, 1988).

In addition, the idea that looking after children, itself, creates non-abusive and more nurturing masculinities, fails to take account of the continuance of men's violence despite shifts in the sexual division of labour and the control men have had over the sexual division of labour at the social level (Pringle, 1995). Moreover, such perspectives assume that the activities of caring in themselves will bring about less dominant masculine identities, as if there is a simple relationship between caring activities and non-abusive practices (Pringle, 1998). Pringle has argued that although men's greater involvement in childcare may be a means of creating more 'nurturant' masculinities he also suggests that it can 'bring into stark relief the destructive potential of dominant forms of masculinity' and can therefore involve increased risks for children (Pringle, 1998: 120). Other psychodynamic perspectives draw on a form of

psychic strain theory to explain men's violence at the subjective level of masculinity identity construction by arguing that it is challenges from women to their dominance, which then produces identity insecurities and thus 'defensive' violence against women (Jefferson, 1994; Gadd, 2003). Hearn (1996) has suggested that such psychodynamic perspectives are not necessarily antithetical to more structuralist approaches to violent masculinity construction. At the ideological level however, they can be viewed as conscious woman-blaming strategies to resist women's equality and maintain the benefits that violence towards women produces through arguments that it is women, not men who are responsible for their violence (Pence and Paymar, 1993).

One illuminating empirical study, which has been undertaken from a critical masculinities perspective on violent fathers, and which challenges some of the arguments above, is that undertaken by the Australian researchers, Alder and Polk (1996). This research looked at the case records of men who had killed children in different settings. They noted that, as in Messerschmidt's analysis, masculinities were differentially accomplished through these killings, although there were also commonalities between them. For example, in the killings of children by fathers and stepfathers, there were two different kinds of killings. One kind was the killing of very young children under five, in familial settings, when fathers and stepfathers were involved in looking after the children. In these circumstances, Alder and Polk argue that children were killed because their behaviour was seen as a threat to fathers' own paternal authority. These fathers had been regularly involved in the day to day care of their children and there had been ongoing violence towards their partners as well as ongoing abuse towards the children. For example, in describing how they came to kill the children one father said, 'I went down the park with

Sam...he was as good as gold, then he f...king shit, put shit all over the place, then I belted him.' Another stated that he kept on hitting his child 'because he was crying ...and I picked him up and shook him (to) shut him up.....I didn't lose my cool, I was just annoyed' (Alder and Polk, 1996: 404-5).

Other fathers killed their children in post-separation contexts when they were involved in 'custody battles', and several of these cases involved prior domestic violence, although not always prior violence against children. Moreover, these killings were specifically planned. These fathers often gave several reasons for killing their children which included suggesting that the children were 'better off dead'; as well as their 'loss of power and control in the family' 'their own pain' and 'getting revenge on their partners' (Alder and Polk, 1996: 405-6). Alder and Polk, indicate that, although these killings were undertaken for different reasons and in different circumstances, they suggested that children were killed, because of perceived threats to their masculine identities as fathers and their loss of authority and control over children as well as over mothers. This study illuminates how far violence can be deeply embedded as part of men's constructions of themselves as fathers and suggests that violence towards children is connected to their violence and abuse towards mothers. Critical masculinity perspectives may therefore be useful in understanding how the use of violence as a resource in familial social relations is connected to men's identities as fathers, rather than being separate from such identities.

Part 2 Practice based approaches

Risk assessments

Walklate (2001) has noted that perceptions of 'risk' are produced by powerful cultural social processes, which may magnify particular threats and obscure or disregard others. In this sense, a recognition of the need to adequately assess the risks posed by violent fathers to mothers and children in the father-child contact context by professionals, could be seen as a positive development on current policies and practices (see, for example, Radford et al., 1999; Aris et al., 2002).

However, the assessment and prediction of risk has been a problematic area in criminal justice and child welfare contexts (Farmer and Owen, 1995; Parsloe, 1999; Beaumont, 1999). For example, Farmer and Owen (1995) noted in their study of child protection practice, that the risks to children were frequently based on 'common sense' or 'intuitive' judgements, rather than on research-based knowledge. Nevertheless, moves towards more 'evidence based' statistical prediction methods are not without problems (Beaumont, 1999; Parsloe, 1999). Beaumont (1999) has suggested that methods of statistically predicting risk remain a 'risky business' and indicates that they are fraught with complexities and uncertainties, both in definitional and methodological terms. In addition, Parsloe has emphasised that statistical risk assessment is based on social constructs of risk and is therefore not an 'objective' and 'value-free activity,' (1999: 12). She indicates that risk assessment involves ethical and social value judgements, often from under-trained and over-worked professionals. Further, Beaumont argues that risk assessment may be viewed as a quick, managerial and technocratic measure by policy makers to fix failing social policies, and where a lack of resources may prevent more comprehensive measures to protect others from harm.

Despite these problems however, as Aris et al.(2002) have highlighted, there are indications of the need for improved types of risk assessment which are more grounded in research based knowledge to address the problem of the risks of harm to mothers and children under current family law policies. In addition, Walby and Myhill (2001) have stressed that criminal justice processes (which may be linked to an assessment of a violent father's suitability to have different forms of contact post-separation, such as his attendance on a perpetrator programme) also need to use risk assessments that are better informed by research-based knowledge.

The development of such models as indicators of prediction of re-offending in relation to domestic violence have been based on common factors or 'risk markers' drawn from prior research evidence which can also be related to situational contexts such as separation (Saunders, 1995; Campbell, 1995; Walby and Myhill, 2001). However it needs to be recognised that these markers only suggest associations between various situations or behaviour and do not indicate causal patterns (Saunders, 1995).

For example, in the UK, Walby and Myhill (2001), drawing on findings from UK research on domestic violence, indicate a number of key risk markers, such as prior assault, separation and violence towards children as predictors of repeat assault. Nevertheless, since these markers are dependent on different research studies using different populations and methods, they are also confined by the methodological limitations of such studies.

Other more psychologically orientated research has included 'psychopathological' characteristics of domestically violent men as risk markers (Saunders, 1995).

These may include 'behavioural deficits' such as 'lack of assertiveness' or socially-defined 'personality disorders', involving 'insecurity and alienation' and being 'excessively concerned about their own masculinity', although, as seen earlier, it is recognised that 'no consistent [pathological] profiles have been found' in men who use domestic violence (Saunders, 1995: 72). It therefore needs to be noted that risk markers also vary, depending on the theoretical underpinnings of research studies.

As might be expected, predictive risk assessment models have a longer history in the North American context. For example, in the US, they emerged partially as a consequence of a number of judgements which found that clinicians had been negligent, where women had been killed by violent men who were being seen in therapeutic contexts, particularly during couple counselling. Thus, a number of clinicians were found to be negligent for failing to warn women about the 'dangerousness' of their male partners (Hart, 1988; Saunders, 1995; Campbell, 1995). However, although the North American literature indicates that predictive risk assessment instruments can be regarded as an improvement on clinical or 'intuitive' assessments alone, as in the UK literature discussed earlier, researchers have emphasised their inaccuracy in predicting 'the dangerousness' of domestically violent men and warned against viewing them as providing any certainty in the field (Saunders, 1995; Campbell, 1995).

Another drawback, as the US practitioners Bancroft and Silverman (2002) have emphasised, is that most models have focussed on the risks of severe repeated physical violence or the potentiality of lethal violence. Thus, they may not address the psychological harms that can be inflicted through power and control patterns involved in domestic violence and which can have particular impacts on

children as well as mothers. These latter authors also stress that, whilst the risks of near-lethal or severe violence towards mothers can have profound impacts on children, including the risks that they may themselves be killed, such models do not generally address the range of direct harms often inflicted on children by violent fathers through their parenting practices. There is therefore a crucial gap in this area and this is discussed further below.

Different risk assessment models

Two types of risk assessment instruments have been developed in predicting repeated and serious physical domestic violence in North American contexts and there continue to be debates about which is the most effective (Goodman et al., 2000; Weisz et al., 2000). The first type includes instruments based on general risk features identified through the empirical research, such as the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment guide, known as the SARA (Kropp et al., 1999). Although this is not the only instrument of this type, it will be focused on here because it is beginning to be widely used in the UK in the criminal justice system (Metropolitan Police Service, 2001).

The SARA involves a structured checklist of 20 risk factors which has mainly been developed from risk characteristics of known offenders in the criminal justice system. It includes factors such as: past assault, including in previous relationships; past sexual assault and sexual jealousy; use of weapons and/or death threats; minimisation and denial of offending behaviour; suicide threats; separation or high conflict over separation; recent substance abuse or dependence; employment problems; a history of violence to others, whether other family members or strangers and an escalation in frequency and seriousness of assaults towards partners. It aims to inform professional judgements at three levels of risk

– low, medium and high (Metropolitan Police Service, 2001). But it is not based on a cumulative score; rather it is dependent on the weighting given to different factors and their application to a particular situation (Metropolitan Police Service, 2001). It includes seeking information from the perpetrator and the victim and a review of other records (Stark, 2002). It is also one of the few instruments that has been subjected to predictive validity testing (Goodman et al., 2000). For example, in a retrospective study on 50 offenders, Kropp et al. (1996) compared the use of a single SARA score to clinical judgement alone and clinical judgement informed by SARA based assessment. It found that only the SARA-based clinical judgement was strongly related to re-offending, indicating that its effectiveness is related to professionals' own knowledge and expertise (Goodman et al., 2000). A further study (Kropp and Hart, 2000) evaluated the reliability and validity of judgements using the SARA with 2681 identified offenders in the criminal justice system, in six different samples, and found that the presence of different risk factors among offenders was quite diverse. In addition, significant discrimination between those with a history of spousal violence and those without a history of such violence was found only in one sample through the use of the SARA, and between those who had re-offended and those who had not in another. These findings, therefore, again suggest that its effectiveness without further judgement and information is fairly limited. Thus, its value may depend, as Parsloe (1999) has highlighted above, on the social values and competencies of those administering it and the time they have to seek out information from other sources.

The second model is an assessment instrument developed for use specifically in discussion with survivors known as the Danger Assessment Scale (Campbell, 1995). This was originally produced to assist survivors identify and predict the

possibility of lethal violence from their partners or ex-partners, and looks in particular at escalation of the violence in terms of its frequency and severity. The scale assesses two aspects of dangerousness. Firstly, it looks at the levels of current violence used by the perpetrator. Secondly, it addresses escalation and overall tactics of power and control and specifically includes direct violence towards children. Significantly, it also includes psychological aspects of men's power and control over women and does not only focus on the level of physical or sexual violence, as in the SARA instrument. It consists of only fifteen items and is fairly easy to administer (Campbell, 1995; Stark, 2002). However, although it was designed originally to assess the possible potential of homicide, it has been viewed as useful in assessing the risks of repeated violence more generally by professionals (Goodman et al., 2000; Weisz et al., 2000). Goodman et al. (2000) point out that one advantage of the Danger Assessment Scale (DAS) is that it draws on a survivor's own knowledge of their individual partner or ex-partner's violence and 'elicits information solely from the victim' who, in certain settings, may be 'the only available source of information' (2000: 65). It may therefore be particularly relevant in contexts where women have not already reported domestic violence to the police or other agencies. In addition, it has been shown to have high internal construct validity and reliability in a variety of settings (Goodman et al., 2000). Nevertheless, it has been argued that only relying on survivors' knowledge of perpetrators, may mean that the risks are under-estimated (Weisz et al., 2000).

Significantly, two recent studies to test the predictive value of the Danger Assessment Scale and women's own intuitive judgements about risks of severe domestic violence from partners and ex-partners suggest that they are perhaps more significant than any other measure of the risks of repeat severe physical

violence from partners (Goodman et al., 2000; Weisz et al., 2000). For example, in a pilot study, Goodman et al. (2000) compared the use of the DAS with a spousal abuse type instrument developed by Straus et al. (1996) based on a revised version of the CTS to predict the re-occurrence of severe domestic violence in the following three months. It found that the DAS had a much higher predictive value for repeated domestic violence. Further, Weisz et al.'s research (2000), using secondary analysis, indicated that survivors' predictions significantly improved risk factor instruments over a period of four months and survivor predictions on their own were strongly associated with subsequent severe violence. However, a few women (4 per cent in this study) under-estimated the likelihood of repeat violence from partners. On the basis of these findings, Weisz et al. suggest that survivors 'may have a better understanding of the meanings of batterers' threats and violence' and may be better positioned to understand 'the whole context' in which it occurs (2000: 86).

Thus, one clear message from these two studies is that women's assessments are crucial to inform professionals' decision-making in different settings and have relevance for assessments of risk in relation to child contact and where the referral of a violent father onto a perpetrator programme is being considered in family law or in criminal justice contexts where different sentencing options are being considered. In the latter respect, for example, Hester et al.'s research (2003) on attrition in domestic violence cases in Northumbria, noted that the criminal courts may give violent fathers less severe sentences because of their contact arrangements with children, rather than considering the possible increased risks to children, which may incur as a consequence of lighter sentencing. Moreover, although a form of risk assessment appeared to be used by the police in this study,

it did not inform decisions at sentencing or look at the risks posed by violent fathers to children (Hester et al., 2003).

In the UK, the SARA checklist developed by Kropp et al. (1999) has been piloted for more general use by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) (2001), although at the time of writing there appear to be no published evaluation studies about its effectiveness. In addition, the SARA is being used by the London Probation Service in pre-sentence reports and in assessing violent perpetrators' suitability for attendance on perpetrator programmes (National Probation Service, London, 2002). Since the MPS state that they view it as a dynamic model which is subject to change with increasing knowledge, the higher accuracy of survivors' predictions of risk may therefore be of relevance here to the further adjustment of the model. In addition, the use of instruments such as the DAS with mothers could be particularly relevant to professionals who may be involved in assessing the risks of violent fathers in relation to child contact and in men's suitability to attend perpetrator programmes. However, it also needs to be recognised that some women may be reluctant to talk about their experiences for various reasons, including shame, fears that their children will be taken into care, or that they will not be believed (Hester and Pearson, 1998; Radford et al., 1999; Aris et al., 2002). Nevertheless, the above studies found that some women's reluctance to speak about their experiences can be overcome by sensitive and culturally appropriate methods.

Assessments of violent fathers' contact with children

Whilst there is a general lack of appropriate contact assessment models which specifically assess the risks to children from a violent father, there are two contrasting models which have been developed in the US, which consider the

impacts on children in the post-separation context. One has been widely used for such 'assessments' which is based on research into 'high conflict divorce'. (Johnston and Campbell, 1993; Johnston and Roseby, 1997). There are, however, major problems with this model. Firstly, it is based on psychological typologies of violence outside of any analysis of gendered power. Secondly, it relies heavily on classical Freudian psychoanalysis to dismiss children's fears about their fathers. For example, in its typologies only severe chronic physical violence by men is recognised as being possibly harmful and it minimises the seriousness of what it terms spasmodic violence in relationships and post-separation violence, regarding both as not dangerous, because they are viewed as merely intermittent. Thus, post-separation violence is viewed as a 'positive' short term measure used by the perpetrator, whether male or female, which enables them to be 'empowered' and 'gain more control' (Johnston and Campbell, 1993: 197). Another drawback is that it regards mothers as being equally responsible for ensuring that contact works, despite their experiences of violence from men.

In a further development of the model (Johnston and Roseby, 1997), there are arguments which are highly dangerous in relation to children's safety (Bancroft and Silverman, 2002). For example, these authors embrace the idea of 'parental alienation syndrome' and regard children's experiences of physical and sexual abuse from violent fathers and their reluctance to see their fathers, because of such abuse, as merely Freudian fantasies (Johnston and Roseby, 1997). Further, in the case examples given in this latter work, violent fathers' sexual abuse of girls that falls short of actual penetration is merely regarded as 'poor boundary control,' and there is no recognition that fathers can directly physically and emotionally abuse children. Nevertheless, as Bancroft and Silverman (2002) emphasise, this model has been highly influential in informing contact evaluations in the US. In addition,

although it is not known how far it is being used in the UK, it has been recommended as an appropriate model of assessment for use where there is domestic violence by family court reporters, by the post-structuralist researchers, Featherstone and Trinder (1997) without any critique of the dangerousness of some of its assumptions.

In contrast, the practitioners Bancroft and Silverman (2002) recommend a comprehensive assessment which recognises a range of different ways that violent fathers can harm children, and whilst it draws on previous research, is based mainly on their own practitioner experience of observing and evaluating violent fathers for the family courts. It includes assessing the risks violent fathers may pose in three main areas, involving 14 different risk factors. These include: the level of harm and psychological cruelty to mothers and children; the risks of direct sexual, physical and emotional abuse of children and the risks of authoritarian, neglectful and harmful parenting, including the risks of undermining the mothers relationship with the children, and using the children as weapons against the mother. It also involves assessing a violent father's 'sense of entitlement' to having his needs met by others and his reasons for wanting contact and how far this is based on his own self-centredness and expecting children to meet his own needs. In addition, Bancroft and Silverman emphasise that such risks cannot be assessed by information from perpetrators of domestic violence alone, since their own experience and previous research with violent men (see part one of this chapter) means that perpetrators' accounts are unreliable. They also note that violent fathers often perform well when they are being observed by professionals and therefore stress that information needs to be sought directly from mothers and children and other sources such as schools. Moreover, in contrast to the previous model, they emphasise the importance of practitioners taking on board mothers'

concerns and recognising the inter-relationship between mothers' safety and children's own wellbeing. Further, they suggest ways of questioning violent fathers, which may give a more credible picture of violent fathers' own understandings of children's needs.

Aris et al. (2002) have noted that the specific assessment of violent fathers' suitability for contact is underdeveloped in the UK. One exception is the Coram Child Contact service which undertakes assessments for supervised contact as part of the Safe Contact Project, where fathers, who are being assessed for supervised contact, are also expected to attend a perpetrator programme (Slade, 2000). This assessment appears to screen out violent fathers who have been identified as severe risks through serious chronic violence and drug and alcohol abuse. According to Slade, it assesses fathers' suitability only in relation to their history of violence towards women, children's experiences of witnessing it and general levels of aggression. Thus, it misses out many negative aspects of violent fathering identified by Bancroft and Silverman above. Moreover, the assessment appears to be based on the underlying assumptions contained in attachment theory, which presupposes that children must have attachments to their fathers; although the Coram service does recognise that these can be 'disrupted' through children witnessing sustained domestic violence (Slade, 2000). Nevertheless, according to Slade, one of the goals of this centre is to repair such 'disruption' through offering supervised contact. In these circumstances, evidence is sought from fathers that they understand the impact of their previous behaviour and take responsibility for it. During supervised contact, assessment is ongoing and the father has to demonstrate he is a 'responsible parent' although how this is done is not clear (Slade, 2000: 508). Thus, although this model is an improvement on that of Johnston and Roseby (1997), it also appears to neglect many aspects of violent

fathers' parenting practices and the risks of direct abuse such as those addressed in the model suggested by Bancroft and Silverman (2002).

However, the use of risk assessments, which place the safety and wellbeing of mothers and children at the centre of contact decisions and which focus on the harms perpetrated by violent fathers, would require significant ideological shifts by many professionals currently involved in making such decisions.

Perpetrator programmes and violent fathers

As has been seen in chapter one, referral to a perpetrator programme or to another form of 'treatment' such as an anger management course or counselling, can be made a condition of a father having some form of contact by the family courts in England and Wales. Anger management courses, which do not address the 'power and control tactics' specifically involved in the use of domestic violence by violent men (see Pence and Paymar, 1993), have been found to be generally ineffective in dealing with this kind of violence (Babcock and La Taillade, 2000). In addition, there has been a developed critique of psychodynamic counselling models, whether used individually or in men's groups, in dealing directly with men's violence against women and children in intimate and familial relationships (Adams, 1988). Increasingly, therefore, cognitive behavioural programmes which incorporate a gendered analysis of men's social power, based on the Duluth model discussed earlier, are being regarded as a better solution to try and change domestically violent men in the UK, by feminist and pro-feminist practitioners (see, for example, Mullender and Burton, 2001). These groups were, until fairly recently, mainly run in the voluntary sector in the UK, but probation-led programmes have proliferated in the last few years, as a result of a renewed focus on the rehabilitation of offenders in criminal justice policies (Scourfield and

Dobash, 1999; Eadie and Knight, 2002). Thus, Eadie and Knight (2002) noted that by 2000 there were over 40 programmes existing nationally, the majority of which were set up by probation services.

Nevertheless, huge questions remain about the efficacy of perpetrator programmes (see, for example, Healey et al., 1998; Gondolf, 1998, 1999; Bennett and Williams, 2001). In addition, although such programmes emerged out of the aims of some women's advocates and anti-sexist men's groups to focus on and change violent men's behaviour (Pence and Paymar, 1993), there have been a number of concerns about their development, which have been raised both in the US and in the UK (see, for example, Hart, 1988; Adams, 1988; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Hague and Malos, 1993; Tolman and Edleson, 1995; Gondolf, 1997; Hearn, 1998b; Burton et al., 1998; Lee, 1999; Mullender and Burton, 2001).

These have, firstly, included fears that they may do more harm than good by misleading women that their partners can be made safe through such programmes. Secondly, it has been argued that they may enable violent men to shift to psychological tactics of power and control over women through focussing mainly on ending men's physical violence. In addition, there have been concerns about male bonding in group settings and collusion by male facilitators with men's justifications and excuses for their violence. Thirdly, there have been fears that they may divert or dilute criminal justice responses and fourthly it has been suggested that they may take resources away from women's and children's services. A fifth critique which encompasses some of the former ones is that they may be unaccountable to the local community, including other local services such as women's support services, and this accountability also involves a responsibility to demonstrate their effectiveness through appropriate monitoring and evaluation.

Standards for perpetrator programmes

Attempts to address these concerns in the US have been made through the establishment of state and local standards (Austin and Dankwort, 1999; Bennett and Williams, 2001). These standards included prioritising women's safety and community accountability and incorporating programmes into an overall criminal justice and community response to men's domestic violence, which has been a pioneering factor in the Duluth approach (Pence and Paymar, 1993). Austin and Dankwort's research (1999) specifically looked at the content of 37 local and state standards for perpetrator programmes which had been developed as a consequence of the issues raised above and found that most incorporated these issues in their standards. However they noted that several were extremely vague about how these standards were monitored and evaluated. Nevertheless, these authors highlighted the importance of establishing standards that prioritise victim safety and perpetrator accountability as well as accountability to the community as the 'deciding criteria on which any changes should be measured' (Austin and Dankwort, 1999: 167).

In the UK context, whilst the development of perpetrator programmes for violent men have a shorter history, similar voluntary principles and minimum standards have been established via a national network for practitioners involved in the field now known as Respect, although, at the time of writing, there is no means of enforcing or monitoring such standards and it is not known how many programmes actually embrace these (Respect, 2000). However, one survey (Humphreys et al., 2000), found that 15 out of 19 projects stated that their main aim was to prioritise the safety of women and children, which is a fundamental principle of the Respect standards. Moreover all 19 projects stated that they

limited men's confidentiality so that information could be fed back to partners about the men's progress and any concerns about risks to partners or children. In addition, all had direct links to women's support services or ran their own, and 'almost all' provided safety planning for women and assistance with legal information. Further, they 'all claimed to discourage unrealistic expectations of men's attendance and to avoid directly competing with funding for women's domestic violence services' (Humphreys et al., 2000: 20).

Children's specific safety needs

The National Practitioners' Network has specific guiding principles on child abuse and protection issues (National Practitioners' Network, 1998). This document also emphasises the importance of recognising that 'domestic violence against women is the single most important context for child abuse and therefore [is] a strong indicator for the existence of child abuse' (National Practitioners' Network, 1998:1). However, as far as children's specific safety needs were concerned, the survey discussed above, indicated that 7 projects did not have a child protection policy in place (Humphreys et al., 2000).

Standards for probation programmes

In addition, Eadie and Knight (2002) note, that due to the large increase in probation-run programmes at the end of the 1990s, there is a need to establish similar standards and principles in the probation service. But they suggest that there may be conflicts between certain principles, such as prioritising women's and children's safety, which are fundamental to the Respect standards, and the probation service's aim to address the 'crimogenic' needs of offenders. More recently, 'Duluth model' programmes are being run by London's probation service as part of the Home Office's pathfinder initiatives to evaluate 'what works' in

relation to domestic violence (London Probation Association, 2002). However, as yet there appear to be no published standards for this work.

Perpetrator programmes and risk assessments

The Respect Minimum Standards document states that programmes should not use ‘assessments of risk and reoffending without including a clear acknowledgement of the limits of such assessment processes’ (Respect, 2000:8). It also includes recommendations that, in assessing men’s suitability for attendance, programmes should access all relevant available information, including witness statements where men are court-mandated to attend. Nevertheless, it does not specify that programmes should seek information from mothers or children. It also states that ‘projects can assess men’s progress or motivation in groups, their understanding of programme materials and their attendance, and report their concerns to outside agencies and persons,’ as well as contributing to the assessments of other agencies (Respect, 2000:8). At the time of writing, there appears to be no published information about how far programmes use risk assessments, nor their efficacy, although as has been seen earlier they are being used by the London Probation Service to inform men’s suitability for attendance.

The efficacy of perpetrator programmes

Not surprisingly, given their longer history, the evaluation literature is far more developed in the North American context. However, effective evaluation and what this means remains fraught with problems and controversies although in some areas there is more convergence (Healey et al., 1998; Gondolf, 1999; Bennett and Williams, 2001). Given the reframing context of prioritising women’s safety, as seen above, two primary questions have been addressed in the more recent literature (Gondolf, 1999; Bennett and Williams, 2001). These include: whether

women are safer through such interventions and whether there are better models or forms of intervention than others. It should be noted here, however, that, although there are significant connections between mothers' safety and that of children (see chapter 2) the evaluation research, with a few exceptions, does not appear to ask questions about children's safety (Saunders, 1998; Bancroft and Silverman, 2002). This is discussed further below.

In addition, it has been argued that 'batterer' programmes should be evaluated as part of overall community strategies to deal with their violence through systems analysis, rather than viewing them as lone interventions (Healey et al., 1998; Gondolf, 1999; Bennett and Williams, 2001). Another issue, which relates to questions of the effectiveness of different models and interventions and which has emerged from prior research, is how programmes can be more effective in terms of differences between men, for example in relation to ethnicity, or meeting substance abuse or mental health needs (Gondolf, 1999; Bennett and Williams, 2001). Nevertheless, difficulties in evaluating the above questions abound.

One of the main problems in evaluating women's safety is that women are not always contactable, especially where they have left the relationship, although women's reports are viewed as the key indicator of the success of different interventions (Gondolf, 1998, 1999) and self-reports by men are not considered reliable indicators of women's safety (Bennett and Williams, 2001). Moreover, violent men may have moved on to new partners and these also need to be included in the evaluation (Gondolf, 1998, 1999). Thus, many evaluations fall back on recidivism rates in terms of re-arrest, which, because of under-reporting of assaults by women to the police, are widely known for their inaccuracy (Bennett and Williams, 2001). A further problem is the high attrition or drop-out rate from

programmes which needs to be taken into account in evaluation design and averages at around fifty per cent (Bennett and Williams, 2001). In addition, Bennett and Williams note that focussing only on those who complete programmes tends to exclude those more marginalised men since the research evidence suggests that these are the men who are most likely to drop out (Williams and Becker, 1994; Gondolf, 1999).

Evaluation methods

There is also controversy about appropriate evaluation methods. As Bennett and Williams (2001) indicate, without any comparison group it is difficult to know whether a particular intervention made any difference. However, finding appropriate comparison groups is also problematic. Many evaluations compare men on programmes to men who experience some other sanction which itself may have an impact on the outcomes (Bennett and Williams, 2001). Comparisons may also be made with other programmes to find out if some approaches are more effective than others but there are complex problems of disentangling different aspects of particular models from overall community interventions (Gondolf, 1999). In addition, there may be different findings depending when the evaluation was done since long term evaluations tend to indicate that programme impacts lessen over time (Gondolf, 1999; Bennett and Williams, 2001). For example, an evaluation which looked at recidivism rates five years after men had attended the Duluth programme indicated that, in terms of recidivism, there were no differences between those who had attended programmes and those who had experienced other criminal justice sanctions (Shephard, 1993). But Bennett and Williams (2001) argue, that since the research evidence suggests that most re-offending occurs within six months of a man starting a programme (Gondolph, 1999), assessment and evaluation needs to be ongoing and not left till sometime

after the programme has been completed. Despite these limitations and problems, the existing evaluation evidence indicates contradictory findings. These are discussed briefly below in relation to some key studies which take a comparative approach and which may be considered more robust in terms of their methodology.

Studies looking at the effectiveness of the Duluth model programme

Two recent studies have looked at the effectiveness of the Duluth model programme in the US, using an experimental design where large samples of men were either randomly assigned to a programme or to a control group of men, who were either on probation or undertaking community service as part of their sentences (Feder and Forde, 2000; Taylor et al., 2001). One found no significant differences between men's use of violence, 12 months after the programme, in terms of recidivism rates and men's attitudinal change towards women, between programme men and the comparison group (Feder and Forde, 2000). This was the case even though there was very high attendance on this programme, compared with other evaluation studies (Bennett and Williams, 2001). The other found that men on the programme were 50 per cent less likely to have offended in terms of criminal records, although women's reports indicated that programme men were likely to be slightly more abusive, than the comparison group. However, Bennett and Williams (2001) note that the relative 'success' of the second programme was due to the fact that men with low motivation were screened out for programme selection, during the criminal justice process. These evaluations can be compared with the one UK evaluative study of Duluth model programmes (Dobash et al., 1996) taking a quasi-experimental comparative approach, which found that 67 per cent of men had reduced their violence according to women's reports, compared to 25 per cent of non-programme men at 12 months after attendance. However, these

figures were based on only 40 per cent of the original sample, and on only 20 women's reports, raising questions about whether the final sample was large enough to make such assertions. Thus, these evaluations provide no conclusive evidence for the effectiveness of Duluth model programmes, although Bennett and Williams (2001) suggest that both the US studies highlighted above indicate that they worked more for middle class men who had the most to lose by non-compliance.

Studies comparing different models

These studies have compared different models or approaches, such as self-help, didactic, cognitive behavioural and psychodynamic models. For example, Edleson and Syers (1990) looked at the outcome of a mutual help approach, a didactic approach and a didactic and discussion group approach in Minneapolis and also at different lengths of these programmes over 12 weeks and 16 weeks. They found better attendance on the groupwork programmes, but no difference in terms of longer and shorter programmes. They also found a lower re-assault rate for the didactic and discussion groups than the self help model, but this was not statistically significant. In addition, Saunders (1996) found no difference in re-assault rates between a cognitive behavioural type group and a discussion group, based on the psychodynamic approach. However, what he termed 'high-dependence' men did better on the psychodynamic programme, and men who were regarded as having more anti-social characteristics did better on the cognitive behavioural programme. These studies therefore suggest that differences between different models in terms of re-assault rates are not highly significant.

A more sophisticated study has been undertaken by Gondolf (1998, 1999), using a multi-site systems approach to compare four well established community and

criminal justice interventions in four different cities, Pittsburgh, Dallas, Houston and Denver. All the programmes were based on a Duluth-type model, using cognitive behavioural approaches, and involving a gendered analysis of men's power and control over women. Two had short 12 week programmes but Pittsburgh's was a pre-trial programme with a court review. The Houston and Denver programmes lasted 6 months and 9 months, respectively. Denver was the only programme which offered in-house substance abuse treatment. Except for Pittsburgh, all provided support to women, either through groups or individual support. Programme outcomes were assessed through telephone interviews with initial and/or new partners of the men. Generally, no differences were found between the four sites at 15-month follow-up in terms of re-assault rate, except that there was a significant trend of lower severe re-assault for the longer nine-month programme. Gondolf suggests that this may have been due to the alcohol and substance treatment for the men on site, since alcohol is significantly associated with severe assault. It was also suggested, however, that the shorter three-month pre-trial programme, run in Pittsburgh, which incorporated a court review, might in a longer-term evaluation offset some of the disadvantages of 'shorter programme duration and less extensive services' (Gondolf, 1999: 57). In addition, this study found that there was a high drop-out rate for minority ethnic men, with the highest group being African Americans where almost 50 per cent dropped out of programmes. Thus, this study highlighted the need for culturally specific programmes. At 30-month follow-up, some aggregate findings were made on the overall effectiveness of the programmes, although they are fairly inconclusive (Gondolf, 1998). For example, it was found that only a fifth of the men were identified as being neither physically nor verbally abusive, across the whole sample. Nevertheless, most women said they felt safer and 60 per cent had left their partners (Gondolf, 1998).

These latter points raise one crucial aspect of programmes, where women may feel safer even though most of the men have not changed (Healey et al., 1998; Bennett and Williams, 2001). For example, the latter authors argue that, even though longer programmes may not be more effective, they may be safer for women. This is a point that has also been made in a process evaluation of the DVIP project in the UK, where having men on a programme can give women some respite to consider their options with the assistance of a women's support service (Burton et al., 1998). In this sense, Bennett and Williams (2001) argue that perpetrator programmes can play a small but positive part in terms of women's safety in relation to an overall multi-faceted intervention. There is also some evidence from Gondolf's research (1999) that programmes may work better if they are geared to meet men's specific needs in relation to alcohol or drug addiction and class and ethnic differences. Overall, however, there is no clear evidence that they work in terms of stopping men's violence.

Perpetrator programmes and violent men as fathers

In the US evaluation literature on perpetrator programmes, few studies seem to specifically address violent men as fathers. However, one early study on the Duluth programme emphasised how violent fathers attending programmes used their attendance to 'enhance' their position with the family courts in 'visitation and custody battles' (Ritmeester, 1993: 174). This research found that, three years after the programme had started, there were 'big increases in court rulings' in favour of fathers 'who had completed their programmes,' getting custody of their children. Moreover, these men had used their attendance on the programme to claim that they 'had worked through their problems', whilst their partners had not (Ritmeester, 1993:175). As a consequence of this, the Duluth project took the

decision that they would not provide statements to the family courts for fathers in relation to contact or custody. This example illustrates how violent fathers may misuse perpetrator programmes to increase their power and control over mothers and children post-separation. The more recent US evaluation review by Bennett and Williams (2001) also mentions how abusive fathers may 'punish both their victims and their children through protracted child custody and visitation cases' as an example of how 'ignoring non-physical abuse can over-estimate 'the effectiveness of batterer programmes' (2001:2). But this is the only mention of children throughout the review.

In Austin and Dankwort's US research on standards (1999), very little mention is made of the impacts of fathers' violence on children, except to note that only just over half of the standards stated that they would report suspected child abuse to the relevant authorities. In addition, Saunders (1998) indicated that only two very early studies investigating perpetrator programmes looked at the reduction of 'actual or potential violence towards children' as an evaluation issue. Moreover, there appears to be only one study which has looked at a parenting group for violent fathers (Mathews, 1995). This is mainly descriptive rather than evaluative. Nevertheless, it raises some interesting issues that relate back to the discussion of masculinities and violent fathering in earlier sections.

For example, Mathews found that many fathers were resistant to changing their behaviours and were reluctant to give up their power and control. He also noted that they experienced shame at not being able to control their families, and this appeared to be related to not wanting to relinquish the benefits they got from their position 'as head of the family', as well as not living up to their ideal of 'real' fathers - that is dominant fathers who can control their families. Further, he

indicated that they lacked empathy for their children and this prevented them from acknowledging children's needs. Another issue highlighted was their lack of knowledge of child development, although this was closely associated with failing to recognise that children could have their own needs. The programme also addressed power and control in relation to step-fathering which, Mathews suggested, appeared to be particularly about establishing dominance in a new household. Interestingly, it used many similar cognitive behavioural techniques that are used in violence against women programmes, such as exercises on reframing thought patterns. Nevertheless, its main focus appeared to be to get fathers to stop hitting their children in the context of 'discipline' and there appeared to be no content on other aspects of violent fathers' parenting, such as their psychological and emotional abuse of children.

There appears to be very little literature on violent fathers' parenting in the UK in relation to perpetrator programmes, apart from the survey already mentioned (Humphreys et al., 2000). Moreover, the only comparative evaluation study undertaken in the UK (see Dobash et al., 1996) suggested that the abuse of children by fathers was not a problem in their sample. For example, the authors stated:

Men say they do not usually and persistently use violence against their children and women generally concur when asked direct and indirect questions...intimidating coercive aggression and violence directed at children by men was not a feature of the relationships under investigation. (Dobash et al., 1996: 76)

Thus, these findings did not appear to take account of fathers' possible denials or minimisations of child abuse, nor that mothers might be reluctant to disclose it to researchers for fear of the possible consequences of doing so. Despite these problems, two-fifths of the women in this study reported that their partners 'sometimes' shouted and threatened the children and one in five women identified this as a recurring feature in the relationship. In addition, this study did not appear

to assess the impact on children of observing violence towards their mothers, with the exception of using children in arguments against mothers.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at various ways of theorising men's violence towards women and noted that, although some feminist and critical masculinity perspectives may be useful in understanding men's violence as fathers, there is limited research literature in this area which addresses this specific aspect of men's social power. The second part of the chapter indicates that risk assessments which include mothers' perceptions of risk and a model which specifically assesses violent fathers' parenting practices, may be more useful than others discussed, but indicates that risk assessments are not able to guarantee mothers and children's safety. Further, although the evaluation evidence did not generally focus on violent men as fathers, the lack of positive evidence that perpetrator programmes work for the majority of violent men, suggests that they cannot be considered an effective solution to making such fathers safe to have contact with children. These issues are addressed further in the empirical part of this study.

Chapter 4 Methodology

Overall approach

In this study, I have utilised Harding's distinction between methodology and methods where she defines the former as being concerned with the way the research is conceptualised, theorised and interpreted and the latter as being the procedures or techniques used to gather research evidence (Harding, 1987). I have therefore drawn on those feminist methodological approaches which share with other critical perspectives the idea 'that knowledge is structured by existing power relations' and a recognition that these power relations inform the research questions asked and the interpretation and analysis of findings (Harvey, 1990: 2). The salience of 'researching up' and studying powerful social groups (rather than only researching relatively powerless groups) has been emphasised as another important aspect of critical research and I take this approach in studying violent fathers (Laws, 1990; Kelly et al., 1994).

Also allied to this post-positivist research paradigm is a recognition that the researcher's social values need to be made explicit and 'that values enter the process of research at all stages' (May, 1997:51). Within this approach, feminists have emphasised the need to critically reflect on the research process and make visible the complexities and difficulties of undertaking research rather than screening these out, since they relate to the credibility of the research account and epistemological questions about how we produce valid knowledge (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994). I have therefore taken this approach in this account of the empirical research.

Why directly study men?

The importance of feminists critically studying men in order to produce knowledge about the way gendered power relations work has been stressed by feminist historians and sociologists through an examination of men's writings (Coveney et al, 1984). In another sense, feminists have been critically studying men for a number of years through women's accounts and this is evidenced through the feminist studies on men's violence highlighted in chapter three. However, there can be differences between these approaches and the kinds of knowledge produced by feminists in studying men directly (Scott, 1984; Laws, 1990; Scully, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Kelly et al., 1994; Lundgren, 1995; Cavanagh et al., 2001).

Scully, for example, was able to broaden understandings of male sexual violence through her research with imprisoned rapists and has emphasised the importance of feminists critically examining men's meanings and motivations, a theme taken up by O'Connell Davidson (1995) in her research with sex tourists. Lundgren (1995) in her research on men's sexualised violence in partner relationships in a religious cult in Norway stressed the significance of men's accounts in understanding how violence is used to constitute masculinity through the control of women. Feminist research on the evaluation of programmes for domestic violence perpetrators in the UK (Cavanagh and Lewis, 1996; Burton et al., 1998; Lee, 1999) has also increased understandings of the meanings men attribute to their violence and the discursive strategies they use to redefine it in legitimising ways and to resist change. In this regard, Cockburn (1991) has argued that it is important to study men's responses to women's struggles for equality and has

provided useful knowledge on male strategies of 'resistance to equality' by interviewing men in organisations.

Despite the relevance of the kinds of knowledge produced by these and other feminist studies on men, there has been a general tendency amongst feminists to leave the direct study of men to men themselves and an orthodoxy that feminist research is research on women (Kelly et al., 1994). Whilst recognising that 'men's studies' approached from critical masculinity and pro-feminist perspectives produce useful knowledge, there can be a difference between the kinds of knowledge developed from these studies and studies undertaken by feminists, because of the way the materiality of gendered power relations affects the whole research process (Hearn, 1993). This can range from the kinds of research questions asked to the dynamics of the research context to the type of data produced, as well as to the higher status given to the knowledge that is developed by men within the academy (Kramerae and Spender, 1993; Hearn, 1993; Kelly et al., 1994).

In this respect, another consideration is that, from a mainstream policy perspective, there is a criticism of feminist research which makes claims only from women's accounts. These perspectives often imply that such accounts are 'biased' because those of men have been left out. Whilst there is a double standard here, in that policy makers may be happy to rely mainly on men's accounts, particularly in relation to fathers' views on child contact, the need to produce research which can inform the policy context has also been an issue in undertaking this research.

Research aims

Given the considerations outlined above, I was interested in exploring the meanings of fatherhood directly with domestically violent men and their own views and perceptions of their violence in relation to their fathering practices, both prior to and following separation from partners in the context of child contact. This included looking at how they perceived their relationships with children and women as mothers.

Within this exploratory and open-ended aim, I wanted to address some specific questions and issues which have been indicated through the literature review and which were also informed by my own interest in producing useful research that would have relevance to ‘family’ policy and professional practice and contribute to improving the safety and wellbeing and empowerment of children and mothers by interrogating the meanings of fatherhood and fathering practices in this context.

From this feminist perspective, at the initial stages of the research process my research exploration was informed by a number of hegemonic discourses about fatherhood within family law policy, which I wished to question. The most crucial of these were that:

- a) the ‘good enough’ father is one who merely wants to see his children in the post-separation context:
- b) domestically violent men’s fathering practices and their relationships with children are unconnected to their violent and controlling practices towards women.

As the research progressed, however, another discourse was added to this, which reflected the changing policy context and some salient issues that were beginning to emerge during the course of the research, as follows:

c) that fathers, including those who have been identified as domestically violent and abusive in familial settings, will automatically discard their dominant masculinist assumptions and abusive practices and become ‘caring’ parents through the processes of being involved in caring for children.

The corollary of all the above discourses *for children*, as has been seen through the literature review, is the ideology that they automatically benefit from contact with fathers, particularly in the post-separation context, including those fathers who are violent and abusive, and that their ‘essential developmental needs’ will be unmet unless such contact takes place. Mothers, on the other hand, are viewed through these discourses as needing to be ‘cut down to size’ through more robust policies that will punish them if they do not use their own ‘power’ as adults to force children to have contact.

Thus my overall approach and theoretical framework which informed the empirical research was not to view domestically violent fathers as a small social section of ‘abnormal’ fathers who are ‘pathologically’ violent and abusive in familial relationships and who need to be compared with ‘normal’ fathers but to locate them within normative constructs of masculinity in our society, where masculine social identities are constructed and enacted and reconstructed/re-enacted in different ways through gendered and other hierarchical social relations of dominance (Messerschmidt, 1993; Alder and Polk, 1996; Hearn, 1998). This is

not, of course, to imply that all individual men embrace dominant gendered identities nor that these social relations of power are static and unchanging but to suggest that my focus on violent fathers has a broad relevance.

Operationalising my theoretical framework

Since this study was exploratory, not all questions were formulated at the initial stage. Some questions arose or were refined during the course of doing the research:

Theoretical questions

To what extent does fatherhood continue to be constructed through gendered power relations in which violence can be seen as one key means of maintaining such relations? How have these social relations of power changed at the end of the twentieth century?

Empirical questions

How do violent fathers conceptualise their violence towards women and its impact on children when living with families?

How do violent fathers conceptualise their abusive behaviour towards children?

To what extent do violent fathers make connections between their violence and abuse and their understandings of themselves as fathers?

Are there connections between their violence and abuse of children and their perceptions of themselves as fathers?

How do they understand their involvement or lack of involvement in childcare and their relationships with children ?

Why do violent fathers want contact with children in the post-separation context?

How do they view their practices towards children in this context?

What impact do perpetrator programmes have on violent men's conceptualisations of themselves as fathers and their fathering practices?

Policy and practice questions.

What are the consequences of violent fathers' parenting practices for children?

What changes are needed to recognise such consequences, particularly in relation to policy and practice approaches to fathers' contact with children?

What are the implications of using perpetrator programmes as a means to render violent fathers safe for contact?

The research process – gendered power relations

Related to issues of methodology and methods are specific problems for women in critically studying men, particularly in relation to exploratory research, where the research questions and aims may require the use of methods that involve women's face to face interaction with men (Taylor, 1996). Since these issues were crucial to my own research, they will be discussed here before I outline the research design in more detail. Hearn (1993) gives an extensive account of the 'issues and difficulties' of men critically studying men in his research on men's violence undertaken in a number of research projects (Hearn, 1993:6). However, with a few notable exceptions, as Taylor (1996) suggests, there has been a 'deafening' silence about the difficulties faced by women researchers in this context.

The nature of these difficulties is illustrated in one of the few reflexive discussions about the experience of women researching men by McKee and O'Brien in their research with fathers which involved indepth interviewing (McKee and O'Brien, 1983). These researchers contrast their experiences

between one study on 'new fathers' where wives were usually present at the interviews and another where they were interviewing 'lone fathers' in their homes and on their own. In the latter, they were advised by their female supervisor not to ask the men questions about their sexual experiences because this 'in itself' may be sexually arousing for some men and could cause unnecessary complications for the interviewer. This example illustrates that the research questions women ask men in certain research contexts may be informed by the 'omnipresence' of men's potential for 'sexual violation' of women (McKee and O'Brien, 1983:157). They can, therefore, act as a form of control of women researchers in limiting the research questions they wish to explore.

However, even where women are avoiding asking questions that may be viewed as increasing men's potential for sexual violence, the interview situation and the content of the interview itself may be used as a means to sexually harass women and to assert male power. Taylor discusses this in her research account of interviewing male managers where one of the research aims was to explore companies' attitudes to women returners. She describes how one manager used the interview to express views on 'women in general and women returners' which 'made the hairs on the back of [her] neck stand on end' (Taylor, 1996:114). McKee and O'Brien also relate how, in their lone fathers' sample, men might use the interview as an opportunity to rail against wives and women in general which had the effect of making them feel generally uneasy. Both these research accounts also give examples of where a few of the men used more overt forms of sexual and physical harassment when they were being interviewed in their own homes. These included, for Taylor, a man preventing her leaving the house by physically placing himself in front of the door, and, for McKee and O'Brien, being pestered after the interviews for further contact and, for one of them, not

being let out of the car when the interviewee was driving her to the station after the interview. Taylor also describes how the male managers she interviewed always controlled the boundaries of the interview situation by cancelling the interview at the last minute, by arriving late, or by not letting her get away when the interview had ended.

These accounts challenge simplistic notions of 'the two-tier power hierarchy' of the researcher and researched in some feminist research approaches and the notion of 'hygienic research' contained within positivistic research paradigms. They also contrast with those approaches which have been taken in feminist research with women which aim to empower the research participants and view the research process as a collaborative endeavour (see, for example, Williamson, 2000).

Whilst power dynamics and forms of manipulation by both interviewers and interviewees are complex and will be present in any interview situation (O'Connell Davidson, 1995; Layder, 1995; May, 1997), gendered power dynamics where particular strategies are used by men to assert male dominance often go unmentioned. Women do, of course, develop their own strategies to resist such control, although some of these may be singularly ineffective and appear to place the blame on women researchers themselves for not avoiding or provoking dangerous situations or for not appearing professional enough (Taylor, 1996).

McKee and O'Brien talk about employing a variety of strategies to 'offset any risk of sexual confrontation' by 'taking conscious decisions about make-up and clothes', by maintaining a 'professional' manner when ambiguities arose and, as illustrated earlier, by avoiding asking certain questions. But these strategies did

not always work and can serve to obscure the constraints placed on women researchers as well as putting them in actual danger. McKee and O'Brien make light of the incidents of sexual and physical harassment that they experienced and this may be one strategy to diminish the lack of power they felt in the interview context. However, as Taylor points out, this 'trivialisation' of women researchers' experiences can continue to 'protect the power imbalances between men and women that are already in place' (Taylor, 1996:118).

A different approach, which was one taken by Laws in her research on men's social constructions of menstruation, is to view the whole research process as 'a power struggle' (Laws, 1990: 218). Laws relates this not just to the interview situation but to the data analysis process and to considerations of ethics in relation to research participants. She discusses how the process of transcribing a group discussion by men made her feel 'upset and angry' and 'ground down' and that she had to find a way to reduce these men's views to 'data' and to 'use them for her own ends' (Laws, 1990: 218).

She also points out that traditional ethical considerations in relation to the research participants do not take into account situations where the researcher may be in a less powerful social position than the research subjects. In her own research with liberal middle class men, she states that, whilst she continued with her contract to protect their identities, she felt she did not 'owe them anything more' and did not give them 'privileged access' to the research results.

I have gone into these few reflexive research accounts of women's experiences of researching men in some detail because I wanted to illustrate that it is not just my research focus on violent fathers which posed particular difficulties, since these

problems are likely to be present in many research situations for women which involve direct face to face research with men. Although these may vary in degree, depending on the subject matter, the physical and institutional context and women's and men's own social positioning in relation to class, 'race' and ethnicity, the gendered and sexualised nature of power relations between men and women are still likely to have an impact. On the one hand, they may affect what research gets done because feminist researchers may avoid undertaking research directly with men for these reasons (Laws, 1990). On the other, they may be reinforced through the various stages of the research process itself through the silences that surround them.

At a very basic level, these silences fail to address issues of personal safety for academic women researchers and highlight the need for safety procedures in academic research contexts and for safety awareness in all research training (Taylor, 1996). Moreover, although there is now more acknowledgement of safety issues in relation to gender for social science researchers undertaking field research (see, for example, SRA, 2000), when I began considering the design of this study in 1998 there was a general absence of any guidelines on this issue.

Thus, in relation to this research, my whole thinking about the research strategy was initially informed by the need to think about ways to protect my own safety whilst, at the same time, trying to find ways of resisting the constraints this placed on me. Such safety considerations are, of course, reinforced when both the focus of the research and the research participants are defined by their own violence (Lee and Renzetti, 1993). For example, Scully in her research with convicted rapists describes how for security purposes she 'took the precaution of removing [her] home address from all public records, such as the university and

local telephone company and having her phone number unlisted'. She also describes how early on in the project 'a generalised sense of anxiousness was intensified by anonymous phone calls and several threatening letters' she received (Scully, 1990: 13). Drawing on this experience, and those discussed above, I had to think about ways of protecting my own anonymity so, for example, it was less easy for the violent fathers interviewed to find out where I lived.¹ Safety considerations also informed my thinking about where I would find the men's sample and the location of the field research, as well as the interview context itself (see also Hearn, 1993). However, safety concerns are not only a problem for the researcher, but also involve others who might be affected by the research. In this study I had to consider the safety of the children and mothers who would be the indirect subjects from the fathers' sample, and this issue is addressed further below.

Research strategy

Given what has been said above, and if safety were the only consideration, 'distance research methods' such as postal or telephone surveys would appear to be the most appropriate techniques for undertaking research in this area.

However these methods do not tend to lend themselves to more exploratory research which is aimed at looking at male violence and the meanings of fatherhood in this context and on which there is little previous research. Further, a number of these techniques, which use highly structured questions or scales such as the Conflict Tactics Scale, are not able to take into account the context or meanings applied to different events or behaviours by the research participants (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Nazroo, 1995).

Qualitative and ethnographic research techniques, such as focussed depth

interviewing, enable researchers to explore the particular meanings research participants apply to their actions and the contexts in which certain behaviours occur (Cicourel, 1964; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Denzin, 1994). This kind of interviewing also enables researchers to probe and follow up aspects of participants' motivations, constructions and interpretations for which highly structured interviewing techniques or self-complete questionnaires do not allow (May, 1997). Focussed depth interviewing was therefore the main method used in this research, although this was supplemented by other methods, such as the use of violence and abuse indexes or checklists which have been developed in the evaluations of perpetrator programmes. These have been shown to facilitate men's acknowledgement of different aspects of their violent behaviour towards women and children (Dobash et al, 1995; Canvanagh and Lewis, 1996; Burton et al, 1998).

Sampling strategies

Given the aims and exploratory nature of the research, it was necessary to find a purposive rather than a randomised sample that would provide enough 'information rich cases' to fulfil the research aims (Gilbert, 1993; O'Connell Davidson and Layder, 1994). My sample of fathers therefore needed to fit two primary criteria. These were that:

a) the fathers needed to be identified as having already carried out domestic violence by others such as welfare or criminal justice agencies of the civil courts, or to have admitted at a minimum level to being violent themselves. This aspect was important because previous research has shown that where mothers state that fathers are violent, the men tend to deny it, or make counter allegations suggesting that it is merely a mutual phenomenon (Dobash et al., 1996; Hearn,

1998).

b) Fathers needed to be separated from their partners and children and preferably they need to have, or have had some form of ongoing face to face contact with the children. This criterion was important because this was the main focus of this study.

A secondary criterion was that the sample should be as diverse as possible in terms of men's class and ethnicity in order that suggested differences between violent masculinities could be explored (see, for example, Messerschmidt, 1993, 1997). However I recognised that as a white female researcher, African or African-Caribbean men might be unwilling to be interviewed by me, since this has been suggested in earlier research (see, for example, Scully, 1990;) and that there might also be other barriers in interviewing Asian men. I therefore recognised from the beginning that there could be considerable difficulties in this area and that I might not be able to explore the aspect of ethnic differences. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the sampling process, I did contact some relevant organisations to see if these limitations could be overcome through specific over-sampling strategies.

Difficulties in finding the sample.

Building a sample of any fathers, who fitted the primary criteria and were willing to be interviewed, posed considerable problems and proved to be an extremely length process, taking two years, overall. As Hearn (1998) has noted, criminal and legal processes make it difficult to find a sample of violent men who are willing to talk about their experiences. These difficulties were compounded in this study by my second criterion since it could be anticipated that family law and

child welfare processes might also make violent fathers reluctant to volunteer. In addition, the criteria for some ongoing face-to-face contact with children generally excluded those in prison populations. Moreover, whilst other researchers investigating fathers and child contact have sought men through fathers' rights organisations such as Families Need Fathers (see, for example, Smart and Neale, 1999), given the aims of this research and my own knowledge of these organisations (Harne and Radford, 1994), it seemed highly unlikely that any of these men, although they might be keen to be interviewed, would admit to carrying out any violence towards ex-partners and/or children. Later research has interviewed violent fathers using contact centres (Aris et al., 2002). However, this research also indicated that most denied their violence.ⁱⁱ

In the first instance, therefore, contact was made with a number of family lawyers, including black lawyers' groups, in different geographical areas, since earlier research undertaken with mothers on this issue (see Hester and Radford, 1996) had found a sample through this route. But, although a number of lawyers were willing to inform their male clients about the research (where they had contact and had civil orders for domestic violence against them), no men came forward. One lawyer stated that this seemed to be about fathers' continuing anxieties about confidentiality. It was therefore perhaps unsurprising that these men were unwilling to be interviewed on the topic of their fathering practices in the context of domestic violence, since there could be fears that this would ultimately compromise their own contact arrangements with their children. Attempts at getting research participants were also made with social workers in contact with domestically violent fathers through child protection agencies, but this again produced no volunteers.

However, workers from two perpetrator programmes for men who are domestically violent, and who had expressed an initial interest in research being undertaken on their programmes in relation to fatherhood, led me to seek access to men through these projects. One of these programmes was run in the voluntary sector and took a mixture of men who were either court-mandated or attending voluntarily. The other was a probation-led programme, which took men who were mandated to attend by the criminal courts as part of a probation order. This, hopefully, meant that I would gain access to a range of fathers and not only those who had been convicted for domestic violence.

In order to get some consistency in terms of the sampling frame and to obtain access to a larger cohort of violent fathers who might fit the criteria, I then approached other voluntary and probation-led perpetrator programmes in different geographical areas. This was mainly because I anticipated that many of the men attending the originally interested programmes might not be separated from partners, since, one motivation for attending by some men may be to persuade current partners not to leave the relationship (see, for example, Gondolf, 1988).

I therefore made contact with an additional six perpetrator programmes, four of which agreed to give me access to men who were attending or had attended their programmes and who fitted the criteria. However, only two of these had found any volunteers who fitted the primary criteria, within the required time frame and 17 of the 20 men who were eventually interviewed were drawn from the two original programmes who had initially expressed interest, one of which was based in the south of England and the other in the north. Moreover, although 30 men had initially volunteered to be interviewed from all four programmes, ten did

not turn up or subsequently made themselves unavailable, with one having been taken into custody just prior to the interview. This indicates, as Hearn (1998) has suggested, that violent men can be a particularly 'unreliable' group to research.

Nevertheless, this sample of 20 men, in general, fitted the primary purposes of the research. Firstly, they were all identified by agencies as having carried out domestic violence. Secondly, most had experiences of having some face to face ongoing contact with their children, following separation, although a couple were still seeking contact. In addition, the varied of experiences of violence and abuse the fathers had perpetrated and their varied experiences of contact provided enough rich information to fulfil the exploratory aims of the research (O'Connell Davidson and Layder, 1994).

As far as the secondary criterion was concerned, there was diversity in terms of men's social backgrounds, although, as anticipated, there was little diversity in ethnic terms, since only one minority ethnic man volunteered to be interviewed. Thus, the sample was mainly limited in this respect to the experiences of white British fathers.

Social backgrounds of the fathers interviewed

The social and occupational backgrounds of the fathers interviewed ranged from the professional to the semi-skilled. For example, one was a university lecturer, whilst another was an officer in the armed forces; one was a student; three were sales managers; three ran their own businesses; three were technicians; seven others worked in skilled trades, including another in the armed forces and one had worked as a bar man. Three were unemployed or were on long term sick leave at the time of interview. One described himself as a heroin addict, whilst

another stated he had a drink problem. Two others also described themselves as having mental health problems. Their ages ranged from their early twenties to late forties.

Limitations and reflections on the sampling strategy in relation to violent fathers

One of the major limitations of this sample, was that it only included one minority ethnic man, so that any possible differences based on ethnicity were not generally able to be explored. This may, in part, have been due to the unwillingness of minority ethnic men to be interviewed by a white female researcher. On the other hand, it could also reflect their smaller numbers on perpetrator programmes, according to one inner-city programme manager (see also, Gondolf, 1999). On reflection, however, it may have been possible to increase the numbers of minority ethnic fathers in the sample, by attempting to over-sample such men who were attending perpetrator programmes, or extending the sample to prison populations.

This research, was also limited to exploring violent fathers' meanings in the particular setting of those attending perpetrator programmes and violent fathers may have put different interpretations on their own experiences in other settings (Fielding, 2001). Nevertheless, as the first exploratory research looking at the way violent men construct themselves as fathers in the UK, this particular setting is highly relevant to current policy and practice issues on child contact, and since it is exploratory raises further questions that can be pursued by others.

In addition, in many ways my sampling strategy could itself be considered

exploratory, since research specifically focussing on violent fathering practices had not been undertaken before. Overall, the efforts to obtain an appropriate sample ended up being a combination of purposive and convenience sampling and tended to reflect the particular difficulties of ‘sensitivity’ (Sieber, 1993) which are involved in researching this area, as well as the difficulties for a lone researcher, outside of a team setting or commissioned research, where the sample may pre-exist (Williamson, 2000).

Finding a sample of mothers

Whilst the focus of this research was on violent fathers and violent fatherhood, from a feminist perspective it was important to have mothers’ views and accounts of men’s fathering practices in the context of domestic violence to provide comparative perspectives (see also Smart and Neale, 1999). Further, although earlier research had highlighted some aspects of violent fathers’ abusive behaviour towards children (see, for example, Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford et al., 1999)ⁱⁱⁱ it did not specifically focus on mothers’ views of men’s fathering practices in this context. It was therefore necessary to seek a sample of mothers who could provide these additional perspectives. This was also important because fathers’ accounts in general are accorded privileged status and carry far more legitimacy within family law discourses as has been noted earlier.

Ethics and safety concerns for mothers

In considering the mothers’ sample, I originally envisaged the possibility of interviewing a smaller sample of mothers who were the ex-partners of the violent fathers interviewed, although I was aware that concerns about confidentiality for both men and women and safety for the women and children might preclude such an approach (see Hester and Radford, 1996; Smart and Neale, 1999).

Smart and Neale, for example, in their research on post-divorce parenting practices, felt that if they interviewed fathers and mothers from the same family, this might 'inhibit' participants' accounts of their experiences and undermine their belief in the confidentiality of the research (Smart and Neale, 1999: 42), whilst Hester and Radford stated that they 'did not interview women's partners because of the safety risks involved for the women concerned' (Hester and Radford, 1996). Such safety concerns are informed by the possibility that violent fathers could try and find women and children through the researchers, or that the research interview process itself could fuel further post-separation violence by the perpetrators towards them. This was a concern which was raised by one women's support service connected to a perpetrator project that I had originally approached to find men to interview. Another problem is that having to talk about their experiences of violence can be extremely traumatic for women (Kelly et al., 1992; Williamson, 2000) and can be compounded when ex-partners' abusive behaviour towards their children is being explored and where self-blame can be one response to such abuse (Hooper, 1992; Hanmer, 1998). Thus, in considering this sample, I felt it was important that the women I interviewed were in contact with appropriate networks, which were providing ongoing support to the mothers.

Subsequently, it became apparent that, whilst safety was a key issue, there were also practical difficulties in trying to pursue the course of interviewing ex-partners of the fathers. This was due to one of the programmes from which most of the men were drawn (12) having no women's support service in operation when several of the interviews took place and, in addition, some of the men stating that they did not know where ex-partners lived. Other programmes also

As a consequence, I initially tried to seek a comparable sample of separated mothers who had experienced domestic violence and where their children either still had face to face contact with fathers or had had fairly recent contact at the time of interview, from other women's support services linked in with perpetrator programmes. However, whilst one women's support service did agree access, no-one volunteered to be interviewed from this group within the relevant time frame and I had to seek a sample of women from elsewhere. Subsequently, two women's support and self-help networks, one based in the south and one in the north of England, provided access to mothers who had experienced domestic violence and who were separated from partners and where these men had had or still had contact with their children. Thus, although this sample did not strictly match that of the fathers, in that only one of the mothers had an ex-partner who attended a perpetrator programme, it was apparent that these mothers' accounts could still provide valuable comparative data with the exception of providing views on perpetrator programmes.

Because of the previous research with mothers and also because the first few interviews showed that mothers were willing to talk in considerable depth about their views and experiences with some interviews lasting three hours, I decided to limit this sample to ten mothers. As with the sample of fathers, mothers' occupational backgrounds ranged from the professional to the semi-skilled. Two mothers were or had been managers in private companies; one was a teacher; three did administrative work; one had had her own business; one was a student; two had worked in semi-skilled employment, and two mothers who both had four children, had for most of the time when living with their partners been full-time carers of their children. This sample was also very limited in terms of reflecting a range of ethnicities. Nine women were white, with only

one of the mothers being South Asian. Thus, as with the fathers' sample, in general, I was unable to explore minority ethnic mothers' experiences of their ex-partners' fathering practices, although later research has provided more information on this area, particularly on the experiences of South Asian mothers and children (Mullender et al., 2002). Nevertheless, on reflection, as with the fathers' sample, specific efforts could have been to obtain a wider range of minority ethnic mothers views, through contacting specialist support organisations. This sample, as a whole, did, however, provide considerable, rich information on mothers' experiences of their ex-partners' fathering practices, although as noted above, mainly in a white British context.

Perpetrator project workers

As the research with the men progressed, it became clear that it would also be important to interview programme workers from each of the projects, which provided access to the men. This was because several of the men had talked about how their views had been affected as a consequence of being on a programme and therefore I needed to find out more about the content of their programmes and their specific approaches to working with violent fathers. Again, whilst I would have preferred to interview more than one worker in the different projects, this was not possible, because of workers' own time and resource constraints. One key worker or manager from each of the four programmes was therefore formally interviewed either face to face or on the telephone and these interviews were supplemented with additional documentary material about the programmes and informal 'interview conversations' with other workers who happened to be around when interviews with the men were taking place.

Interviewing strategies – the interview as social interaction

Whilst the interviews with fathers and mothers both involved addressing ‘sensitive’ topics, interviewing perpetrators and victims/survivors about domestic violence obviously raised different issues for the researcher and the research participants. As Cavanagh and Lewis (1996) have highlighted, there are ‘strong gendered differences’ in men and women’s motivations to participate in such research and my interviewing strategies therefore varied, depending on which group was being interviewed. In this research account, I focus particularly on the issues and difficulties for myself as a woman and a feminist interviewing domestically violent fathers, where the focus was not just on their abuse towards women but also towards children and their fathering practices in this context. There were few accounts in the literature about how to do this and the whole process could be seen as a learning experience which involved developing specific strategies to suit the context, whilst also drawing on the experiences of others.

A key issue was whether the men would be prepared to talk about their violent and abusive behaviour towards mothers and its impact on children and any direct abuse towards children. Scully, in her research account of interviewing convicted rapists, has stressed the difficulties for any offenders in discussing ‘threatening and illegal behaviour’ (Scully, 1990:14). Other previous research with domestically violent perpetrators in the UK, has shown that these men may be reluctant to talk about their violence and abuse and may deny or minimise it in interviews (Cavanagh and Lewis, 1996; Hearn, 1998; Burton et al, 1998). Moreover, whilst the use of such discursive strategies by domestically violent men are salient in themselves and can be seen as an findings (see, for example, Hearn, 1998), since I wished to explore the men’s

conceptualisations and understandings of their violence and abuse towards mothers *and* towards children as *fathers*, it was necessary that they were prepared to disclose at least some of this in their interviews. I therefore needed to think through my interviewing strategies and consider what factors might impact on the interviewing process in this context. I also made the decision that I would regard the first five interviews as a ‘pilot’ and would reassess my strategies following some preliminary analysis of these interviews.

Confidentiality, safety and ethics

In the first instance, this raised dilemmas of confidentiality and ethics in the interview process (Lee and Renzetti, 1993). As has been highlighted earlier, these issues are far more complex when undertaking research with those from dominant groups who have harmed others and where there is the potential for continuing harm (Hearn, 1998; Fielding, 2001). Whilst standard research guidance (see, for example, British Sociological Association, 2002; Social Research Association, 2002) emphasises protecting the confidentiality of the research participants, in the context of this research, consideration had to be given to the victims and potential victims of the research participants. This therefore raised crucial questions of child protection and how to deal with issues of confidentiality in this context. However, other research studies in this area indicate that there are no clear cut answers to resolving such dilemmas.

For example, research undertaken by Creighton et al. (2003), decided to accord parents ‘strict’ confidentiality, in their national study on the ‘extent and frequency of parental violence to children in British homes’ in order to fulfil the purposes of the research (2003: 34). This was justified in terms of the aims of the research, which were to establish ‘national benchmarking’ data on the way parents

‘disciplined’ their children (2003: 43). Thus, it was felt that if ‘strict confidentiality’ was not given, then the data could be ‘compromised.’

Other research with children on their experiences of violence has limited confidentiality in line with government guidance on disclosures about significant harm, following the Children Act, 1989 (Department of Health, 1999). where it is expected that such harm should reported to child protection agencies (Mullender et al., 2002; Barter and Renold, 2003). In this respect, it should be noted that ‘the law permits disclosure of confidential information necessary to safeguard a child’ (Department of Health, 1999, s.7.32). However this guidance emphasises that ‘there are no ‘absolute’ criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm,’ indicating that it is a relative concept (Department of Health, 1999, s.2.17).^{iv}

Mullender et al. (2002) stated that they offered confidentiality to children and mothers in their research ‘within the familiar parameters of any disclosures of current risk or harm to the child or others needing to be shared with the appropriate authorities’ (2002:31). Nevertheless, as has been seen from the studies discussed in chapter 2, they also noted that since ‘the overlap between woman and child abuse is so high,’ they ‘considered’ it ‘essential to put measures in place for potential disclosures’ (2002: *ibid*). In the qualitative research, this involved discussing any ‘real’ concerns of continuing harm with the research team in conjunction with children and mothers (where possible) to decide whether a referral needed to be made.

In this research, I had to consider what approach to take if fathers disclosed continuing abuse towards the children in their interviews, at the same time as not

defeating the purposes of the research by enabling them to talk about any past abuse they might have carried out. In negotiating access to the fathers with programme leaders, I raised the problem of child abuse and these workers indicated that they had child protection policies in place or worked with local inter-agency policies and procedures.^v

I therefore decided to take the approach of informing the fathers before the interviews that confidentiality would be limited if they talked about any current ongoing acts of significant harm or risks to children or mothers, but that this would not apply to past abuse. These limits did not appear to create a problem for the fathers, as they were used to having their confidentiality rights constrained by being on a perpetrator programme, where attendance is frequently made conditional on them agreeing to such measures (see Respect, 2000).

Nevertheless, during the course of the interviews it became clear that the fathers' own definitions of child abuse were often limited to severe direct physical acts of harm towards children. Thus, there were indications that fathers were carrying out practices in the present, which they did not necessarily view as harmful. In addition, in a few cases, there were indications that children continued to be very afraid of fathers, in the child contact context and in one case there were significant issues of concern about a child's development, because of this father's violence. Moreover, a worrying concern, were some fathers' suggestions that their limited definitions of harm were supported by child protection agencies themselves^{vi}. There were also indications that some aspects of their abusive parenting practices were not being identified by the programme workers.

As a researcher, I was therefore faced with dilemmas as to how to act on this

information which I was obtaining through the interviews. I therefore decided on two strategies in discussion with my supervisor. One was to challenge fathers' assumptions of non-harmful behaviours in the interview itself. The second was to report my concerns about ongoing abusive practices by violent fathers to perpetrator programme leaders on a general level and to raise specific concerns about individual fathers in the few cases where children appeared to be at much higher risk.

Reflections on the ethics of this strategy in relation to the safety of children

With hindsight, it would have been far better to negotiate a formal child protection protocol with the programme leaders before the interviews with the fathers took place, rather than relying informally on their own assurances of following child protection policies and practices. This would also have revealed their own working definitions of child abuse and perceptions of significant harm. However at the time these interviews were taking place during 1998-1999, there was little UK literature highlighting possible programme shortcomings in this area (see, for example, Humphreys et al., 2000) and I was operating on assumptions that their awareness of child protection issues was much higher than it proved to be in practice, based on the National Practitioners Network Child Protection Guidelines (1998). This was a mistake. Nevertheless, the process of undertaking this research itself and the feedback given to programme leaders raised their awareness of the needs of children and risks posed by violent fathers. As a consequence, the one programme from which 12 of the fathers were drawn informed me that they had come to realise that they were not sufficiently addressing the needs and risks to children and were reassessing their practice as a consequence of this.

Reflections on the ethics of this strategy in relation to the fathers

The confidentiality contract that was made with the fathers at the beginning of their interviews was not broken. The fathers were aware of the limits of confidentiality in this context and where I had concerns these were raised during the course of the interview.

Questioning strategies

Different questioning strategies have been used in previous exploratory interviewing with violent men which can involve focussing on critical violent events (see, for example, Dobash et al., 1996) or life story approaches (Thurston and Benyon, 1995). However, whilst both can prove useful, I felt that they also had their drawbacks; for example the critical events approach can lead to a focus on incidents, rather than on the overall patterns of abusive behaviour which have been highlighted in research with women, whilst the life history approach can lead to violent men 'representing' and 'excusing' their violence mostly in terms of their own childhood experiences.

Using a topic sheet with a list of the issues I wished to explore, I utilised certain aspects of these techniques, but combined them with asking open-ended and probing questions about their histories of violence and abuse towards children and mothers and their motivations, views and understandings about its impact, in a number of different ways. This method of interviewing involved returning to these topics when the opportunity arose in other parts of the interview, such as when the men were talking about their fatherhood role and their perceptions of their relationships with their children.

In practice, whilst each interview was different, once the men began to feel more

relaxed about being interviewed and some rapport was established (see below), and bearing in mind that it is difficult to conceal one's own views and experiences in conversation over a period of time, some men were prepared to talk about these areas of their lives with seeming frankness. Moreover, further on into the interviews, some seemed to forget that they had previously denied their violence and abuse towards women and towards children and began to contradict these denials or to change their earlier justifications which had included alleging that it was their ex-partners who were more violent. These interviewing strategies highlight some of the advantages of open-ended, non-standardised questioning over standardised and more closed forms in getting a more credible picture of violent fathers' views and understandings.

The contradictions of 'rapport' in interviewing violent fathers

Establishing some rapport with the violent fathers and appearing to maintain a non-judgemental 'façade' was also important at the early stages of the interview in facilitating their talk of violence and abuse. This was assisted by starting with less threatening questions and leading up to the more potentially 'embarrassing' and 'sensitive' topics gradually (see also Scully, 1990). Yet, as Scully has pointed out, there is a fine line between establishing rapport and appearing non-judgemental and colluding with violent men's views. She describes the difficulties in her own research of having to listen to stories which were 'horrible' and yet having to retain a 'neutral' stance in order to elicit their accounts, since 'no one tells his secrets to a visibly hostile and disapproving person.' (Scully, 1990:18). There were similar difficulties in this research in having to listen to violent fathers' justifications for their violent abusive behaviour towards women and children which frequently contained a great deal of mother and child blame and the expression of misogynist views (see chapter five). Cavanagh and Lewis

(1996) in their account of interviewing violent men in evaluation research (see Dobash et al., 1996) suggested ways to challenge such views, through follow-up probing questions, without entering into confrontation with perpetrators.

Some of these probing strategies were used in this research, however there were times when fathers perceived some or all of the questioning about their violence as threatening the 'rightness' of their own views. There were also occasions when such questioning made them so hostile that I felt compelled to terminate the interviews at this point. In addition, as seen above, there were times when I challenged and questioned their treatment of children during contact where it appeared that such behaviour was putting the children at risk. But at times, this did lead fathers to refuse to discuss the topic further.

On the other hand, there were fathers who used charm and humour to attempt to obscure their goals for using violence and to neutralise its impact, with some making jokes about their abuse towards their partners and occasionally towards children. There were also a few who cried when talking about their 'past' abuse of children and sought my advice about child rearing practices. Moreover, some fathers wanted to use the interview as a 'personal therapy' session where they talked endlessly about their psychological and emotional problems and aired their bitterness about ex-partners for leaving them.

As others who have interviewed, or have experience of working with, domestically violent men have shown, such tactics can be highly manipulative and are aimed at gaining the sympathy of the listener and representing themselves as the 'real' victims (Pence and Paymar, 1993; Wilson, 1996; Hearn, 1998). Moreover Horley (1991, 2000), from her own work on domestic violence, has

stressed how domestically violent perpetrators can ‘charm’ professionals in different agencies and deflect blame onto women; thus making it harder for them to believe that such personable men are capable of being violent or abusive. Whilst such ‘charm’ tactics can be used with both male and female interviewers (see, for example, Hearn, 1998), since women are expected to be more sympathetic and deferential to men’s views, they may be perceived by violent men as being more susceptible to this kind of manipulation. This points to the need for women who may be interviewing them in different contexts not to be deceived by such tactics (see also Mullender, 1996).

The use of violence and abuse checklists

Whilst all the men did eventually talk about some violent and abusive behaviour, even though they may not have defined it as such (see chapter five), after the first five interviews, I decided to use the checklists or indexes which have been used in previous evaluation research (see Dobash et al, 1996) to enable the men to disclose more forms of abuse without having to talk about them. Such checklists are often used by perpetrator programmes to enable perpetrators to acknowledge the different aspects of their violence, abuse and control of women. However, I found that current ones in use did not address many aspects of abuse towards children or necessarily include different forms of emotional abuse and neglect. I therefore developed my own checklist in this area, based on previous published research with mothers existing at the time. This checklist (see appendices) did not include sexual abuse as it was assumed that the men would not be prepared to disclose any abuse in this area. The men were asked to complete the checklists following the interviews, and it was left up to them as to whether they wanted to talk about any further aspects, which they had not disclosed in the interview. In the event, most men did disclose far more forms of abuse both towards women

and towards children but chose not to talk about it.

For some men, I was also given verbal information on their convictions by programme workers. However this was not forthcoming in all cases and requiring access to their criminal and programme records could have complicated issues of confidentiality and privacy under the Data Protection Act (1998) and placed extra demands on programme workers which would have made gaining access to men through the programmes more problematic. Thus, since I was not able to cross-check the men's stories about their violence with their records, their accounts cannot be viewed as a 'true' record of their criminal convictions.

Interviews with mothers

The interviews with mothers were far more straight forward and, as Cavanagh and Lewis (1996) noted from their own research, provided a 'powerful antidote' to the violent fathers' accounts. Mothers were asked about the same topics as were covered with the fathers in the light of their own and their children's experiences. They welcomed telling their stories about what had happened, or what was continuing to happen, to their children during contact with violent fathers and being asked about their views about their ex-partners as fathers by an outsider who was willing to believe them (in contrast to the disbelief and assumptions of 'selfishness' by many of the professionals they had faced during contact disputes). Even so, some of the mothers produced reports or assessments made by child psychologists or psychiatrists and copies of letters written by their children to judges or court welfare officers to confirm their fears about the harm their children were experiencing during contact because they expected not to be believed.

The use of the checklists with mothers

Whilst mothers were prepared to talk in far more detail about their own and their children's experiences, the use of the same checklists which had been given to the men also reminded them of forms of abuse which had been experienced but about which they had forgotten or which they had not seen as significant enough to raise in their interviews.

The impact of the interview process with fathers and mothers

The interviews with violent fathers often left me feeling angry at their attitudes towards women, their justifications for their abusive behaviour and at their minimisations of the impact of their abuse on children. I was also anxious about what was happening to some of the very young children who were having ongoing contact with these fathers. Nevertheless, the interviews with mothers were particularly harrowing. For example, hearing about the direct abuse which was being perpetrated against very young children during contact and the consequences of this (some of which was described as being ongoing at the time of interview) was very disturbing. This was particularly the case because these children were powerless to change their own situations and mothers had often been ordered by the courts to force their children to go for contact. I also met a number of these children myself during the interview visits, since some of these took place in their own homes. The emotional impact of doing both sets of interviews and then hearing them again through transcribing the tapes and doing the initial data analysis, meant that I had to put some distance of time before 'immersing' myself in the transcripts to undertake the final data analysis process.

Anonymity

Although all the research participants had been given guarantees of anonymity,

one of the problems which has been highlighted by Lee (1993) in discussing 'sensitive' research, is how to protect the anonymity of participants in qualitative studies which uses small data sets, as has been the case here. The main problem is how to present aspects of accounts which illustrate and exemplify particular themes or patterns so that others about whom they talk, such as mothers/fathers and children, cannot be identified. I have, therefore, changed participants' names and concealed and omitted certain background details without losing some important information, such as the ages of children concerned, which are salient to the analysis.

Data analysis and interpretation

Epistemological approach to interpretation

As Hearn (1998) has noted, men's and women's accounts of violence are contextualised within gendered social relationships of power. Thus, at the discursive level, men's constructions of their violence and abuse both reflect and reinforce this power, through discursive social practices (Hearn, 1998). However, if men's accounts of their violence are viewed only discursively and solely as texts or discourses, this can deny the material reality of their violence and its impacts on women and children (Hearn, 1998). An alternative approach is to take a constructionist realist approach (see May, 1997), where men's accounts are viewed as contextualised constructions of their violence and abuse, but which at the same time, still bear some relation to their violence and abuse as it is materially practised. This is the approach taken in this study.

Overall approach to the data analysis

The overall approach I have taken in analysing the accounts from fathers and mothers based on the interview transcripts draws on what Layder (1998) has called the 'adaptive theory' model. Here, the analysis is guided by the research questions or focus of the study and previous research and theoretical analysis. At the same time, it allows new concepts to be developed from the data as in the grounded theory approach formulated by Glasser and Strauss (1967). The adaptive theory model also recognises that interpretation is involved right from the beginning of the analytic process where the organisation of 'raw data' into initial categories involves some level of prior theorisation.

Layder uses the term 'orientating concepts' to refer to those concepts which can guide the initial data categorisation and which are drawn from previous theoretical analysis or research. This does not, however, prevent new categories being developed which do not 'fit' the orientating concepts used. The use of orientating concepts has been helpful in this research in guiding the preliminary analysis of both the fathers' and mothers' accounts and their applicability is discussed further below.

The approach to the data analysis also has to be appropriate to the aims and focus of the study. Where studies are exploratory, and therefore covering new ground, they may be more descriptively orientated. On the other hand, studies which aim to extend existing knowledge can place more emphasis on theoretical development (Layder, 1998). In this study, whilst there has been extensive research with violent men, the specific focus on violent fatherhood has been a relatively unexplored area.^{vii} My overall aim in the data analysis process was therefore to produce what has been termed 'rich description' where both descriptive and explanatory concepts may combine in the

analytical development of patterns and themes.

Orientating concepts

In analysing the men's talk about their violence and abuse, I was able to draw on the previous feminist and pro-feminist research which has used the concept of 'socially approved vocabularies' (Scott and Lyman, 1968) to interpret how violent men excuse and justify their behaviour. (Ptacek, 1988; Scully, 1990; Hearn, 1998). For example, Ptacek, in his research with 18 domestically violent men showed how they drew on 'socially accepted' rationalisations for their violence whilst Scully analysed how the rapists she interviewed used 'linguistic devices' or 'vocabularies of motive' to interpret and explain their sexual violence in terms that are 'culturally appropriate and socially acceptable' (Scully, 1990: 97).

The analysis of such devices or verbal strategies has been refined specifically in relation to research on men's accounts of domestic violence by Ptacek (1988) and Hearn (1998). Ptacek, utilising Scott and Lyman's categorisations, defines excuses as those used by men to 'deny full responsibility' for their actions through strategies which explain it as being out of their control and which obscures their goals in using it against women and children.

Justifications are where some responsibility is accepted but blame is attributed to others (Ptacek 1988: 141). Hearn (1998) has further extended these categories to include repudiations (denials and minimisations) and confessions. The category of confessions involves men who accept some responsibility and blame but, as Hearn points out, they may or may not be accompanied by remorse. Both these researchers indicate that all these strategies may be used

in the same account and can serve at the same time as descriptions and explanations of violence. One consequence of this is that men's accounts of their violence are often contradictory and these contradictions need to be represented in the analysis. These orientating concepts therefore provided some initial ways in which the data could be analysed and interpreted, whilst enabling the development of further descriptive and explanatory concepts based specifically around their fathering practices.

The data analysis in practice

In practice the data analysis process began with the transcribing of the first set of taped interviews, where sequential themes were developed using a computer programme specifically designed for the analysis of qualitative and ethnographic data, known as the *Ethnograph*. This enables the selection and coding of certain segments of data in each transcript to be sorted into cross-sectional themes, and the building of further themes as more data is analysed (Fielding, 2001). Once all the interviews had been undertaken, I then revisited the transcripts as a whole, and developed further themes during the final data analysis process. This also involved comparing the data from the fathers' and mothers' accounts, as well as from the perpetrator programme leaders, which enabled further themes to be developed. In addition, I analysed each individual father's account for contradictions and compared their accounts with their individual checklists, as well as comparing the checklists as a whole, to address any commonalities and differences in their overall patterns of violence and abuse.

Endnotes

Personal communications from other feminist researchers who had published research on mothers and children's experiences of child contact, in the context of domestic violence, indicated that they had been threatened over the phone by fathers' rights groups.

- ⁱⁱ This research was not published until after this study was undertaken.
- ⁱⁱⁱ This was the only detailed research available at the time the interviews with mothers took place.
- ^{iv} The DoH guidance (1999) does however give some indicators and these were used in this research.
- ^v In this regard, two of the programmes indicated that they had men who had been referred by local child protection agencies.
- ^{vi} For example, one father who had been convicted of assaulting one of his children, had said he was surprised that the child protection agency involved in his case, had taken no interest in his arrangements for contact (see also, Humphreys, 2000).
- ^{vii} At least, at the time this study was first undertaken.

Chapter 5 Abusive fathering

Introduction

This chapter discusses the empirical research undertaken with the fathers who participated in this study. The first part provides the material context to their accounts and summarises the extent and forms of their violence and abuse used against mothers and children. This information is based on a combination of qualitative data from the interviews and quantitative data from the checklists, as well as some minimum information provided by perpetrator programme leaders, such as whether individual men had convictions for violence. It therefore gives a broad picture of the men's violence and needs to be read alongside part 2. It also provides some background information on the men and briefly describes their diverse family situations and their varied connections with children, including contact arrangements at the time of the interviews. The second part analyses the fathers' accounts. In the first section, I briefly look at some of the ways fathers conceptualised their violence towards mothers. This analysis is significant for three reasons. In the first instance, it was important to find out if these violent fathers conceptualised their violence towards children and mothers in similar ways. Secondly, I wished to explore the inter-connections between some of the men's violence towards mothers and the way they perceived their own social identities as fathers, which had been highlighted in earlier research, and how this also connected to possibly abusive practices towards children. Thirdly, they provide further illustration from the fathers' perspectives of the kinds of violence and intimidation that children were living with on a day to day basis.

Part 1 : The material context

Fathers' history of violence.

As the empirical research progressed, it became increasingly clear that all of the fathers had a history of domestic violence; that is, their violence was not related to single incidents or events but had been ongoing for at least part of their individual relationships with women. Whilst this ranged from years to a few months, depending on particular circumstances, for most it had continued for several years and reflects other studies of women's experiences and research with violent men discussed earlier. However, since fathers often minimised their histories of violence, it was not always possible to know when the violence had started, although there were indications that for some men it could intensify when women became pregnant, when children were present, and at the point of separation.

Significantly, for almost half (no=9) of those interviewed, this violence had not only been perpetrated in one relationship where children were involved but had occurred in second relationships. One father admitted to being violent in 3 different relationships with women where he also had genetic children with whom he had contact. Thus, as has been indicated in other research, some had moved through 'careers' of domestic violence, where violent practices in familial relationships were habitual and were carried over from one relationship to the next, increasing the numbers of children and mothers affected throughout this process.

‘Serious’ domestic violence

Although some fathers had been violent in more than one relationship, they had not necessarily been defined as being *seriously* violent by agencies. As has been seen in earlier chapters, what counts as ‘serious’ domestic violence in these contexts may only be where men have convictions for particular ‘incidents’ of violence and/or where there are visible and severe physical injuries.

Half the fathers interviewed here (no=10) had no convictions for perpetrating violence and they described themselves as ‘volunteers’ on the perpetrator programmes, usually at the instigation of second partners who threatened to leave the relationship unless the men changed. In other cases, fathers had ‘volunteered’ to attend to demonstrate their ‘fitness’ for contact with their children, either to the family courts, social service agencies or their ex-partners. A quarter also admitted to having been physically violent very recently, whilst they were on the perpetrator programmes, either to current partners or to ex-partners, which included post-separation violence.

However, in relation to the extent and forms of violence admitted to by the men most explicitly in the checklists, there was, on the whole, little difference between those who had convictions for violence and those who did not (see below).

The 10 fathers who admitted to convictions for domestic violence in one form or another tended to be those who could be described as more 'working-class' in occupational terms. The types of convictions some of these fathers had, that related to domestic violence and child abuse, ranged from physical assaults on their children (no=2), with one of these fathers being identified as a schedule 1 offender for having several convictions of violence to children as well as to their mother, to actual bodily harm on mothers (no=3); threats to kill mothers (no=2) and harassment of ex-partners under the Protection from Harassment Act, 1997 (PFHA)(no=2). Three of these fathers had more than one conviction related to domestic violence with one having convictions for actual bodily harm and harassment. The other 2 fathers had multiple convictions for violence although they were vague about what these actually were. One of these fathers had been convicted in his teens for assaulting his mother and stated he had other convictions for violence against men. Two fathers also had convictions for other offences not related to their violence. Two fathers were on good behaviour bonds.

Civil injunctions

Most of the fathers who admitted to having injunctions against them also had convictions for violence. Four fathers with convictions had injunctions (exclusion orders) to stay away from where mothers and children were living and one father had a restraining order under the PFHA. In 2 of these cases, fathers stated the injunctions had been as a result of their convictions for physical assaults on children rather than violence towards partners. Only in 2

cases did men state that there were injunctions against them where they had no convictions.

Forms of violence.

As in other studies with violent men, the fathers tended to minimise their violence and abuse in their interviews. The checklists (see appendix 1) used in combination with the interviews showed that the majority of the fathers had carried out a range of physical violence and intimidation, often together with sexual violence and psychological/emotional abuse of mothers.

Children's observation of the violence

In their interviews, all the fathers eventually acknowledged that children were present and/or had overheard some of the physical violence, threats and intimidation of mothers, although as is illustrated in Part 2, the significance and meaning of children's presence varied greatly in their accounts.

Moreover, some talked about threatening and intimidatory behaviours which were designed to control the whole family and could be directed towards children as well as towards mothers (see below). Whilst fathers varied in the types and amount of physical and sexual violence and intimidation to which they admitted, the following example is typical.

Father A: pin her to wall or floor; sit or stand on her; bang her head; rip her clothes; throw her around; punch her with fist; pull her hair; pound walls with fists; throw food and objects around; prevent her from leaving; shout, swear

and scream; threaten to harm children; touch sexually without consent; get angry if don't have sex. (father - no convictions for domestic violence)

Sexual violence

Only one man talked about sexual violence during his interview and its more frequent occurrence was revealed only through the use of the checklist. Over a third (no=7) admitted to some form of sexual abuse of their partners, which could range from less directly physical behaviours, such as treating her as a sex object to getting angry when she refused sex; making fun of her sexually; using threats to get sex; making her perform sex acts against her will; sexual touching without consent, physically attacking sexual parts of the body and forcing her to have sex. This could be combined to a greater or lesser extent with other forms of behaviour, which indicated that women partners were often regarded as sexual possessions. Telling women what to wear was a common form of sexual control, as well as checking up on them and accusing them of having affairs.

Psychological/emotional abuse and strategies of coercion

These forms involved strategies of isolation, coercion and humiliation designed to limit their partners' autonomy and undermine women's sense of self, whilst ensuring that the needs of the men were met. In general, more fathers acknowledged carrying out these strategies in the checklists rather than in the interviews.

Most fathers admitted to using some of these strategies with a few disclosing more of this than physical violence in the checklists. This is illustrated in the checklist of Father B who admitted to:

opening his partner's mail; listening to phone calls; depriving her of food or sleep; preventing contact with friends and family; not letting her go out where/when she wanted; making out she was stupid or mad; criticising and calling her names; blaming her and making her feel guilty; threatening to harm the children; accusing her of having affairs; interrupting her and not letting her speak; telling her what to wear; blanking and ignoring her and forcing her to do housework to his standards.

The above were also accompanied by other forms of intimidation, such as stalking, smashing possessions, standing over her, preventing her from leaving the room; making her do degrading things, and physically threatening her through aggressive gestures and shouting and swearing.

Whilst the majority of fathers admitted to using a combination of such strategies in the checklists, together with multiple forms of physical abuse and intimidation, the most common forms included: humiliation and making fun of their partners; criticising and blaming them; making them out to be stupid or mad; not letting them speak or ignoring them; together with isolation strategies such as preventing contact with friends and family and preventing them going out on their own.

Post-separation violence and abuse

A checklist was not used specifically for post-separation violence or abuse. However, a third indicated its use during their interviews. It was also evidenced through the convictions of some of the men under the PFHA. For example, 2 fathers had convictions for telephone harassment, stalking and threatening mothers and children in the family home. Three other fathers said they had used physical violence against mothers post-separation, including two who admitted physical assault during contact visits at the mother's home. In addition, 3 fathers disclosed using threats of physical violence to coerce either first partners or second partners who had left the relationships to return to the family home and, in 2 of these cases, the abduction of children was used as part of this coercion. Further, several fathers talked about threatening mothers through the children during contact visits, although they did not usually acknowledge this as abusive behaviour.

Direct violence and abuse towards children

Fathers' acknowledgement of the direct abuse of children in their accounts was obviously constrained by the focus of the research as well as by how far they were prepared to recognise that certain behaviours were harmful to children. Further, as has been seen above, there were clearly situations where the abuse of mothers and the abuse of children overlapped. These included situations where children were snatched from mothers, where children were being manipulated or used in the abuse of the mother and where they were directly

caught up in such abuse and which also extended into the post-separation context. As might be expected, the most common form acknowledged by fathers was the physical abuse of children. In addition, it should be noted that the interviews and checklists did not ask fathers about sexual abuse since it was considered unlikely that they would be prepared to disclose this. Further, whilst some fathers did admit to direct physical violence towards children in their interviews, they were often more reluctant to talk about it in detail or to mention other kinds of abusive behaviour. These were, therefore, mainly disclosed in the checklists and specifically addressed behaviours which could be interpreted as constituting abuse of children, developed from some of the research discussed earlier.

Physical and intimidatory violence towards children

Although this was complicated by the legality of being able to physically 'chastise' children, most fathers who talked about using physical abuse were clearly aware that they had used 'excessive' or unnecessary force. Almost half the fathers (nine) admitted that they had used physical violence against children, with the majority using it more than once. This could involve the use of weapons such as leather straps and hitting children 'hard' across the face and head as well as bruising their backsides. Fifteen fathers also admitted to being physically threatening to children, either through banging furniture, breaking or throwing objects and/or through shouting and swearing at them. Other kinds of threatening behaviour to which they admitted in the checklists included threatening to hurt their mother, threatening pets, threatening to put

children in care, forcing them to eat, and breaking their possessions. It was also apparent that this abusive behaviour was carried out where fathers had contact with children post-separation.

Emotional abuse of children

As chapter two has indicated, emotional/psychological abuse of children can be seen, on the one hand, as a consequence of children's experiences of fathers' ongoing violence, threats and psychological strategies of control, which engenders extreme fear in children. On the other hand, children may also experience direct emotional abuse, in separate contexts from their mothers. In this study, whilst a majority of fathers eventually acknowledged some of their children's fears in their interviews, these were generally minimised. Moreover, few fathers described forms of direct emotional abuse to children in their accounts and these were mainly revealed through the checklists. For example, several fathers admitted to the regular humiliation of children; humiliating them in front of friends, regularly criticising them and regularly ignoring them. A few also admitted to forcing children to keep secrets.

Fathers' own experiences of childhood abuse and violence

Although fathers were not specifically asked about their childhood experiences of violence, 6 used it as one of a number of explanations for their violence towards women and/or their physical violence towards children. This included 5 fathers who described their own fathers as being violent towards their

mothers and towards themselves, and one father who was brought up by his mother and grandmother and who experienced physical abuse from his mother. In this example, however, this man's experience of abuse was complicated by the fact that he also admitted to 'seriously' assaulting his mother, at the age of 12.

Fathers' familial circumstances and connections to children

Fathers' connections with children were highly complex and changed over time. An important focus of this research has been to look at separated violent fathers. However, as indicated above, as the research progressed it became apparent that several of the fathers (n=9) were also living with or had recently separated from children in second families. These children could be their own genetic children, and/or 'step-children'. The term 'step-children' is used here to encompass all children where men perceived themselves as having some kind of 'fatherhood' relationship where there was no genetic connection, irrespective of whether men were married to partners. In 3 cases, fathers also had connections with step-children from first relationships. Where fathers were still living with second families, children were a mixture of both genetic children and step-children. To a greater or lesser extent, the men viewed themselves as 'social fathers' towards these children. The diffuse connections with children that some men had is best illustrated by one of the participants describing how various children were affected because of his violence resulting in the ending of a second familial relationship:

You see the children *are* [his emphasis] involved, in as much as me and my girlfriend, we were planning to get married - she has two children, I have two children - we have family outings. Sundays we have lunch and we were building...well we called it our extended family, because it's a complicated set up - her children were from two separate relationships - so there's another three families outside of ours and keeping every body sweet and who will have the children on such and such a day, and putting (them) together on bank holidays and Christmases was really very stressful. But we did it and we loved the company of children - we had a brilliant time. I ..er.. treated her children as my own.

The implications of this complexity meant that in looking at the men's violence and its impact, there was a need to broaden the focus of the research and to take account of their relationships with step-children and children and mothers in second families as well as in first families. As a result of this, it was clear that far more children were affected by their violence than was initially apparent. It was also clear that fathers' violent and controlling behaviour and women's *and* children's refusal to tolerate it by ending relationships were major contributing factors as to why familial relationships changed.

In all, these 20 violent fathers were connected to 55 children of varying ages and sexes. Half these children (no=27) were aged 10 or under, and 18 of these were under 7 years old. Four fathers had grown-up genetic children, (over 18 years old) but had connections with younger children, often from second relationships. This included 27 girls and 21 boys under the age of 18.

Fathers' living situations at time of interview

All the fathers except two were separated from children from first families at the time of interview. These two had recently returned to live with first families after periods of separation of over a year or more. In one of these latter cases, the children were teenagers and one had recently left home at the age of 17. In the other, both children were under 5.

Four fathers were also living with second partners and children where the ages of children ranged from babies to teenagers. One father had never lived with the mother and baby of a first family. In addition, 5 fathers were recently separated from second families or, in one case, a third family because of their violence.

Contact arrangements

The kinds of contact arrangements fathers stated they had varied greatly. They had also changed over time and were continuing to change. However, some fathers were far less willing to give specific details about why they had changed. This is discussed more fully in the section on fathers' accounts but some general points can be made about the different types of contact arrangements and the circumstances where there was little or no contact. Most fathers had said that contact had been agreed with mothers, although what is not known here is why mothers agreed and the fathers' accounts can be viewed as particularly unreliable in this respect. Other research has suggested that abused mothers may agree to contact for a variety of reasons and this is

illuminated more in the chapter on the mothers' accounts. However, how much contact fathers had where children were older (11-16) appeared largely to be chosen by these children themselves.

Just under a third of the sample (no=6) had sought contact through the courts, because mothers were opposing it, and these tended to involve children from first families. In a couple of these cases, it was apparent that there was also social services involvement because of concerns over children's safety, due to physical abuse and injuries to children. In one of these, the direct contact ordered had been very limited for a number of years (once every 6 weeks for 3 hours) and was supervised by a social worker because of the extensive nature of the physical abuse to children. This was the only case where, according to the fathers' accounts, contact was being formally supervised at the time of interview. In 3 other cases, contact had also been very limited but in 2 cases was gradually increased over time; these two cases are discussed in more detail in the fathers' accounts.

Two cases had led to no contact, in one, because the father withdrew after a preliminary hearing, after 'losing his temper in the court' and, in the second, because the child in question aged fifteen had refused contact. One case was undecided at the time of interview and in the other, the father had been granted regular staying contact to a genetic child and two step-children, although apparently his violence had not been raised as an issue in the court. This was a case, which had originally been decided some time ago and contact had

become more infrequent as the children got older (see below). The father concerned had recently separated from a second partner and young baby, because of his violence.

Contact and the ages of children

In general, fathers who were separated from older children who were above eleven years of age had infrequent contact. This was mainly because the children 'chose not to' and, in two cases, teenagers had chosen to have no contact at all. Only in one case did a father have regular weekly staying contact with his two children aged 11 and 13 and at the time of interview this had been thrown into question because the children had heard of his assault on a second partner. Whilst older children often chose to limit or have no contact with violent fathers, of more concern was fathers' contact with younger children (ten or under) as this tended to be more regular and more frequent and usually took place on a weekly basis. These concerns are underlined by a number of fathers' statements that they had problems controlling their abusive behaviour when looking after or simply being around very young children, and which demonstrated that they had little understanding of these children's needs(see part two). Contact arrangements varied considerably but ranged at the time of interview from: 4 times a week at the mother's house; weekend overnight staying contact; 5 hours a week and a few hours on a Sunday at the grand parents' home.

Contact with children from second and third relationships

Whether fathers had contact with children from second and third relationships seemed to vary and depended on a number of different circumstances. The father who had 3 genetic children from 3 different relationships had weekend staying contact with all these children at the same time, every 3 months, and he stated that this had been agreed with their mothers. However, another father who had very recently separated from a partner because of his violence and, with whom he had been cohabiting for a number of years, felt that there was no point in seeking contact with her genetic children. This was explained in terms of these children already having contact arrangements with their 'natural' fathers, one of whom had also been violent to the mother concerned. The father mentioned above, who had recently separated from a second family of mother and baby, stated that he would not be seeking contact with this child.

Conclusion

From this summary information, it can be seen that these fathers' violence and abuse towards mothers was chronic and frequently severe and, for some fathers, extended into the post-separation context. Thus, it impacted on a much larger group of children than originally thought, because it also included those in second familial relationships.

In addition, most fathers admitted to a range of simultaneous and direct abuse of children themselves, which included physical abuse, intimidation, and

emotional abuse. As has been seen above, much of this abuse involved very young children, that is children under the age of 6, and the implications of this must be of particular concern. However, the way these men portrayed their abusive behaviour and described its impact in their accounts gives a very different picture.

Part 2: The fathers' accounts

Fathers' accounts of their violence when living with women and children.

Minimisation and limited definitions of violence

As with other research with violent men, these men's accounts of their violence ranged between a series of denials or partial denials to different kinds of minimisations and rationalisations. Fathers frequently denied or minimised certain aspects through the use of limited definitions of what constitutes violence. For most of the men in this study, their definitions were mainly confined to actual physical violence but, even in these descriptions, only certain forms of physical violence counted.

This was most clearly illustrated in the account of one father, Matt, who had returned to live with his partner and two young daughters after a prolonged

period of separation and who saw ‘punching’ as real violence and anything else as something less. For example, at one point he said:

I have hit her, I’m almost certain I didn’t hit her then – I did come back -basically I don’t punch her- I’m not the violent type. I’ve pushed her and raised my voice and tried to strangle her on one occasion.

Later, in his interview, Matt was to talk about other forms of physically violent and intimidatory behaviour which clearly affected the whole family, but was also not viewed as ‘real violence’:

I threw objects and smashed phones and pictures – I’ve smashed cups – I’ve smashed the baby’s cup would you believe – I’ve even smashed remote controls.’

‘A few serious incidents’

Fathers also tended to minimise the ongoing pattern of their violence by talking about it in terms of one or two ‘serious incidents’ that had produced obvious visible physical injury. For example, Tom described his violence as ‘only one incident which was serious – I hit her whilst she was pregnant and broke her nose.’ Brian gave a similar account:

the main problem is that I’ve pushed my wife once and broken her nose and slapped her once and broken her teeth (pause) and I’ve got a controlling problem.

For Brian, the addition of his ‘controlling problem’ at the end of his description appeared to apply to other kinds of violence, which were not perceived as being in the same category as those mentioned above, and which

he did not talk about but were disclosed in his checklist following the interview. These included: smashing possessions, stalking his partner, imprisoning her, opening her mail, physically threatening her and sexual abuse.

Denials and definitions of violence

Although it was difficult for the fathers in this study to deny outright any violent behaviour towards women since they were all attending perpetrator programmes and some had criminal convictions for their violence, a few attempted to do so. For example, at the beginning of their accounts, 3 fathers were at pains to emphasise that they had been wrongly convicted and implied that the criminal courts had been ‘manipulated’ by their ex-partners into convicting them. However, later, these men described events, which referred to their convictions, but these were explained away as not ‘real’ violence or were variously justified as ‘self-defence’ or actions which had been misinterpreted as violence. This is exemplified in Collin’s account where he talked about being prosecuted for three offences. He said:

the charges were for assault, criminal damage, which I was found not guilty for those two. I actually got found guilty of threats to kill her, which I know wasn’t the truth - when you put on tears at the court and impress the magistrate...but that’s another story.

Later on, however, it turned out he had threatened to kill his partner with a knife during a ‘struggle’ over answering the phone, where he had become suspicious about the phone call. He also described his 7-year-old daughter,

witnessing this event. However, he made no comment on the impact this might have had on this child, but rather regarded her merely as a witness to his own version of what ‘really’ happened. It also became apparent, further on into his account, that he was awaiting trial on yet another charge of actual bodily harm, which related to yet another violent ‘incident’ following separation.

‘Not real violence’ could also include convictions under the PFHA (Protection from Harassment Act) where men had repeatedly harassed and threatened women and children post-separation. None of the men with these convictions acknowledged that this kind of behaviour constituted intimidation and control of ex-partners and children but rather saw the restraining orders that were placed on them as making ‘unreasonable’ controls on their own lives. Geoff, for example, clearly presented himself as the victim in this respect:

She said I was kicking the door down - that I was blocking the phone line with my mobile phone - I was accused of harassing her on numerous occasions - and that I was following her when she went shopping – *now I’m frightened to go out* [his emphasis]

Minimisation – mutual arguments and reciprocal violence

One of the most common ways of minimising and accounting for their violent and intimidatory behaviour was to represent it as mutual arguments or a mutual lack of communication. For example, Bill explained his violence towards his second partner in the following terms:

It was the fact that we couldn't communicate, that we were both upsetting and annoying each other about what we were saying – shouting matches – shouting and abuse - we had come close on several occasions....

However, in his checklist, Bill had disclosed that he had frequently head-butted his partner, physically pushed and threatened her, banged and punched walls and engaged in a range of other intimidatory behaviour, including driving recklessly to terrify her and threatening her when she refused sex.

The mutual argument discourse could also often merge into explanations that the violence was reciprocal with women usually being made responsible for having started it. Simon, for example, described his violence in the following way:

Generally it would start off with arguments, where she'd be stubborn and I'd be stubborn – the interesting part is she would be the one to fight – she'd be the one encouraging a fight.

Needless to say, Simon indicated that he had been convicted of such serious physical violence towards his partner (although he was one of the men who conveniently 'could not remember' what the charge actually was) that he would have received a prison sentence if he had not agreed to attend a perpetrator programme.

Mental abuse

In their accounts, only 3 fathers acknowledged mentally abusing mothers whilst living with partners. Moreover, one of these fathers, Phil, was also one

of only two men who volunteered information about deliberately verbally abusing both his first and second partners in front of the children, in his interview. Talking about his relationship with his first partner, he said:

I didn't really get into physical abuse – it was more mental – shouting and screaming, calling her names, putting her down in every way and in front of the children.

This was a clear example of where the abuse of the mother and children is simultaneous, and is discussed in more detail below.

Fathers' explanations for violence towards women

Combined with strategies to minimise their violence were explanations, which were used to shift blame and responsibility and to neutralise its effects. A combination of two main kinds of explanation were frequently offered within the same accounts. The first of these related to some 'internal' mechanism or self, which was portrayed as being separate and out of the control of their 'real' selves. Hence, it could be caused by having a 'bad temper' or a 'short fuse,' or 'uncontrollable rages'. One father, Max, described having a separate 'monster' inside him that was causing such loss of control and also stated he could often 'not remember' any detail about specific incidents. Such descriptions could also be accompanied by expressions of remorse about the violence whilst at the same time disclaiming any responsibility for it. For example, in describing one recent 'incident' towards his second partner, Max said:

I lost my temper with her and tried to throw her out of the house and er I don't know how I came to have it in my hand, but I threatened her with a knife and it was like a

double take and I looked down at myself and I could see what I had and I threw it away and just broke down in tears.

In addition, for most of these fathers their tempers and rages were not uncontrollable in any social context but were portrayed as being ‘triggered’ or ‘provoked’ specifically by the behaviour of women as partners or girl friends. Only 2 fathers described their tempers as being also provoked by adult men. This suggests that this kind of ‘pathological’ explanation for their violence in intimate relationships served more as a convenient excuse for their violence than any actual existence of mental pathology.

The second kind of explanation, which often merged into the first in terms of the reasons men gave for the provocation of their violence, related specifically to justifications in relation to women’s failures to meet men’s expectations or demands of them. However, the same men also described being violent, when women challenged their views, or were regarded as making unreasonable demands.

Contradictory rationalisations for violence

Thus, most fathers gave several different contradictory rationalisations for their violence towards women in the same account, which could accumulate and change depending on the context in which they were talking. This was illustrated most clearly in the account of one father, Dave. At the beginning of his narrative, Dave described his violence as being the result of his (ex)-partner refusing him contact with the children, giving the impression that he

had only been ‘legitimately’ violent in this context and that it had not occurred whilst living in the relationship. For example, he said, ‘I don’t want to minimise anything. I’ve whacked her across the face a few times during our separation - she wouldn’t let me see the kids’. Further on into the interview, however, it became clear that there had been ongoing violence before separation and, in this context, it was justified because his partner did not ‘have his tea on the table,’ when he came home from work and the house was ‘untidy’. Thus, Dave felt she was undermining his identity as a ‘real’ man. A third explanation was that his wife was pathologically jealous and kept him a prisoner in his home because she had a pathological hatred of men, as is illustrated in the following extract:

My wife said I didn’t meet her emotional needs – I felt I was being treated in such a way, that I was being undermined, weak that sort of thing, because my wife wasn’t doing anything. I resented this... I wouldn’t have minded if she had worked.

Q. Is that what your violence was about then?

D. It’s a very complex story and to cut to the long and short of it, my wife has this tremendous anger against men. She’s been abused – her father was a paedophile, we got into arguments, she was jealous if I went out - in the end *I was virtually a prisoner in my own home* – I wasn’t allowed out - she would go out all day.

Later, when it became clear that he had also been physically violent to one of his children (see below) and his partner had unbeknownst to him reported it to social services, his violence became portrayed as merely reciprocal.

She said she was frightened, but if she was frightened why did she kick me between the legs once in an argument? I’ve smacked her across the face, I’ve pushed her and dragged her – but that was the extent to which we got to – we could have killed each other – that was the straw which broke the camel’s back. She would say she was frightened of me – but that all stems back to her being abused.

Violence towards women and men's perceptions of themselves as fathers

Some men also justified their violence towards women during pregnancy, because at the time *they* had chosen not to be fathers and their partners were perceived as contravening this choice. In addition, women's state of pregnancy could be seen as threatening the emotional support that men expected from women and this could also be viewed as a justifiable reason for violence. This was directly expressed by one father who stated that he was violent when he found out his partner was pregnant because he felt 'insecure,' and he felt that his partner was not giving *him* 'any support'. Thus, as has been illustrated in earlier research with mothers, for these men, their partner's pregnancy could be viewed as a 'justification' for their violence because women were no longer providing the same level of emotional servicing that they had had previously. For some of these fathers, it extended into violence following the birth of children because mothers were portrayed as making unreasonable demands on them, such as asking them not to go out and were therefore also perceived as neglecting the men's needs.

Fathers' violence and the division of labour in the home

Whilst Dave was one of only 2 fathers who justified some of his violence in terms of 'traditional' gendered expectations of the division of labour, most fathers in this study said that they did not see any differences between mothers' and fathers' 'roles' in terms of housework and/or childcare. In this context, some fathers justified their violence towards women because when

they did do housework it was not up to fathers' standards. Jeremy, for example, who was one of several middle class fathers, explained some of his violence in the following terms:

Well for years I did the cooking and the cleaning, because she'd never been that way inclined. and rather than negotiating I would shout and scream

Q. Because she didn't do it?

J. Yes – well to be fair, when we were first married she did, probably because I picked fault with what she did, she said she wasn't going to do it anymore.

Such discourses could also merge into explanations that their partners were exploiting them as 'house husbands'. For example, Guy, another middleclass father, explained that he was violent because his partner treated him unfairly since he had to do most of the housework after the birth of their child:

She was the main breadwinner, and when we were living together I did all the shopping, cleaning etc.... it [the violence] was ostensibly to do with housework – my partner was very untidy – I resented doing certain things, like having to go round the shops – *I felt I was being treated instrumentally* [his emphasis].

In a similar, but different vein, Brian stated that he didn't believe in 'set roles' in the home but explained his 'controlling' behaviour towards his partner in terms of having to do too much housework and basic childcare because his partner went out 'four nights a week' so he was unable to spend 'quality time' with his 5-year-old boy:

I've always felt that my wife didn't help on the household chores that needed to be done, like dishes, washing – things like that. I did it all - so I didn't have a lot of time to play with my son – I would be cooking tea, bathing X, or getting him ready for bed, so I didn't have a lot of time for the love side of things.

In these examples, fathers portrayed themselves as 'new style' men, but, in a neat reversal, women are seen as exploiting these roles so their violence is also portrayed as being justified in this context. Further, for Brian, his partner is regarded as being even more at fault because she is viewed as preventing him from loving and enjoying his child by going out in the evening and having a good time. However, later in his account, Brian related that his partner did 'not go out a lot' because he used threats of violence to stop her. Thus, for these men, it was not the traditional division of labour that was significant to them but their rights as men to dictate and control household arrangements on their own terms through violence, if their partners did not conform to these terms.

Children as observers of fathers' violence

Although in certain contexts children could be portrayed as significant to the men either as objects or sources of love and enjoyment, as has been indicated in a number of the accounts above, in other contexts, children's witnessing of the violence, as Hearn (1998) has noted, was regarded as too unimportant to mention in their accounts. Often, it was only when fathers were directly asked about children's presence, did it become apparent that children were the unmentioned observers of the violence.

In some accounts, fathers denied that children even knew about their violence. But it then became apparent that they were aware of the impact it had on them

Brian, for example, initially stated that he did not think his 5-year old son was aware of his violence towards his mother, but later in the interview, he said ‘when we argued, he would sort of shout and come over and hit me, because he was trying to protect his mother’. Similarly, Matt, who portrayed himself as ‘not the violent type’ described hearing his four-year old daughter saying to her mother, ‘why has daddy hit you?’ and ‘don’t worry mummy,’ and related how his daughter had put her arm round her mother.

For other fathers, children’s presence could be mentioned in passing, as though it was totally unimportant, whilst at the same time emphasising how much they cared for their children. For example, Bob, talking about his violence towards his second partner, stated that he ‘had a lot of time for the baby [but] no time for her’. He then proceeded to describe how ‘the violent incident’ where he had been arrested had happened when the mother had been ‘holding the baby in her arms’ and ‘the baby had been covered in her blood’. He subsequently related how much he enjoyed playing with ‘my [sic] baby’ and said he was ‘very proud of him’ and stressed the fact that he liked the baby being like him. He also emphasised that as soon as he came the home the baby ‘wanted’ to be with him, rather than his mother, thus suggesting that he was a ‘better’ parent than the baby’s mother, and that he was in a competition for the baby’s affections.

Fathers' conceptualisations of using children to control mothers

Such a clear disregard for children's safety and well being, whilst at the same time, expressing how much they cared for them, was also exemplified in fathers' accounts when they talked about abducting children from mothers. Phil, for example, like Bob, portrayed his two-year old son from his second relationship as being 'very special' as 'my little boy.' Phil was 'so proud of him,' that he 'could cry with joy'. Thus, Phil clearly viewed these emotions as some justification for forcibly taking the boy from his mother when she had left the family home in order to escape his violence, as illustrated in the following extract:

I didn't want to lose her and I didn't want to lose my son – she did leave me one night, but I went into old gear and went down her mothers and said get home and she wouldn't - so I took the baby off her and said you can stay here if you want and I knew she would come home, because a good mother won't leave her baby.

Thus, despite his expressions of 'caring' so much for his child, this example illustrates how Phil's 'baby' is viewed as an object that could be used both to get his partner to return home and to re-establish his own sense of possession in the child. In addition, as in Bob's account above, this 'caring' did not appear to extend to considering the child's feelings when being 'snatched' from his mother. In contrast, this kind of caring can be seen to be more focussed on how far the children could be used to serve these men's self-interests, and to reinforce a sense of their own (superior) masculine identities as fathers.

Fathers' conceptualisations of their abuse of children

Simultaneous abuse and interconnections with the abuse of mothers

As indicated in the accounts above, fathers' rarely conceptualised using the children to control mothers, as harmful to the children themselves. On other occasions, however, fathers' acknowledged that their abuse of children was directly connected to their abuse of mothers' but this was rationalised in relation to mothers' behaviour, and mothers' failures to control children and failures to keep them from annoying fathers.

This was illustrated in the accounts of two fathers who drew on discourses of 'traditional' gender 'roles' to justify their abusive behaviour. For example, Bill had recounted that he was violent, in order to ensure that 'everything was run the way (he) wanted it to be run' and it was his 'word which went' in any decisions about what should happen in the family. Apart from having overall control, he saw his main role as a father as being able 'to go out and earn money and when he came home he had to unwind, because he had been working all day'. In this context, he related how his combined abuse towards his partner and his children could be caused by the 'children being under his feet' and his partner's failure to 'control' them. He felt that 'children should be seen and not heard' so that they were frequently physically threatened or assaulted if they happened to be present in the same room as he was. Similarly, Dave justified some of his abusive practices towards the children on the grounds that he saw his main fatherhood role as going out to work and he

therefore used violence when his partner did not meet his expectations of her as a wife and mother, in the household. However, he excused this on the grounds that it was the way he himself had been brought up:

You expect your tea to be there on the table and all that sort of thing; that thing is the role model I had from my own father. He never did anything around the house, never spent any time with the children, came in and had his tea and then out to the pub...

As with Bill, Dave resented the children's presence when he was at home and appeared to regard them as a nuisance when he had to take some responsibility for them such as at mealtimes because this stopped him from getting on with what he wanted to do. He said:

I wasn't very patient with them...to be honest I was bloody awful, like at meal times I would say eat your tea, eat your tea, I just wanted to be outside –working on the house or landscaping the garden.

This latter statement also takes on a different meaning when it is noted that earlier Dave had described his partner as 'keeping him a prisoner in his own home.'

Childcare and the abuse of children

Fathers' views on childcare

Both Dave and Bill's accounts can, in some ways, be seen to match the template of what is frequently viewed as the typical domestically violent father who is wedded to traditional 'patriarchal' values such as being authoritarian, expecting mothers to do most of the childcare and punishing them when they

fail to meet fathers' expectations. However, these two fathers were unusual in this study in espousing such views. Most of the fathers described themselves as having some regular involvement in childcare where partners worked, although this was often far less than mothers. Two-thirds of the fathers stated that partners had been working either part-time or full-time when they were living with the family. Moreover, 2 fathers described themselves as doing the majority of childcare, because their partners were the main 'breadwinners.' All the fathers also described undertaking some occasional childcare on their own, either when partners infrequently went out for the evening or when mothers were ill, and one father described having to look after the children on his own for a couple of weeks in this context. However, fathers views on doing childcare were often contradictory and, whilst some stated that they 'believed' in equally sharing childcare, they could also be resentful if they felt they were doing 'too much' and this itself could lead to more violence against mothers. Other fathers stated that they had chosen to do childcare whilst mothers worked, but this could also lead to violence if they felt they did not control the situation.

Whilst there may have been some exaggeration of fathers' involvement in looking after the children, these accounts illustrate that, for the most part they did not conceptualise themselves as distant or uninvolved fathers, as has been suggested in some of the earlier literature (see, for example, Holden and Ritchie, 1991; Radford et al., 1999). However, an emerging significant theme from their accounts, was that looking after the children meant that they could

carry the same practices of dominant masculinity used against mothers, into the childcare context.

For example, when looking after children, these fathers often described children as provoking their abusive behaviour in a similar manner to the way they had described mothers provoking the abuse. This was illustrated in Matt's account, who was one of two fathers who separated from his partner for a prolonged period, but had returned to the family home 'for the sake of his two young daughters' (aged 2 and 4). Matt talked about his fears when he was looking after the children, whilst their mother worked part-time, in case they made him lose his temper. He said:

Basically what it is I'm frightened with my temper- the two of them are little sods together, and I'm frightened of doing damage to them. When I'm on me own with them and they're misbehaving I can feel my temper, and it does frighten me in case I hit them.

Previous to this, he had described how his partner also often provoked his abuse because unlike other girl friends she would not 'shut up' as is illustrated below:

What winds me up about her is that I have actually raised my voice to my other two girlfriends and once they'd seen me raise my voice they knew I was in a bad mood and that would make them shut up – it was enough to make them shut up – it was enough to frighten them but not this one – she pushes and pushes and I will snap and go to hit her.

Tony, who earlier in his interview stated that he believed in equally shared childcare where both partners worked, related how he had had to look after his

2 and 4-year-old daughters on his own when his partner went into hospital for a couple of weeks, prior to their final separation, although the children were in a nursery during the day. However, at this point, he described how he felt this experience had made him more abusive towards the children because he was 'no good' at looking after them and they 'demanded' his attention. He said:

It was too much for me I was no good at it whatsoever, I would be getting frustrated with them and very very tired – they wanted to talk to dad, and they were constantly badgering me for attention- (there was) awful shouting, verbal abuse, aggressive abuse to get them to do what I wanted them to do – I was constantly boiling - the slightest thing – if they dropped their spoon when they were eating their pudding – that would be enough for me to slam my fist down on the table and say what the hell do you think you are doing and that would obviously shock them rigid.

As with Matt above, Tony had also talked about how his abusive behaviour towards his partner was 'provoked' by her making him lose his temper, but in this case it was because she was portrayed as making 'unreasonable' emotional demands on him.

Ted, who had convictions as a schedule 1 offender for several physical assaults on his children, described how he would hit his three daughters whenever they did things that pushed him 'up in the air' and 'annoyed' him. This is illustrated in the following extract, when he was 'helping' his 5-year- old daughter with her homework:

If they came home late from school... and I'd get a bit annoyed if they wouldn't sit and concentrate on their homework, because I thought that was important, and if I actually sat - say with P, and she was trying to read to me and sometimes I would get a bit annoyed if I thought she wasn't trying.

Q. So you would hit her?

A. Yes but it was also more shouting.

Q. What effect do you think that had on her?

T. She would just get really terrified and curl up in a corner, in the end she wouldn't sit on my knee anymore.

Other fathers talked about children 'provoking' their abuse at mealtimes and bedtimes when they were looking after them and their partners had gone out and in a few cases this had resulted in serious injury to the children. Dave, for example, talked about how he had been involved in a child protection investigation when caring for his child because his partner was out for the evening. He described how he had hit his 6-year-old son 'too hard' and bruised him because he was 'just playing and not going to sleep'.

One father, Rob, believed that 'the only way to get children to do what you wanted' was to hit them and, like Dave referred to above, related how he had been convicted for assault on one of his children, who with a disability, because he had hit him 'too hard' when he wouldn't go to bed.

Thus, these examples of violent fathers' involvement tend to contradict discourses, which suggest that violent fathers become less abusive and automatically discard their self-interested masculine assumptions of dominance when they are directly participating in actually caring for children. In contrast, as Alder and Polk's (1996) research on the killing of children indicated, there were indications that physical and verbal abuse could increase

in relation to the amount of time they spent with children, and when they had sole responsibility for caring for them.

In addition, it is important to stress that these fathers were talking about threatening and hitting very young children, most of whom were under five, and, in this context, it was apparent that most fathers were usually unwilling to even consider that these children had their own needs and interests that should be met through their parenting practices.

Many of these children were therefore being abused either because they were perceived as making 'unreasonable' demands on fathers 'such as demanding their attention' or because they were not fulfilling their expectations of what children should be.

Mental cruelty and dominance

In addition to physical violence and threats, some fathers described being deliberately threatening and cruel to children. Phil, relating what he was like with children in his first family, stated that:

Just being in the same room was enough in the end – it was mental abuse. They were terrified of me. all I had to do was look.....I was quite cruel to be honest with you, for example at mealtimes I used to sit there and make them eat things they really didn't like and they used to cry. I wanted to make them too perfect. I wanted to make them what I should be like.

Thus, as in the previous accounts of violent fathers' child caring practices, Phil indicates his own self-centred motivations when he says he was cruel to them because they did not fulfil his expectations of how they should be.

Authoritarian practices and discipline

On the other hand, Bill's description of threatening his children, could be viewed within a more traditional discourse of fatherhood. Bill stated that he would deliberately terrify his children by being 'overbearing' and 'ordering them about' and said that he would use his size as 'a very large person,' to 'impose (his) will on them'.

Physically abusing children or threatening them was justified by a few fathers in the context of talking about their specific responsibility for 'discipline' and punishing children in families for 'wrong-doing'. For example, Pete said that discipline had 'always been his responsibility' and described one occasion where he had taken a leather strap to his step-children (both girls) because they 'kept doing what they were told not to – they kept pushing me'. Another father, John, who had been in the armed forces, described how he felt that this experience had influenced his physical abuse of his children by justifying it as 'discipline'. He said:

I would smack them quite often, but would see this as being discipline – but it was really forces discipline, not proper parenting. It was just like being in the forces – I would ask them once, tell them a second time and the third time I would whack their backsides – it was horrendous for them.

Moreover, it should be noted here that Phil later said that he had been physically abusing his children over a period of six years when he returned to live at home after leaving the forces.

These latter examples more closely approximate to an already recognised view of violent fathers where their physical abuse may be perceived as ‘over-disciplining’ or ‘over-punishing’ children in the context of ‘traditional’ authoritarian fatherhood as has been seen in the child protection literature discussed in earlier chapters. However, only a few of the fathers in this study described their physical abuse of children as being specifically about ‘punishment’ (although at times it was also about this and fathers did not necessarily give only one reason for abusive practices towards children). Nevertheless, fathers’ discourses in the area of child rearing overall appeared to be more closely approximated to Stoltenberg’s idea of an ‘ethic of self-interest’ which, he argues, is involved in the modern construction of dominant masculine identities as social practices. Thus, in many ways, fathers’ justifications for the abuse of children even if they were regularly involved in their day to day care were similar to their reasons for abusing mothers – that is, because children were ‘provoking and annoying them’ and they therefore felt that they were ‘entitled’ to be abusive.

Fathers' views about the impact of their violence and abuse on children

Abuse towards mothers

As has been noted earlier, fathers' portrayals of their understandings of the impact of their violence on children represented one of the most inconsistent and contradictory aspects of their accounts and were most inconsistent in relation to children witnessing the abuse of their mothers. Such inconsistencies were exemplified by several fathers who stated that 'at the time' (that is, before they attended a perpetrator programme), they had no understanding that their abuse towards mothers had any effect on the children or that their children even knew about it. But at other times in their accounts, they had described children being present, or being intentionally used in the abuse of their mothers. These contradictions were illustrated in Jeremy's account where, at the beginning of his interview, he had described hearing his two daughters 'crying and screaming in their bedroom' when he was being violent to his partner, but later he said that 'at the time' he had had 'no awareness' of any impacts on them. However, these contradictory discourses can also be interpreted within the 'ethic of self-interest' discourse. Thus, these fathers either knew that their violence was having an impact on children, or they were so self-interested that they did not even consider its impacts in relation to children.

A few fathers acknowledged that witnessing near-lethal violence could have an impact but also tried to deflect the blame for this on to mothers for causing them to be violent. For example, one father, Pete, used such an incident to

show how restrained he was in the presence of his four-year-old son and described how, in this situation, he had deliberately refrained from killing the child's mother, even though 'she deserved it because she was having an affair'.

Occasionally, other fathers acknowledged that their abusive behaviour towards mothers had had some impact but tried to minimise this by describing children as merely being 'wary' of them rather than 'fearful' or 'frightened.' Another strategy of minimisation was to suggest that it had only affected children at the time it had happened. In addition, a few fathers indicated that they thought babies could not be affected, because they were so young, although interestingly these fathers often described children as 'babies' when they were two three years old.

One father, Guy, was an exception to this general trend. Guy stated he had never been directly physically abusive towards his six-year-old daughter but described the 'very negative impact' on her through 'witnessing' his 'explosions of rage and temper' towards her mother. He said:

She's shy – she has a lot of problems going to school and changing class, - I think it has had the effect of making her insecure.

Fathers' views of harm in relation to their direct abuse of children

Whilst several fathers acknowledged that children were terrified of them when they were directly intimidating or physically abusing them, most seemed either

to have given no thought to how this might affect children in the longer term, or regarded children's feelings as irrelevant anyway. A few fathers did acknowledge that their children had been affected in more serious or long term ways by their direct abuse where it was clear that children were exhibiting such serious behavioural or development problems that they could not be ignored. However, at the same time, these fathers were often concerned to minimise its impacts in the present, particularly where they were talking about it in the context of their own rights to contact.

Thus, Tony, for example, stated that his two young daughters were at the time of interview 'not so much frightened as wary – they used to be very frightened – they would shake and tremble.' Contradictorily, however, he also described how he felt one child's mental development had been delayed because of his abusive behaviour as is illustrated below:

M's four and she's not talking well compared with children half her age. She has these catatonic states – it alarms me. I've seen that when I've been aggressive and smacked her - that's one major effect that I've had on her.

Fathers' love cancelling out the violence

In addition, even where some fathers did acknowledge that children were being harmed by a combination of their violence towards mothers and their violence towards children, this could be qualified by a belief that these effects could be cancelled out by other behaviour or because of their love for the children, as illustrated by a further extract from Matt's account:

The youngest seems to cry all the time which I think is through the violence and the eldest will just cry when I tell her to do anything, which I think is due to all the shouting and violence and I'll say, I'm not telling you off, I'm not saying you can't do it - wait until tomorrow – we'll play a game of when the police were chasing me – oh I love them to bits!

This idea of love as part of their violence towards children or as cancelling out their violence was also a recurring theme throughout the fathers' accounts particularly in relation to child contact and will be discussed in this section in more detail.

Fathers' views on child contact

'Rights and responsibilities'

Despite most fathers having admitted to some direct abuse and intimidation of children and having acknowledged that children were often terrified and fearful of them in this context, most did not see this as a reason to prevent *their* rights to see the children on separation. For example, only one father was prepared to acknowledge that a combination of his violence towards the children's mother and his direct abuse of the children meant that they were justified in not wanting to have contact with him. In contrast, fathers often tended to portray themselves as 'good and responsible fathers' because *they* wanted to see the children and children's feelings in the matter were just assumed.

In addition, although some fathers stated that they thought children should be given a choice in theory, depending on their age (for one father, this was 13; for another, it was 5 or 6), they did not necessarily apply this to their own

children. A few fathers who mentioned or talked about children's reluctance or refusal to see them preferred to explain this for reasons other than their violence. In this context, the most commonly used reason was mothers 'maliciously manipulating' children against their fathers.

For example, Dave, who had admitted to physically abusing his stepson when living with his partner, and who had visiting weekly contact for five hours a week with his three year old daughter and step-son for four months at the time of interview, explained his son's 'shouting and screaming' when he first went for contact in terms of 'his age,' (he was then ten) and because of 'the insecurity' of his wife and 'her jealousy'. He also stressed the legitimacy of this explanation by stating that his court welfare officer had said that his wife who had opposed contact 'was manipulating his son', that 'he was having words put into his mouth' and that 'he (the court welfare officer) had sussed this out for himself'. Inconsistently, however, later in his account, he acknowledged that his children continued to be frightened of him because of his violence and that this meant that they 'wanted to be with their mother', although he still argued that their mother was to blame, because she was portrayed as increasing their fears of him.

Similarly, Geoff, (another father who had applied for contact through the courts) could not accept his fifteen- year-old daughter's refusal to see him and explained it in terms of 'all her mother's doings and manipulations'. Only John who has been referred to earlier and had disclosed ongoing physical

abuse of his children, as well as extensive physical and psychological abuse of the mother for a period of six years, acknowledged that his two children, a girl aged 15, and a boy aged 13 (at the time of interview), did not want to see him because of his violence. Talking about his relationship with his daughter with whom he felt he had had a closer relationship, he said, 'I think (it was) because I hurt her so much, and because of the violence and what happened between me and her Mum'.

Interestingly, another father, Max, who had been violent in two relationships and had recently had to leave a second partner and children because of a recent violent 'incident' at the time of the interview, described how the children (from his first relationship) with whom he had had contact for several years, were affected by this. He said:

Well the upshot of this is that my children [from his first relationship] got to hear that I'd actually assaulted X [second partner]. I had told them we'd split up – I hadn't told them that I'd assaulted her. My daughter [aged 11] was very quiet but my son [aged 15] wouldn't come out with me – he went down to the bottom of the garden and started smashing things up.

Thus this father recognised in a limited way that his violence towards his second partner had affected his children and made them ashamed of him.

Fathers' views on limiting contact

However, some fathers expressed views that fathers should not have contact or, more usually, that they should have some form of 'supervised' contact where there had been direct abuse of children but, with the exception of one

father (this was the father who had been identified as a schedule 1 offender), they did not apply it to their own abusive parenting practices.

This was most obviously expressed by Jeremy who began by saying that fathers should not have contact if there had been child abuse but then went on to qualify what he meant by this, perhaps because he recognised that his own behaviour towards his children could be construed by others as child abuse, as is illustrated in the following extract:

Q. What are your views about violent fathers having contact?

J. It depends if the father has been involved in child abuse (pause) - in extreme abuse physical torture and burning or sexual molestation.

Other fathers mentioned ‘repeated assaults’ of children as a reason for ‘supervised’ contact, whilst for a few, only sexual abuse counted as a situation where contact needed to be controlled in some way. For example, Bill, who had earlier talked about physically threatening and abusing his children (see above) stated:

if there’s genuine feeling there and the father wants to see them, and they haven’t been a child molester or something like that – but I would be loath to see a father denied the right to see his children – possibly with a third party or something.

Thus, in this context, as with their definitions of violence towards women, fathers’ definitions of what counted as ‘child abuse’ could be limited to the extremes of what is perceived as culturally unacceptable and, as can be seen from the latter example, even in these circumstances, fathers’ beliefs in their

'rights' to contact could be portrayed as inviolable. Moreover, only one of the fathers in this study felt that children 'witnessing' their violence towards mothers should be a reason for limiting their contact, despite some acknowledgement by fathers that children continued to be fearful of them because of this, when they saw them on contact visits.

Accounts of manipulation and use of children against mothers

Some fathers portrayed contact as a situation which could be used to continue the abuse of the mother through the children, although their representations of such actions were not usually viewed as abuse, but rather were a continuation of discourses of mother-blaming and, in one case, of the father 'protecting' his child from his mother. These included accounts of circumstances where fathers tried to use children to turn them against their mothers and to threaten mothers through the children.

This latter motivation was illustrated in Dave's account where he described telling his three- year-old daughter and ten- year-old son that he would 'get a court order if their mother did not agree to more contact and she would [then] go to prison'. This was despite the fact that earlier in his interview, he had acknowledged that it was not only their mother who was reluctant to allow the children to have more contact but that the children themselves were frightened of him. Moreover, he appeared totally unconcerned about what effect this kind of threat might have on the children.

Collin was another father who stated that he had deliberately made disparaging comments about their mother to the children in order to 'get back at her' for getting him convicted of 'threats to kill'. Like Dave, Collin dismissed any idea that such abusive comments could have any negative impact on the children themselves as illustrated in the following extract:

Q. Have you said things to the children about their mother?

C. Yeh – I've said she was no good – that she's got other boyfriends.

Q. How do you think they feel about that?

C. They don't know the truth do they? They're just listening to me spouting rubbish from their point of view – they're just thinking I'm not a nice person saying things about their mum. You see I'll say anything because I know I can get at her...

It should be noted here that, at the time of interview, Collin was in the process of applying for a formal contact order through the courts since his partner had stopped contact after further post-separation violence.

Another father, Pete, talked about deliberately telling his 14-year-old son about his mother's 'bad' character during his contact visits because he 'cared' about him and 'wanted to protect him'. Yet, in his account, it became clear that his main aim was to undermine his son's view of his mother and to justify his own abusive behaviour towards her:

I have always tried to be there for him. My son's mother is an irrational character, I have to put my son right about a lot of things – she tends to lie for attention – she has a lot of attention seeking behaviour and she projects a lot of falsehoods – I get him to question things that are going on – things that she tells him – things about me being in prison....

It is worth noting here that Pete had previously separated from this child's mother, some years previously, because of his 'severe' physical violence and had recently separated from a second partner for the same reasons.

These fathers' accounts tend to confirm the research with mothers and children discussed in chapter 2, which has found they may deliberately attempt to undermine mothers to the children as part of a continuum of their violence in the post-separation context.

Accounts of abuse during child contact

Fathers' talk of abusive behaviour towards children during contact was framed by their constructs of what constituted abuse and more obviously by the interview context where it was clearly 'risky' to disclose behaviours that in their terms were clearly defined as abusive. Moreover, their 'opportunities' to abuse children were also affected by the changing contact context. As has been seen in part 1 of this chapter, fathers had different histories of contact, depending on the length of time since separation from first partners, with a few having had contact for a number of years which had reduced as the children had got older. Others only had contact for a short time, which was also changing at the time of interview.

Fathers who had used the law to get contact and/or where safety issues had been raised about their contact by mothers and/or by agencies (for example, social services) described situations where the length of time they had the

children for, was initially limited. Although most of these fathers did not describe this as 'supervised' contact, it was clear that there were some informal 'supervision' arrangements in place. Simon, for example, described having weekly visiting contact with his children at his parent's home and 2 other fathers said that their contact involved visiting the children for a limited time at mothers' homes. For 2 fathers, Dave and Tony, their weekly contact time had recently been extended at the time they were interviewed. Dave's contact had been extended from 2 to 5 hours a week and, as has been seen in the previous section, he wanted contact for longer. Tony described having only just got overnight weekly staying contact with his two young daughters, after a period when his contact had been severely limited. None of these fathers described having contact at a contact centre.

Fathers' accounts of abusive contact practices

However, both Dave and Tony described abusive parenting practices towards children during their contact time which appeared to have increased when they had the children for longer periods on their own. For example, Dave, in describing 'the difficulties' he had in looking after the children during his five hours a week, said 'but men need to be educated by children, if you've got a *short fuse* (my emphasis) like I have, and the child is screaming what do you do?' It was therefore apparent from this account that, although he viewed part of his problem as being due to his 'lack of knowledge' about children, he also associated it with his 'uncontrollable' violence.

Moreover, since his motivation for having the children for contact seemed to be partially tied up with undermining their mother, he indicated that he was prepared to put his three-year-old daughter's safety at risk by refusing to consider the mother's anxieties about what he was doing with the children when he had contact. This is illustrated in this extract below:

D. My wife doesn't like me taking my daughter to men's toilets or changing rooms – she's afraid of abuse. because she's been abused herself.

Q. Don't you think she has a point?

A. No!

Tony, who had earlier excused intimidating abuse when looking after his two daughters (aged four and two) whilst his partner had to go into hospital because he was 'no good at it' and they were constantly 'badgering him for attention', described how he still 'lost his patience with them' when they came for overnight staying contact. In this context not being 'abusive' towards them appeared to depend on whether the children were being 'as good as gold' but as soon as they deviated from this standard, such as waking up early in the morning, he found 'the same patterns (of abuse) coming back'.

Dave and Tony were not the only fathers who described 'difficulties' when having children on contact, even if the contact had been ongoing for some time or was infrequent. Bill, for example, who described seeing his children from his first relationship infrequently (because they were at an age to choose when to come) and was also living with his second partner's children, stated that he

still found it difficult ‘not to revert to the old ways –not (to) lose (his) temper and lay down the law’ and ‘not (to) shout at them’.

In contrast, Rob, who had been convicted of assault on one of his children prior to separation described how, whilst he could not actually hit them any more, he still had to physically threaten and shout at them in order to exercise his control and did not see this behaviour as constituting abuse.

Fathers’ perceptions of children’s fears

A few fathers did acknowledge that children continued to be fearful of them, during contact visits. Simon, for example, who said he would have gone to prison for the severe violence he inflicted on his partner, post-separation, if he had not had the option of attending a perpetrator programme, had been having contact for a ‘few months’ on a weekly basis at his parent’s home. He described how his 4-year-old daughter had asked him if he was going to ‘kill her mother’ when she saw him on a contact visit. Guy, who had been having contact at the mother’s home for nine months at the time of interview, described his six- year- old daughter as still being ‘scared of him’ because she has seen him in ‘massive tempers’. For these fathers, their children’s fears of them were to some extent viewed as a ‘problem’ but clearly not enough of a problem to question their own contact.

Fathers' reasons for wanting contact

Whatever their involvement in childcare and their perceptions of relationships with children before separation, it was apparent that children took on far more significance for fathers post-separation. For some of these fathers, this was more specifically connected to a desire to continue to 'do power over' mothers through the children, as has been seen in the some of the accounts above. It was also likely that these kinds of motivations were more prevalent than expressed, particularly for one group of fathers who were all interviewed from the same perpetrator programme, since one father from this group specifically disassociated himself from the prevailing view of 'blaming' and 'getting back' at their ex-partners. This father, Max, was the only one who in his talk about contact acknowledged that children had separate needs and interests from his own and recognised that, in looking after children during contact, he needed to think about how to meet their needs.

However, children were also significant to these fathers for other reasons, which included a sense of possession and entitlement to the ownership of children both in the more traditional patriarchal meaning and for some fathers in the more modern construction of 'genetic' ownership where it was apparent that this sense of ownership in children was an important part of their masculine identities. Thus, fathers like Rob stated that 'no one was going to come between me and my children because they are mine' whilst others like Tony talked about their genetic children as being 'part of themselves'.

Fathers' discourses of rights

As in other more general research on fathers' contact, highlighted in the literature review, these fathers conveyed a strong sense of entitlement to contact with their children in their accounts, although this was expressed in more blatant or more subtle ways. Fathers like Dave stated that they 'knew the law' and that their entitlement was based on the 'rights of the child to have contact'. Other fathers like Matt said that 'every father should have the right to see his kids, supervised or not'. However, some also saw it as their right to choose whether they wanted to see the children or not. This view was expressed by Pete who said:

the father may decide that he doesn't want to see the children that's one thing. I think it's the child's right to see their father. I also think it's the father's right to see the child.

Fathers' discourses of love

Linked to fathers' sense of entitlement to contact with children were discourses of love and emotionality which cut across most fathers' accounts to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, frequent reasons given for wanting contact were related to receiving children's love or alternatively because of fathers' love for their children. For some fathers like Dave, this was portrayed in terms of entitlement to the 'unconditional' love that children were perceived as providing. In talking about why he wanted contact with his children, Dave said, 'it's because of the unconditional love they give you – its one of the most important things in life'. Similarly, Bill stated, 'it's about love – you can't get love like that from anyone else'. For other fathers, it was because they loved

the children, or as expressed in Matt's account, because he 'loved them to bits'. But in both these kinds of discourse, there was a sense that children were perceived as a kind of 'emotional property' or 'investment' where they existed for the benefit of meeting fathers' own emotional 'needs' and where a father's love was a form of power over the children.

This also meant that within these constructs, children were viewed in a highly romanticised way, where children were expected to always be the providers of love, whatever happened in their lives or whatever their fathers did. Further, implicit within these portrayals was an understanding that as the 'permanent' providers of 'love' children would give men the emotional support which they had expected from women as their (ex-) partners but which women could now no longer be relied on to give. This idealisation of children in these accounts was, perhaps unsurprisingly, more frequently applied to babies or to young children under the age of 5 or 6, since it is under this age that children are perceived as particularly 'innocent' and 'helpless'. Moreover, as has been seen earlier, it was frequently accompanied by a sense of masculine pride and ownership which could also be expressed as though they were competing with mothers for the emotional possession of children.

For example, Dave, whose children were depicted as more of a nuisance before separation, in the context of child contact talked about his 3-year-old daughter as being 'daddy's little girl.' Another father, Tom, who had battered his ex-partner whilst pregnant because *he* did not want to have a child at the

time, became very agitated and physically threatening when talking about his limited contact with this child and repeatedly said ‘*my* baby loves me,’ (his emphasis) and saw his partner’s refusal to live with him, as depriving him of *his* child’s love.

These fathers’ accounts of children’s love and their love for their children therefore indicated that they had very different meanings from what might be more conventionally understood as an unselfish emotional commitment to children’s wellbeing. Their expressions of ‘love’ were centred on themselves and what they could get through ‘love’ and not what they could offer children. Moreover, their accounts suggested that children’s ‘love’ was perceived as both a source of men’s power, that is as a possession, and a form of power over children and therefore could not necessarily be interpreted as indicating that fathers were becoming more ‘nurturing’ in the sense of being able to prioritise the needs and interests of children rather than their own.

This was most obviously apparent where some fathers discounted the impact of their violence and abuse on children and children’s own experiences and feelings about fathers’ violence and abuse. In these discourses, fathers represented *their* love for children or children’s love for them as cancelling out such violence and abuse. Alternatively, their violence and abuse could also be seen as an expression of their love for children, as illustrated in Matt’s account highlighted earlier and approximated to some of the men’s accounts in Hearn’s

research (1998) where violence towards women was viewed as an expression of love.

Thus, these accounts suggest that 'love' is not some essential human emotion that remains untouched by social relations of power, but rather 'love' and ideas about parents' love for children and children's love are constructed through these gendered social relations and can be highly gendered.

Fathers' accounts of their 'needs' for contact

Fathers' focus on their own needs, rather than on their children's, was not only illustrated through their constructs of love, but was also suggested through their concepts of fathering both prior to and post-separation, where children could be portrayed as existing almost completely for their own benefit, as illustrated in the following extract from Collin's account:

Q. What does being a father mean to you?

C. Satisfaction, happiness, security, wellbeing, I feel good, I feel proud, I feel I can do anything in the world.

Q. So the kids give *you* security?

C. Yes, I feel I can do **anything** in the world and land on top – it would benefit the whole family.

Q. So if you get contact what will you do with them?

Silence

Collin was not the only father who had nothing to say when questions focussed on what they offered children specifically in the context of contact, and some fathers who already had contact for short periods and were wanting longer

staying contact stated they had ‘never really thought about it’. A few appeared to think that watching a video or taking them to McDonalds was sufficient in terms of addressing children’s needs. Such lack of thought suggests that children’s own interests may be particularly ‘neglected’ where violent fathers have contact with children for longer periods on their own. This has been indicated in the other research with women and children discussed in chapter two, and is further illustrated in the following chapter.

Familial ideology and ‘responsible’ fatherhood

Most fathers also reiterated the familial ideology that children need both biological parents as one of the reasons as to why they should have contact. This could be expressed simply, as in Pete’s account where he said, ‘I think a child needs both parents’ or in a far more elaborate and gendered way, as in Jeremy’s account, where there were echoes of the more traditional ‘new right’ discourses of responsible fatherhood referred to earlier. Jeremy’s account was also interesting because it illustrated the amount of mother-blaming that can be contained in such discourses, as well as how children can learn about the significant gendered differences between men and women. He began by saying that children who were younger than 13 should not have a choice about whether they should have contact, as is illustrated from the following extract:

Q. What if they are under 13 ?

J. Well then. fathers should always see their children, because fathers love their children

Q. What does that mean though?

J. I think fathers should be a good role model, they should assist their children to become good adults, both mother and father should do that. I personally have seen

some strange young adults who come from one parent families and there's no access because there isn't a father – they don't know who a father is.

Q. What sort of role model then?

J. Someone who hopefully wants to work whether that's for charity or for profit. To indicate that it's important and to go out and earn good money to indicate to a child that that's what we should all be aiming to do and not sitting on our backsides and claiming off the state. I don't agree with that at all. To convince them of the importance of keeping fit and the importance of schooling, because that allows us to choose what we want to do. I don't think it's good for one parent to bring up a child. I know a lot of men who have custody of their children and are bringing them up on their own because women have done the molesting – I think that there's so much that men can do that's different from what women can do. I think there has to be stability, and it allows the children to see that there are differences between men and women. If they don't learn about men from their father, they will learn it from a stranger – I'm only just learning that men shouldn't be dominant.

Later in his account, Jeremy was to state that his daughters had benefited from his violence, because they had learnt that 'there is violence in the world' (see also chapter 6).

These fathers' accounts have raised a number of key themes in relation to the way they conceptualise their fathering practices. These are discussed further in the next chapter, in looking at the impact of perpetrator programmes on their accounts and in the concluding chapter, after considering mothers' perspectives.

Chapter 6 The impact of perpetrator programmes

Introduction

This chapter looks at the impact of perpetrator programmes on the fathers' accounts. This study did not set out to evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes in bringing about change with the violent fathers who were interviewed. Nevertheless, it was anticipated that, since all the fathers who participated in the research were either on, or had very recently attended, a perpetrator programme, this might have had some impact on the way they conceptualised their fathering practices and their relationships with their children. Further, some men talked explicitly about changes in their views as a consequence of programme attendance, which meant that this aspect of the research context needed to be explored in the analysis and interpretations of their accounts.

Since the fathers' sample was drawn from four different programmes, the first section outlines the overall approaches of the four programmes, based on the interviews with a key programme worker or manager and any documentation that the programmes provided. This involves looking specifically at whether and how programmes addressed fathering practices, children's safety and issues of child contact and how effective they felt they were.

The second section discusses the impact of the programmes in relation to the fathers' accounts, looking at fathers' explicit statements about changes in their understandings or views and how these related to their understandings in their accounts as a whole. These are also compared to programme leaders' stated

aims. Finally, I discuss the apparently contradictory impacts of the programmes in this area.

Limitations in the analysis

It needs to be re-emphasised here that this is not an evaluation of changes in men's individual behaviour, since these can only be appropriately evaluated by talking to mothers and with children, as has been seen from the literature discussed in chapter three. In addition, this analysis presents a snapshot picture of violent fathers' own interpretations related to their varying experiences of perpetrator programmes as they had been attending for different lengths of time and had entered the programmes in different ways. Further, although there were some differences between the four programmes, the numbers were too small to form any view about whether these had an impact on fathers' understandings; although, since 12 men were drawn from one voluntary sector programme, some issues are raised in relation to this one programme. In addition, it needs to be noted that only one key worker from each programme was able to be formally interviewed; thus the picture of the work of the different programmes is fairly limited.

Section 1

Approaches of the different programmes

Types of programme.

The fathers who were interviewed for this study were drawn from two voluntary sector and two probation-run programmes, although one of the probation programmes was managed jointly with a voluntary sector child protection agency. This was the most recently established programme and had been only running for about a year at the time the interviews took place. The main differences between these two types of programme were how men were referred on to them. The probation programmes appeared to take only men who had been mandated by the criminal courts or were out of prison on licence. However, the voluntary sector programmes took referrals from a variety of agencies, including the family courts, as well as court-mandated men and self-referrals.

In order to distinguish between the different programmes in the discussion, the two programmes from the south of England will be referred to as S1 and S2 and the two programmes from the north as N1 and N2.

Overall philosophies and theoretical frameworks

All 4 programmes stated that their primary aims were to ensure the safety of women and children and to focus on the men's individual responsibility for their violence. Moreover, all generally took a cognitive behavioural approach, drawn from social learning theory. This included the use of cognitive

restructuring techniques through the use of groupwork, to enable the men to acknowledge the intentionality of their violent and controlling behaviour and challenge their strategies of minimisation and denial, as well as strategies for shifting blame on to their partners. They also aimed to develop empathy for their partners and sometimes children. Thus, programme materials indicated that work with the men in the early stages focussed on getting them to expand their definitions of what counts as violence and looking closely at how they made decisions to be violent. Such learning often took place through the use of re-enactments which were then videoed and played back to the course participants for discussion. This could also include addressing certain situations which might be perceived by the men as acting as ‘triggers’ for their violence. In the first stages, these learning strategies were combined with behavioural techniques such as the taking of ‘time-outs’ when men felt they were about to be violent. These programmes also aimed to address attitudinal change in relation to women in the longer term and were overlaid with a feminist analysis of men’s structural power. Thus, in many respects they resembled the Duluth model programmes, outlined in chapter three.

However, one voluntary sector programme (S1) also included psychodynamic approaches and undertook a considerable amount of individual counselling with the men before they attended the groupwork sessions (see below). In talking about this in his interview, the programme leader for this project took the view that the men needed to connect with their own underlying feelings

and emotions before they could develop empathy with victims and undergo sustained cognitive shifts in relation to their attitudes towards women.

All four projects had some form of pre-assessment where the men were expected to acknowledge some level of wrong doing and willingness to change before being accepted on a programme and, for men on probation, this was assessed at pre-sentence report stage. But one probation-led project manager (N1) emphasised that 'realistically this was often at a minimum level'. From the literature provided, the two voluntary sector projects participating in this study did seem to require a higher level of motivation to change.

Length of programmes

The length of programmes varied. However, all but the shortest project (N2) had 2 stages, where in the first stage they aimed to end men's physical violence (one project also emphasised ending men's sexual violence at this stage) and a second stage which focussed on other forms of abuse and control. The shortest and most newly established project which ran for 10 weeks stated that they could only begin to look at forms of non-physical violence in the time available and were aiming to extend their programme to 20 weeks for this reason. The voluntary sector programme, from which the majority of the men were drawn and which included a more psychodynamic approach, delivered this first stage partially through individual counselling sessions of 8-12 weeks before the group work programme of 48 weeks. One probation programme (N1) had a first stage of 20 weeks of two hours per week and a second stage of

six 6 two-hour sessions over six months. The other voluntary sector programme (S2) offered 32 weekly three-hour sessions with approximately a third comprising the first stage. It can be seen, therefore, that apart from the shortest programme, the other three were fairly lengthy with men having to attend weekly for between eight months and over a year. The rationale for this length was that sustaining change in attitudes as well as behaviour took a long time. Moreover, these three programmes were all members of the National Practitioners' Network which lays down a minimum national standard of 75 hours over 30 weeks (see Respect, 2000).

Women's safety

All the projects stated that their priority was the safety of women and children and two of the projects specifically emphasised in their literature that they also assessed whether attendance was likely to increase the 'safety' risks.

However, in relation to the latter point, the validity of such assessments appeared to depend on the contact they had with partners/ex-partners to get their views and the strength of support offered. But for one of these projects (S1), the support service to women was not functioning during the period when some of the interviews took place and the most recently established probation project (N2) did not 'yet' have a route to be in contact with partners and ex-partners.

Two projects sought feedback from women and 3 offered information about men's progress on the programme. However, one project stressed that 'most

women do not avail themselves of this service'. This project (N1) was in the process of trying to improve and change its practice in relation to making contact with women and the type of support it offered. In general, linked support services varied greatly, with one voluntary project (S2) having extensive provision of its own and stating that it was 'in contact and working with 90 per cent of men's partners and ex-partners'. Two others were linked to separate support services provided by local women's aid organisations and the most recently established project was linked to an advice service for women.

Given that 8 of the men had also admitted to being 'seriously' physically violent and intimidating towards partners or ex-partners in their interviews whilst on the programmes, programme workers were asked what happened when this occurred.

This appeared to vary from project to project and depended on the type of offence. One probation project worker stated that 'men would be retained in the programme, unless they had been remanded in custody'. Another voluntary sector project worker said that a man who was not court-mandated, 'assuming he was engaging' (with the work of the project) and 'recognised what he's done,' would be retained on the programme, subject to certain conditions like 'staying away' from his (ex) partner. In this project, women might be supported to take out a civil injunction or to make a complaint to the police, but it was emphasised that there was poor practice in the local criminal

courts, where a perpetrator might only receive a fine, so women often saw little benefit in pursuing criminal charges, even where there was sufficient evidence to prosecute.

This project worker also stressed that it had been difficult in the past to get probation officers to 'breach' court-mandated perpetrators for repeated violence. The other voluntary sector project (S2) stated that it was decided on a 'case by case basis' but, at a minimum, the man would be sent back to the beginning of the programme or he might be suspended and, if he were court-mandated, reported to the probation services. Whilst practice might differ depending on the nature of the violence, most programme workers appeared to regard it as 'safer' to retain men on the programmes rather than expel them. These practices also seemed to reflect, to some extent, those identified in the US literature on standards discussed earlier (see, for example, Austin and Dankwort, 1999).

Children's safety and child abuse

One apparent difference between these programmes and other programmes discussed in the literature is that they had all developed some focus in their work on children. Whilst they varied in the amount of time spent on this and the issues focussed on, at a minimum, it included some content input on the impact of witnessing domestic violence on children and situations where children could also be 'caught up' in this violence, as well as addressing some

limited aspects of men's direct physical abuse of children, usually in the context of father's role in disciplining children.

Three programmes addressed issues of children's safety and the impact of domestic violence in separate sessions, including the shortest programme which had one specific session looking at witnessing domestic violence from the child's point of view; this involved showing and discussing a video focussing on children's experiences. Another probation-led programme (N1) had the most extensive input, which was co-delivered with a children's agency. This included 4 sessions in the first stage and one session on 'positive parenting' in the second stage. Topics covered in these sessions included looking at children's experiences of domestic violence; looking at men's specific offences where children were involved; looking at what children need; the negative experiences men have brought into their lives and how they can improve; how children are affected by violence at different stages of childhood, including pre-birth and exercises on 'responsible' parenting where men had to role play various common scenarios in relation to children's experiences of violent perpetrators. Such exercises involved one man role-playing the child whilst others would give him advice. Types of scenarios included 'when my dad takes me out, he will talk about mummy and is not interested in me' and 'sometimes when dad comes home, I am afraid for mummy and for myself'.

One voluntary sector project (S2) had 3 sessions in its second stage which looked at men's direct abuse to children in the context of discipline, parenting

and childcare issues more broadly. This programme also looked at sexual aspects of men's abusive behaviour and included group discussion on sexual 'boundaries' with their own children. This was the only project that touched on aspects of child sexual abuse, although defining it as 'boundary' behaviour as Bancroft and Silverman (2002) have suggested may have meant that this form of abuse was also minimised.

The leader from the other voluntary sector programme (S1) felt that it was inappropriate for them to deal with any issues of child sexual abuse. He stated:

It's not something we work with here, it's a different order of abuse and a specialised one too- it's not the same - we wouldn't mix it with violence against women.

Such failures by programme leaders to recognise the possibility of sexual abuse of children by domestically violent men may lead to children being put at risk. However, as has been seen earlier, these views may be promoted in the literature aimed at practitioners (see, for example, Johnston and Roseby, 1997).

The latter programme did not have separate sessions related to children but it was felt these issues were integrated throughout. The worker interviewed stressed that they had a number of men who had been violent towards children 'often in the context of discipline' and this was therefore an issue that was included as part of the programme. He stated:

We talk about why it doesn't work and connect it to what they are doing to their partners; that works very well - as a group they are very receptive, because for a lot of them it's a struggle about 'how do I deal with this - how do I deal with this without hitting them, what can I do?' So it has a very practical application.

In general, however, with the exception of one programme (S2), apart from the ‘discipline’ context, there did appear to be far less focus or understanding of other circumstances where violent fathers might directly physically, emotionally or sexually abuse the children, particularly, for example, when they were looking after them on their own as has been highlighted in chapter 5. It was also unclear how far the programmes recognised that children could sustain longer term fears of their fathers and the long term negative impacts for some children in situations where they were having ongoing contact with violent fathers. This raised one of the contradictory aspects of programmes where they were being perceived by the family courts as being able to make violent fathers’ safe to have contact and is discussed further below.

Approaches to father-child contact

Risk assessments

The two voluntary sector programmes indicated that they specifically took referrals of men from the family courts in relation to child contact. Moreover, both these programmes indicated that they could undertake risk assessments for the family courts, regardless of whether the perpetrator was being referred to attend a programme. However, it was apparent that these two projects took very different approaches, with one project leader (S2) making it clear that they did not necessarily support a domestically violent father’s application for contact as is illustrated below.

Clearly we would say that child contact would be inappropriate if it is unsafe for the child and the mother and our point of view would be that safety overrides the rights of the child for contact. We would also question the usefulness of contact in these

situations. Any risk assessment we do is on a very objective basis where safety comes over and above contact - we have protocols around that. If we are in contact with the mother and she is opposing contact on the grounds of safety —we would write a report for her about her partner's history of violence for the court.

As has been discussed in chapter three, risk assessments offer no guarantee of certainty but are likely to increase in accuracy if they include mothers' views of safety. Yet this was the only project which indicated that it would include mothers' views.

In contrast, the other voluntary sector project placed more emphasis on what can be viewed as the 'responsible father approach' where, in relation to children's safety, the assumption appeared to be that it was part of their responsibilities as 'good' fathers to seek contact but, if necessary, it should be supervised. Talking about risk assessments, the worker interviewed said:

We would never probably say someone is safe. I think generally what it does is highlight areas of concern. It's supervised contact that we would generally recommend – it's never done - oh this guy is fine.

This project also indicated that they would undertake risk assessments for child protection agencies and for individual fathers who paid privately for an assessment for the family courts, as was the case for one of the fathers interviewed from this programme, and this latter practice would appear to particularly put mothers and children at risk.

Father-child contact and programme content

These two projects also had different approaches towards addressing violent fathers' contact in the content of the programme itself. For example, the former project leader said:

We look at how men may use children on separation and in relation to contact, and the appropriateness of chasing contact. We work with men to stop seeking contact where their motivation is about control. If men already have contact we get them to look at doing it less abusively and more positively –so that they can separate their own needs from those of the child.

However, the other project leader, whilst acknowledging that mothers' and children's safety was a priority, seemed to optimistically view violent fathers as being able to focus on the needs of their children through the responsible father approach. He said:

Our position would be that the safety of the mother and children is the priority and the men recognise as far as the children are concerned that they are responsible for the children and not the other way round... and that's very effective because other men really support that...and there's a very strong sense that you are there for your children and it's not okay to use your children to even actually see your partner, that's quite a strong position. I think the group is very valuable on that, because they reinforce that that's the way it should be.

This project worker stressed that they also work to stop men verbally abusing the mother to the children and they try to get fathers to recognise that they should be supportive of the mother's primary caretaker role:

the other thing we put emphasis on though, is that from the child's point of view both parents are *loveable*, so it's not very good for the child, if he's being at all negative about his partner – the child already has to deal with his behaviour, but some of his reparation is to start to recognise that - so whatever relationship he formally has with the child he is supporting the child's mum – and the need to recognise that the mum

is liable (for the child) and the father is supporting that too - so we put that very much in the frame

However, within this project, as illustrated from the quotations cited above and from some of the fathers' accounts, there did appear to be some underlying assumptions that all children found 'both parents loveable' even if they had been violent and abusive. In this regard, there also appeared to be a failure to recognise children's sustained fears of their fathers. Thus, there seemed to be some underlying assumptions that children would want contact or that fathers should have contact anyway in order to demonstrate that they were acting responsibly. As a consequence, the worker was asked directly about this and he responded:

No one has a right to contact if you are violent and abusive, if there's no violence and abuse well yeah, children ideally would want to have contact with both parents - unless the child doesn't want to- but of course once there has been violence and abuse that doesn't stand so simply.

Programme leaders from the two probation projects stated that they did not do separate risk assessments for the family courts. But the leader for the most established programme (N1) indicated that she did provide 'reports' for the family courts if requested, after or during a father's attendance on a programme and she emphasised that these reports frequently made it clear that fathers attending their programmes were not suitable to have contact.

Programme effectiveness

Given the research literature discussed earlier, which indicates that there is little evidence suggesting that programmes are effective in ending most men's violence and abuse, project workers were asked how they evaluated their programmes. All the programmes had some form of internal evaluation, based on the men's self-reports but, as has been seen in the literature review, this is not a reliable indicator of change. In addition, one voluntary sector project (S2) had recently had an externally assessed process evaluation which included the views of some women still living with their partners but no comparisons were made with other groups of men not attending programmes.

The two programmes (S1 and N1) from which the majority of men were drawn were specifically asked how successful they felt they were and how they measured such success, given that this is problematic in itself. One of the programme workers (S1) in discussing this stated:

What do you mean by success? I would certainly say the men change for the better, whether they change *enough* for the better, without more indepth research is unanswerable.

Significantly, in relation to the findings from this research discussed in the previous chapter, he highlighted that getting the men to empathise with women and children was the most difficult area to change, as illustrated in the following extract:

C. Across the spectrum from the guys who are really quite domineering and chauvinistic to the guys who aren't generally that way but are still violent and abusive even (they) have little sense of who she (the partner/ex-partner) is as a person in her own right. She's important to them only in terms of what they can get from her - so the idea of her existing as a person with feelings and how she might feel is surprisingly absent.

L. That's interesting because a lot of them talk about children in those terms as well.

C. Yes - children aren't there for you, you're there for them. You might get things from them - that's secondary, that's by the by.

The salience of these observations is key to explaining one common theme in fathers' perspectives on their own violence, regardless of individual differences between them. They illustrate the dehumanisation and objectification of others indicated in the fathers' accounts and a sense of 'master status' contained in such discourses where the needs of familial others are not even considered as relevant.

Both project workers also raised the issue of men being able to sustain non-violent behaviour, particularly beyond the length of the programmes, as well as how this is measured. The worker for the probation project (N1) stated that 'there *appeared* to be high rates of non-offending whilst the men were on the programme' but information was not currently being sought from partners or ex-partners on this because 'it could jeopardise women's safety' and not all women's whereabouts were known. She also talked about Home Office concerns with recidivism rates (that is, rates of reconviction) but recognised that these were not an adequate measure of the men sustaining non-violent behaviour because so much domestic violence goes unreported and unprosecuted. This project was completing an internal longitudinal evaluation

at the time of interview, over a 15-month period based on questionnaires with the men and using rates of reconviction. The former project was about to be evaluated by an external organisation but the specific foci of this evaluation was not known at the time of interview.

However, whilst the literature review has indicated that the abuse of children and mothers is inter-linked, it was unclear, in these two programmes, how far children's own safety needs, particularly in the father-child contact context, were recognised as needing to be evaluated in their own right.

Moreover, although all the programmes indicated that they were in varying ways attempting to address the needs of children witnessing domestic violence and some aspects of direct physical child abuse, particularly physical abuse in the context of discipline, it appeared from the fathers' accounts discussed in the previous chapter that they could be operating on too limited definitions of what constitutes harm or 'significant harm' to children perpetrated by violent fathers. This under-estimation of harm could involve a failure to recognise abusive fathering practices when fathers were looking after children and children's sustained fears of their fathers in the father-child contact context. Moreover, there were also indications that programmes were under-estimating or failing to recognise the possibility that violent fathers could be sexually abusing the children. Some of these points are further illustrated in fathers' accounts of change below.

Section 2

The fathers' accounts of change

Changed understandings or talking the talk

In looking at whether fathers' understandings had changed in a positive direction as a consequence of programme intervention, one of the main problems was assessing whether fathers were just using the language and concepts they had learnt to 'talk the talk' or were 'spinning' different stories about their behaviour. As has been seen in chapter 5, some of these fathers were able to use language and concepts that they had learnt on programmes such as conceptualising their violence as part of an overall pattern of 'controlling behaviour' but, whilst using this language, they might also resist acknowledging such control through the use of justifications. This was illustrated in Brian's account of his violence where he talked about having a 'controlling problem' but then went on to justify his control anyway, because his partner was not doing enough housework and childcare. Some fathers also related how specific short-term behaviours had changed because they had been told 'not to do it' by programme workers without indicating that they thought it was 'wrong'. For example, Dave, who had been attending a programme for about six months and had talked about how he had told the children that their mother would be put in prison unless they came for more contact, stated that he had only stopped saying this when the programme worker had told him,

'that it was not a good idea'. On the other hand, there were a few fathers who talked in a more self-reflective way about the impacts of their violence.

Jeremy, for example, who had been attending for about eight months, talking about his violence to his partner and his 'dominant' behaviour in the family home said:

I thought the only thing she had to be afraid of before was the violence, but I understand now, it's not just the violence. it was the domination and control and not having the freedom to make her own mind up.

However this understanding did not extend to why his partner was refusing to see him when she and the children had initially fled because of his violence.

He seemed to be more focussed on his own needs and feelings when he said:

I hadn't been violent for a long time, [this later turned out to be a few weeks, according to his account] but she wouldn't let me in and the girls were screaming upstairs. That really hurt me. I don't understand why she wouldn't let me in and she won't discuss it.

Changed understandings of the impacts of their violence on children

A few fathers talked about changed understandings in relation to children witnessing domestic violence as a consequence of programme intervention whilst, at the same time, minimising them. Simon, for example, who had 2 convictions for domestic violence and who had been on the 10-week programme (N2), described how a particular programme session where they had seen a video on children's perceptions of witnessing domestic violence had made him think about how his three children, who were all under five, must see it. This had therefore made him 'more cautious' about what he said

to the children about their mother when he had contact with them. On the other hand, he also minimised his 4-year-old daughter's expressed fears that he was going to 'kill her mother' when she saw him on one contact visit and felt that she would soon get over this. However, he was one of the few fathers who acknowledged other impacts of his violence towards children, apart from them being generally frightened at the time it had happened.

Jeremy also partially attributed his changed understandings about the impact of his violence on his 2 teenage daughters to being on a programme and expressed some remorse for his violence, whilst at the same time continuing to justify it in terms that it had meant that they had learnt about violence and what men could be like. He said:

They were frightened –frightened for their mother and for themselves. I feel sick about that now. I'm hoping it won't have a lasting effect. I'm hoping because they've seen that and have learnt there is violence in the world, but that they can see a change over the last few months.

Matt felt that being on a programme had lessened his physical violence towards the mother of his 2 young daughters but he also seemed unaware how he was shifting his abuse to more emotional forms with no thought about how this might impact on the children, as is illustrated in the following extract:

If it wasn't for this programme I would be getting done for domestic violence...she's moaning [his partner] and she's tired from getting up in the morning with the kids and I'm not sleeping and it does get my back up and I count to ten and it doesn't work and I count to ten again and I make a joke with the baby [aged 3] *I say 'she (the mother) is going round the twist [his emphasis].*

Understandings in relation to the direct abuse of children

Some fathers also talked about how they had changed their understandings as a result of being on a programme in relation to their direct physical and intimidatory abuse of children. However, fathers' understandings in this area often raised concerns that children were continuing to be harmed during contact. For example, Tony, who had been on a programme for about 9 months and whose account of his aggressive and physical violence towards his 2-year-old and 4-year-old daughters because they demanded too much attention, was highlighted earlier, stated that, although he had learnt on the programme that he shouldn't do it, 'he found himself still 'doing it again' when his children came for staying contact. Given that this father had already talked about his older daughter (aged 4) 'not talking well' and going into 'catatonic states', this example did raise concerns about whether programme workers were recognising such significant child protection issues in relation to child contact. Another father, Max, talked about how the programme had made him question his physical abuse towards his second partner's children in the context of discipline and 'smacking' but his understandings of this seemed ambiguous to say the least. He said:

I struggle with how hard to do it - am I going to really hurt them - am I going to break a limb? I would never use a weapon like my mum did with me, but then I laughed at her... but I've come to a grey area now - because of the work I'm doing here - I don't think it's right, am I just teaching a child that I'm bigger and stronger than him?

In addition, 4 other fathers described some change as a consequence of what they had learnt on the programme in relation to not 'losing their tempers so

much' or 'shouting at children' when they were in their presence and when they were specifically responsible for looking after them on contact visits. Like Tony, however, they also talked about how 'difficult' they found it to change this abusive behaviour. Three of these fathers also talked about how the programme had challenged their own views that they 'were always right' and that, as a result, they allowed older children to have, at times, their own opinions when in the past they would never have allowed it.

Bill, who earlier in his interview had stated that he believed that 'children should be seen and not heard', said that he had realised that he needed to try and 'communicate with the children more' rather than just telling them to 'get out' (of the room) when they annoyed him during contact visits.

These latter accounts do, however, raise questions about whether their children felt safe during contact or whether they gained any benefit from contact visits and how far the programmes were addressing these issues. One father, John, did, however, describe how being on programme had increased his understanding of the impact of his ongoing direct physical abuse of his children (this had been for a period of 6 years) before he and his partner separated and that he could understand why these older children did not want to have contact with him.

Programmes as support groups for violent men

The literature discussed earlier, indicated that one concern is that they can merely serve as support groups for violent men, without challenging their violence (see, for example, Hearn, 1998b; Lee, 1999). Some men may, for example, gain a shared sense of masculine identity with other violent men and view the main purpose of the group as gaining support for themselves rather than addressing the harm they have perpetrated on women and children. This view was illustrated by Max who was attending the more psychodynamic programme (S1) for the second time and had been on it for 6 months. He stated:

It's such a relief to sit in a group of men that have experienced ... for so many years I thought I was the only bloke who couldn't control his rage – I didn't see myself as psychotic or stupid, but my violence comes from moments of extreme emotional distress.

He then went on to describe a recent 'incident' where he had threatened his second ex-partner with a knife where he continued to deny any responsibility for it because it was a consequence of his underlying emotional distress which was precipitated by alcohol. Interestingly, however, this event did not lead him to being prosecuted and therefore criminalised for this violence and he described how he was being allowed to stay on the programme provided that he agreed to stay away from this second partner.

Contradictorily, however, Max disassociated himself from what he described as the general group view on fathers' 'issues' with their ex-partners over contact:

In our group meetings that's come across from the other guys, a lot of their contact has been messed up by issues with their partner, but that's not the issue for me – my kids are the issue – it's my relationship with them, regardless of how their mum (his first partner) and me are getting on.

As was indicated in the previous chapter, Max was the only father who talked about the need to address children's specific needs and interests during contact. However, as has been seen above, another contradiction in Max's account is that he also described the difficulties he had in controlling his physical abuse towards his second partner's children when he was living with them.

Violent men as victims

In addition, there were indications that some men's views that programmes are primarily support groups for themselves may be reinforced where part of the approach is to focus on men's own 'pain'. As has been seen earlier, the argument by those who subscribe to this approach is that it enables an increased empathy for others. For some of the violent men in this study, however, it seemed to have the counter-effect of increasing their sense of themselves as 'emotional' victims and detracting from any understanding of women and children's experiences and their needs for protection from violence and abuse.

This was illustrated in two fathers' accounts where they were talking about what they would do if their teenage daughters became involved with a violent boyfriend. Both these men were attending the programme which placed more emphasis on using psychodynamic approaches(S1)

In Jeremy's account, for example, he talked about 'love' as being a reason for his daughters staying in a violent relationship. He said:

Well if they loved him, then try to work it out and get him to try and seek help – there isn't much more you can do – *violence is a cry for help* [his emphasis].

Another father, John, talked about teaching his daughter to 'recognise the signs' so that 'he (her partner) can get help'.

Worryingly, another father from the same programme, in talking about his views about whether abusive fathers should have contact, stated that he had learnt that even fathers who were sexual abusers were victims and therefore should also be entitled to have contact, as is illustrated in the following extract:

Q. Are there any circumstances when fathers shouldn't have contact?

A. If there's been sexual abuse, but then from the work we've done here (on the programme) which is teaching us not be judgemental and to view perpetrators of that sort of abuse as victims as well who need help, I would say no I can't think of any circumstances...

Whilst the programme worker for this project stated that they did not support contact where there had been sexual abuse, this father's view does raise concerns about the mixed messages that programmes may convey and how

they are interpreted by violent men. Further, as can be seen from the examples above, it was apparent that these fathers did not view domestic violence or child abuse as criminal behaviour.

Responsible fatherhood, reparation and child contact

The above examples also connected to the issue of programmes supporting a father's contact, particularly if they took the stance that violent fathers are being responsible by seeking contact. Connected to this idea of responsibility was the notion that it was a means of fathers making reparation to their children. Here again the focus could be on the interests of fathers rather than on the needs of the children to be protected from abuse.

Tony, for example, who had admitted that he was still continuing his intimidatory abuse of his two young daughters and that they were afraid of him, stated that one impact of being on a programme meant he had learnt that:

The violent partner needs to be given a chance to make amends and to put himself right... just because he's made some mistakes he could still perform the role of the responsible and loving father.

Resentments about being on a programme

Four fathers expressed great resentment about having to be on a programme. These were all fathers who had been court-mandated and were attending as a condition of probation orders, although there were other fathers who had been court-mandated who did not express such resentment. Three of these men felt they had been 'wrongly' convicted by the criminal courts and programme

attendance appeared to fuel their hostility towards ex-partners and to have had little impact in shifting their thinking in relation to their partners or their children.

For example, Collin, who had earlier stated that he had been wrongly convicted because his partner had cried in front of the magistrates and had been attending a programme for about 24 weeks, conveyed the impression that it was irrelevant to his own situation and that all he was learning about was 'worse' forms of abuse than his. It should be noted here that he had been convicted for threats to kill (with a knife) and that he had admitted that he was facing further charges of re-assaulting his ex-partner. He said:

My problem is more – it's nothing to do with actually beating her up or whatever, mine is down to verbal more than anything. So I've come here and had my eyes opened about what does happen in relationships and other people's convictions far worse than mine. I know mine sounds worse, but it's just the tip of the iceberg compared to other people's.

For another father, Geoff, who had been on a programme for about 32 weeks, and who also felt he had been wrongfully convicted for post-separation harassment, the programme appeared to have no impact whatsoever, except to increase his sense of injustice. He stated that he did not know why he was on it since all he had ever done is 'love, care and provide for the whole family and if that's wrong then I'm guilty'.

For Tom, who had been attending a programme for nearly a year, although he perceived some benefits for himself, even talking about being on the

programme appeared to fuel his resentment and continuing shifting of blame on to his ex-partner. He said:

It's teaching me a lot of things, like why I'm so frustrated with myself, like booze and drugs don't help but I'm still not there yet. But I want S to live with me. I can't accept she's not living with me. I resent her living on her own and being independent. She's very strong and I'm not included. She doesn't see us as a family, she sees the baby as hers. She's been violent towards me, but she doesn't do a thing about that – the injury she gave me was far worse than I gave her [he admitted to having broken her nose]. But I'm the one who is on probation and I've got to pay compensation and be on this programme. She's worried about me losing it in front of the baby. She wants me to be safe with the baby, but she loses it – her whole family does.....'

Tom's interview had to be cut short at this point as he became increasingly perturbed and verbally abusive about his ex-partner and her family. It should be noted however that previous to this outburst, he had made no mention of her 'violence' and had stated that he had attacked her when he had found out she was pregnant, because he did not want to be a father. Yet his arguments that his partner was deliberately excluding him from 'the family' can also be fuelled where programmes take the stance that a violent father's presence in families and/or his contact is generally desirable for children.

The contradictory impacts of programmes

Violent fathers' resistance to change

For several of the fathers interviewed here, being on a programme appeared to have had contradictory impacts, when their individual accounts were looked at as a whole. Whilst a few had apparently had their 'taken-for-granted assumptions' about men's domination over women and children in familial relationships challenged, there were also ways in which they continued to

resist taking responsibility for their violence and to justify it in other ways. This was indicated through their use of discourses outlined in chapter 5, where they continued to shift blame for their behaviour onto others, including very young children as well as mothers in their accounts. At the same time, many continued to draw on medical models of psychopathology whereby they sought to excuse their violence by representing it as being ‘out of their own control’ and disconnected from any intentionality on their part. Through these socially accepted discourses, they also managed to avoid perceiving their behaviour as wrong or criminal and to re-present themselves as victims.

This was linked to the way some fathers demonstrated that they were far more concerned with stressing the help and support that they themselves and other men who were violent needed rather than acknowledging the harm that their victims had experienced and, for some, being on a programme appeared to fuel and reinforce these victimisation discourses.

Contact and ‘responsible’ fatherhood

Of particular concern were indications that working in a group with other men addressing topics such as ‘parenting roles’ could reinforce discourses of responsible fatherhood that were used to justify violent fathers’ contact with children and to reassert their power and control over mothers through the children themselves. This was most apparent for the majority of men who were from the same programme (S1) although such examples were also apparent across the whole sample.

Moreover, fathers' views from this latter programme appeared to contradict the programme leader's stated approach that in having contact fathers should be supportive of the mother and focus on the needs of their children.

Over and beyond this, the fathers who acknowledged continuing abusive behaviour towards children during contact visits still viewed contact in terms of meeting their own needs so that children's fears could be discounted.

In this latter respect, it was also apparent that there were some differences between programme approaches when workers were involved in contributing 'evidence' to the family courts on a father's fitness for contact and how far they took the safety of children and mothers into account.

Of interest also were fathers who emphasised that some of their understandings and views were partially challenged, not as a result of being on a programme, but through other means. For example, a few fathers who were voluntary attenders on programmes said that they had changed their views through the actions of a partner leaving them and reporting their violence to the police. Three fathers also said it was their children's refusal to see them that had made them more aware of the impact of their violence. Bill, for example, in talking about his first family related how one of his grown up children had told him 'how good she felt and it was the best thing that ever happened' when he left the family home.

In addition, in examining their accounts as a whole, for some fathers there seemed to have been little positive change in either acknowledging their

violence or its impacts on women and children and this seemed to be unrelated to how long they had been on a programme. Four of these fathers had been on programmes for over a year with 2 of these men being on second programmes. Of particular concern in this respect, was that nothing significant seemed to happen to the men who disclosed that they had been seriously physically and threateningly violent whilst attending the programmes, including two men who disclosed that they had threatened partners or ex-partners with knives. This appeared to apply equally to men who had been court-mandated to attend. Thus, although this might be related to the inadequacy of the criminal justice and probation response and these issues were highlighted by some programme workers, it did appear to raise questions in relation to arguments that programmes prevent violence in the short term, whilst the men are in attendance.

In conclusion, the issues raised above do highlight a number of concerns about programmes which require further investigation and which raise further complex questions about their impacts, particularly where they may be perceived as a means of rendering violent fathers safe to have contact with children. From most of these fathers' accounts, there were few indications that they were safe to have contact, if either their understandings of their post-separation violence and harassment or their direct physical and emotional abuse of children and neglect of children's needs during contact are recognised as salient issues.

Chapter 7 Mothers' accounts of violent fathering

Introduction

This chapter discusses the mothers' accounts. These provide a powerful contrast to those of the fathers. With a focus on their ex-partners as fathers, they highlight in different and similar ways to the men's accounts the interconnections between constructs of violent masculinity and fatherhood and show the way such fathering practices can be bound up with abuse and coercion. However, whilst this was the main reason for interviewing these mothers, their accounts are valuable in their own right in providing further insights into mothers' understandings and experiences of violent fathers.

The first part briefly provides some contextual information on mothers' and children. The second part focuses specifically on the way mothers conceptualised violent fathers' practices.

Part 1

The material context

As has been outlined in chapter 4, the mothers interviewed were drawn from two geographically different support groups/networks for separated mothers and children who had experienced domestic violence. This context meant that these women were able to conceptualise and reflect on their experiences of the violence in relation to others who had had similar experiences and, in gaining support from other women, portrayed themselves as survivors of the violence rather than as victims. This sense of survival was emphasised literally by most

of the women who felt that their own lives and those of their children had been endangered, either through extreme physical violence or through a combination of psychological abuse and threats of physical violence, such as threats to kill. At the same time, they and their children were continuing to be profoundly affected by these experiences and most were still being subjected to different forms of post-separation violence and harassment, including different forms of harassment and threats through legal processes and contact arrangements (see below)

Mothers' living situations and familial relationships

All the mothers were living on their own with some of their genetic children at the time of the interview, having separated from most recent partners for varying lengths of time ranging from 4 years to 1 year. However, 3 mothers had children from relationships with previous violent partners, although the length that they had been in these different relationships varied. One mother had managed to escape her first violent relationship after 9 months, whilst the other 2 had been in these relationships for a number of years. Both these women felt they had been specifically targeted and entrapped into relationships with second violent partners, since they had been living in communities which had isolated and shamed them following their divorces from first partners. One of these was a white fundamentalist Christian community and the other was an Asian community and these latter mothers' experiences suggest that some violent men may specifically target women who they perceive as being more isolated and vulnerable.

The time women lived in violent relationships ranged from 9 months to 16 years. However, changes in their living situations and the length of their relationships with their partners were crucially related to their experiences of the violence and how far it was directed towards or impacting on the children, and their own awareness about this. It was also affected by how far they felt able to safely to leave the relationships, where 9 of their partners had threatened to kill them/or their children, if they left. Fathers' legal 'rights' to contact with children were highly significant in this context, because all the mothers' partners used these as a real threat to argue that the mothers would never be able to escape from them. Moreover, some fathers threatened to get 'custody' of the children, or to abduct the children, where mothers were attempting to end relationships. For one mother, this latter threat was carried out 3 times following separation. Other factors included the general lack of support and protection they received from public agencies such as the police and social services and the advice they received from legal professionals. Three mothers had initially left relationships and then returned due to pressure and threats from partners and sometimes promises of change. As a consequence, it was much harder for them to leave these relationships a second time because they were being more closely controlled by their partners.

In total, 25 children had been living with mothers and violent fathers before separation. When interviewed, mothers were living with 16 children under 10, and 6 over 10 years old; 3 children who were over 16 years had left home. As

with the fathers' sample, the majority of children concerned were young or very young (10 were under the age of 5 when contact had started) and had had little opportunity or power to have their own voices heard in relation to contact.

Contact arrangements

All the mothers interviewed for this research were involved in contact disputes which were decided or were continuing between the years 1998-2000. Contact arrangements had changed over time and were continuing to change. For these mothers, however, contact had either been or was continuing to be an ongoing problem at the time of interview because of their ex-partners' persistent abusive behaviour. As in earlier research (see Radford et al., 1999) most mothers had sought legal advice and had been told by solicitors that they could not legally refuse their partners' contact, even though some separations had taken place after the case law in this area had begun to recognise that domestic violence could be a 'cogent reason' to deny such contact. Exceptionally, one of the mothers who had had children with 2 violent partners initiated and organised contact herself for both sets of children, without seeking legal advice, because she felt strongly that they needed to 'know' their fathers. However all the mothers described children's contact experiences with their fathers worsening over time and becoming more abusive. This led to all the mothers and, in one case, older children, seeking changes to end or severely limit contact or to counteract fathers' applications for contact through the courts. It also meant that there were frequent changes in contact arrangements.

In addition, most of these mothers described themselves and their children being involved in numerous interim hearings, and investigations by court welfare officers and social workers, which often continued for several years.

At the time of the interviews, which took place during the spring and summer of 2000, direct contact had eventually been denied by the courts to the fathers of children in 4 families, although, in one of these cases, the youngest child of a family of 4 was still having contact at a contact centre. In another case, which had been going on for 3 years, the father had been ordered to attend a perpetrator programme as the mother described the judge being extremely reluctant to deny him contact. However, in this case, the judge finally accepted that the father had not changed as a consequence of attending a programme and contact was also eventually denied. Another father had disappeared after 2 contact sessions at a contact centre and the sexually abusive father referred to above had also disappeared abroad. The children of 3 mothers were still having ongoing contact and were continuing to be abused at the time of interview. Another mother was awaiting a court hearing, where she was trying to stop direct contact with a birth child of her second partner and contact was eventually denied in this case. However the youngest child of her first family was having very intermittent contact with her first violent partner. In summary, at the time of interview, contact had ceased for most children in 7 families and was ongoing for children in 3 families.

The extent and forms of violence mothers and children experienced

Nine of the women had experienced ongoing patterns of violence, which combined different forms of psychological abuse and intimidation and physical and sexual violence and which usually began early on in their relationships, although the way these developed varied. They also described periods where there would be lulls in the violence, when partners promised to reform, although the violence started up again sometime later.

Whilst some women described these patterns as starting at the point where they married or began living with partners, because at that point the men perceived them as their possessions whom they were entitled to control, others described such patterns commencing even before this. This was illustrated by one mother, Margaret, who described how her second partner had forced her into marriage, by initially befriending her and the children when she had lost all her friends and been excluded from church activities because they did not approve of her divorcing her first husband. She related how he then raped her and presented her with a 'progression of threats'. These included threatening her with the loss of her home which belonged to the church community, having her children taken into care by social workers, and, if that did not work, killing her youngest child.

For other women, strategies of control and intimidation developed into physical and sexual violence during pregnancy. Jean, for example, was frequently hit and raped by her violent partner because she did not want to

have sex while she was pregnant. Aisha, who had experienced violence in her first (arranged) marriage, described the start of physical violence as a development from verbal aggression and threats from her second partner (who was white) as a consequence of her being more 'vulnerable' when she was pregnant and because he felt once she was having 'his child', he was more entitled to control her. For 3 mothers, the physical violence began soon after they had had their first children and continued in combination with other forms of abuse, whilst for another mother, the physical violence began at the point when she tried to leave the relationship with her young baby. Thus, as has been indicated to some extent in the fathers' sample and in other research with mothers discussed in chapter 2, the violence these women described as experiencing from their partners often intensified or was connected to the presence of the children.

Forms of men's violence experienced by women

In contrast with the men's minimisation of their physical and intimidatory violence, the women talked in detail about this. Whilst many of the men interviewed defined physical violence only as hitting or punching, for 7 women being half choked or strangled sometimes to the point of unconsciousness was experienced by them as being one of the most severe forms of physical violence. It was at this point that 2 women felt they had to escape the relationship because their lives were felt to be in danger. Threats to kill could also precipitate women into leaving relationships.

Sexual and reproductive abuse of women

Another clear difference between forms of abuse to which the men admitted and those experienced by the woman was sexual violence. In the mothers' accounts, its impact was clearly more significant to them than some other forms of violence. Out of this small sample of 10 women, 6 revealed having experienced many different forms of sexual violence in the checklists and, in their accounts, 5 described being regularly raped, with one woman having been raped by both her partners when living with them. Rape was also connected to reproductive abuse and used as a means of entrapping them in relationships through pregnancy and having children. Three women described being raped in this way, with one mother, Maureen, stating that 3 out of her 4 children were conceived through rape. In describing how rape had extended into reproductive abuse, Margaret talked about how her second partner would accompany her to the doctor to prevent her from applying for an abortion and, prior to her pregnancy, had torn up her prescription for birth control pills. He had told her explicitly that his purpose in 'making' her have his child was to prevent her ever escaping from him because the law now gave him 'joint custody' of the children. Thus, as in the earlier research (see, for example, McGee, 2000), these fathers' patterns of power and control were integrally linked to children and the presence of children.

Forms of psychological abuse and control

Even where women did not disclose any experiences of sexual violence, some of the women's experiences of psychological abuse were linked to the men's perceptions of them as sexual possessions and is similar to other research discussed in chapters 2 and 3. However, as the relationships progressed, this often extended into overall strategies of control designed to isolate women from others, including neighbours, friends and family, and monitoring all women's contacts with the outside world to prevent them leaving the relationship. For example, Pat described how her ex-partner used to phone her eight or ten times whilst he was working and come back home at different times of the day to ensure she had not left. In its most extreme form, sleep and food deprivation were used to psychologically 'destroy' women and Margaret described how her second partner continuously used sleep deprivation, combined with physical violence, to push her to commit suicide. In addition, women described a catalogue of psychological abuse which was designed to humiliate and undermine them. In common with the father's accounts of abusive control, this included being denigrated about standards of housework, with cooking being one of the most frequent activities that triggered both verbal abuse and physical violence when food and plates would be thrown either across the floor or at the women themselves.

Financial abuse

As illustrated in the fathers' accounts, several mothers worked outside the home and included half the mothers in this small sample. Thus, for these mothers the pattern of abuse and control was not linked to traditional divisions of labour as conceptualised in some formulations of domestic violence, discussed in chapter three (see, for example, Messerschmidt, 1993). However, forms of financial abuse shifted to take account of these different contexts. For example, one mother, Susan, described being forced to return to work by her partner's violence much sooner than she would have chosen to, after each of her 3 children were born, because he was 'obsessed with money'. Two other mothers, who both described themselves as the main breadwinners when still living with partners, related how post-separation tactics of violence and harassment were used to lose them their means of financial support. In this regard, one mother, Fiona, described how her partner physically threatened her boss when she first left the relationship, causing her to lose her job. A South Asian mother, Aisha, related how her second partner physically attacked her business, following separation, forcing her to sell up.

Combined abuse of mothers and children

As in the studies discussed in chapter 2, one of the most significant types of psychological abuse experienced by all these mothers was the way children were used deliberately as a means to control and harm them and these are discussed further in their accounts. Moreover, for a few mothers, the violence started with the children being abused. Two mothers, who were living with

second partners with children from first relationships, described such strategies being used to drive these children from the family home. Three women were also threatened with the abduction of their children, as well as threats to kill children from the same partners in the context of preventing women from leaving relationships. The use of children could also be combined with threats to involve, or the actual involvement of, outside agencies, such as social services, and GPs, to get the children put into care and mothers labelled as ‘incapable’.

Post-separation harassment and violence against mothers and children

On separation, mothers frequently described fathers’ abusive behaviour as shifting into another gear, indicating that some domestically violent men can be highly sophisticated in their use of different tactics of abuse to induce fear and get revenge on mothers for daring to leave the relationships. For example, mothers related how their ex-partners switched to forms which did not involve direct physical violence in the post-separation context and which, therefore, made it harder for the women to convince agencies such as the police and the family courts that their ex-partners continued to be a threat. This included tactics which have been highlighted above and in other studies addressed earlier (see, for example, Humphreys and Thiara, 2002) such as reporting mothers as being ‘unfit’ to social services.

Other tactics included forms of post-separation harassment similar to those described earlier in other research with mothers but which were minimalised in

the fathers' accounts. These involved: phoning the electricity and phone companies to get the services cut off at the family home; making silent phone calls; entering the home whilst the mother and children were away and leaving live electric wiring exposed; breaking into the family home on numerous occasions whilst mothers and children were out, and driving or walking up and down outside the family home to instill fear and ensure that families knew they were being watched. Most mothers and children experienced a combination of these terrifying tactics at different times. For several families, such tactics of fear went on for years and they were still experiencing them at the time of interview.

Moreover, as has been highlighted in the research with children discussed earlier (see, for example, Mullender et al., 2002), children were equally the victims of fathers' campaigns of fear. Such campaigns directly affected the children where they were unable to feel safe in their own homes or even outside of it. Two mothers described situations where children were followed to school as a form of harassment and one mother described how her children feared they would come home from school and find that she had been murdered.

Direct physical violence post-separation

Four mothers also experienced being directly attacked inside or outside their homes. One mother, Sonia, who had not previously experienced violence, and had left the relationship after 9 months when her baby was born, experienced

daily violent attacks and threats made against her in the home and had to move to her parents' house in order to escape. Thus, this mother's experience indicates that, even where the violence commences post-separation, it can still be severe and life-threatening. In addition, 5 mothers experienced serious physical violence during or linked to contact handover, and this is discussed in part 2.

Litigation abuse

The other main institution that fathers used to harass mothers and children was the legal system. One way this was done, was through fathers' applications for penal notices to have mothers sent to prison for breach of contact orders and half this sample of mothers said they had experienced such applications. Another way was through fathers making repeat applications for direct contact when it had been denied by the courts. Three mothers described such applications being made several times. In each of these cases, there were concerns of risks of abuse and the children had to be repeatedly re-interviewed by professionals, creating constant anxieties and uncertainties for them. In addition, where fathers made repeated contact applications, mothers emphasised that children were living in a continuous state of fear where they never knew whether contact would be renewed and each solicitor's letter which arrived in the home could be a source of stress for older children.

Part 2

The mothers' accounts

Children witnessing and combined abuse

Most of the mothers described circumstances where children witnessed abuse towards mothers which 'spilled over' into affecting the children, because they just happened to be there. At times, this could involve circumstances where, as has been illustrated in the fathers' accounts, men had complete disregard for the safety of children, for example where women were being attacked and they were holding babies. This was illustrated in Jean's account where she described her partner slamming her against the wall and half-strangling her when she had her baby daughter in her arms.

Another mother, Fiona, who had experienced physical violence from the day she married, recounted how initially she felt she could hide the violence from her two young daughters because it usually happened at night when they were in bed. This situation changed on one occasion when her partner was going to attack her and her oldest daughter, then aged 3, stood in front of her and said 'Don't hit mummy' and she realised she had to leave the relationship. She also described contexts, which recurred in most of the mothers' accounts, where the children were 'caught up' in the violence, when her partner was shouting and throwing food and objects around and smashing possessions. For her, the 'final straw' in her relationship with her partner was when she 'found

her youngest daughter (aged 5) hiding under the kitchen table,' after witnessing a particular episode of her partner's violence, because she felt she was going to be the next one to be attacked by her father.

A further common context where children were directly involved was when mothers were thrown or locked out of the house. Margaret, for example, described having to call the police to get back in the house when she had been locked out by the children's first father, who was also threatening to throw the children out of the windows. This event was treated by the police when they came as 'just a domestic' and they went away once she had got back in.

Simultaneous abuse – fathers' deliberate abuse of mothers in front of children

Whilst several mothers described contexts where fathers disregarded or ignored the presence of children when they were abusing mothers, a few also described being deliberately physically and sexually abused in front of children, where they felt the aim was to control their own behaviour. For example, Pat described how her partner made sure she acceded to his sexual demands by being intentionally sexually violent towards her in front of her 3-year-old son, John. This was illustrated in the following extract:

I didn't want to have sex with him and by this time I disliked him intensely and I would pretend to be asleep and he would cause a scene and wake me up - and wake up John - because he was hitting me and getting on top of me - you are my wife - you are my property - and then he would just do it to me and John would go, 'what are you doing? What are you doing to mummy?', so I just used to let him do it in the end ...

At other times, he would be deliberately physically and threateningly violent towards her in front of her son to control her own behaviour so that, in the end, she felt almost totally controlled by his violence:

I used to beg him not to shout and scream at me or hurt me or sort of strangle me [in front of John] – if your son’s face doesn’t stop you what will - you know the look of fear on his face and ‘don’t hurt mummy’ ... Basically the things that would trigger him off, was if he didn’t get his own way and I wouldn’t do what he said ... When John was getting older, I just used to do anything he wanted in order to save a scene and that’s when I realised I had to get out.

Pat went on to describe how this kind of abuse was also accompanied by her partner deliberately making derogatory remarks about her to her son (see also McGee, 2000):

I left when I was six months pregnant with Simon [the second child] so he hasn’t suffered all that, but John did. He saw the hitting and the shouting and mummy’s sick in the head and mummy can’t do anything right and mummy can’t cook and mummy can’t do this or that... He’d take him for a ride in the car and then say it. John would come back and say, ‘you’re sick mummy’.

Combined abuse and the differential treatment of children

As has been indicated above, some mothers described situations when they were living with partners where children could be the first or main targets of violence. This included situations where fathers wanted to get rid of children who were not genetically theirs. Aisha, for example, described the violence beginning when her second partner attacked her two older children, a girl (aged 15) and a boy (aged 13), to try and get them out of the home because she was pregnant with ‘his’ child. In this context, her partner’s violence was

integrally connected to constructions of fatherhood where he wanted the family home to be just 'his own baby,' and his mother, so her other children were subjected to a combination of physical and emotional abuse to 'drive them out'. This included: 'pulling her daughter's hair,' 'dipping her head in the washing up bowl,' and 'lifting up her son by the neck'. Moreover, when she tried to protect her children, this resulted in violence against her when 'he started to bang' her head 'against the wall.' These actions partially achieved the desired result, because her daughter left home at the earliest opportunity, but they continued towards her younger son, mainly in the form of emotional abuse where her partner subjected him to 'mental torture,' and would say things deliberately designed 'to hurt him'. Aisha described her own feelings at this time in the following extract:

I remember when I was heavily pregnant I fell down and I was petrified of hurting the baby because of him - that was the effect he had on me. I felt I was carrying the baby for him, not for me - that's how he made me feel. I felt I was letting the children down, but I couldn't protect them I was so frightened.

Margaret described a similar situation following marriage to her second partner and the birth of their baby which began with the 'mental abuse' of her two daughters (aged 9 and 13 at the time) and a son (aged 12 at the time) from her first relationship:

He started to try and drive them out of the house - shouting and screaming, not allowing them to watch television, not allowing their friends in the house, trying to turn their friends against them - their friends would come round and he would say, 'oh they don't want to see you', that sort of thing.

Later, she described how he would terrorise the children by his treatment of the baby and by indirect threats that he could kill them, as illustrated in the following extract:

He used to pull the baby off me when I was feeding him and threaten to go out the house with him, when he couldn't get his own way. At the time I was breast feeding, he would literally pull the baby off the breast, upset all the children - have everyone crying – he would really like upsetting people, get a buzz out of making people cry - get a buzz out of destroying people's lives. He often boasted how he had destroyed other people's lives. He boasted that he had got away with killing someone to the children.

Eventually, Margaret was able to get him removed from the family home by the police when he attacked her older son, by 'physically grabbing him, and forcibly kissing him on the lips'. However the psychological abuse of the children continued when he later forced himself back into the home following contact with the baby and she had to send her older children to live with her first violent partner as the better of 'two evils'.

Fathers' violence and abuse when involved with children

Other mothers described how just the presence of children in the home could be a cause of the violence towards them, particularly where children were perceived as interfering with fathers' own needs and interests. In these circumstances, fathers' abuse was often directed at very young children. For example, Tina related how her second partner directed most of his physical violence towards her 2 young children rather than herself. At the time the violence started, her children were aged 4 (a girl) and 2 (a boy), with the girl being her second partner's stepchild. She said:

In the mornings at weekends he used to like to sleep in, so if the kids woke him up he would go in and give them a good hiding - he didn't like the kids waking him up. If they went downstairs he would make them go up and make them be quiet. He made these cardboard clocks for my daughter which he stuck in her bedroom where the time was drawn at eight o'clock and he told her she couldn't get up until the time on her watch matched the time on the clock - she was only 5 then. Sometimes he used to put his hands around their throats and say 'if you don't shut up, you'll be in more trouble', and he's said to me, 'if you don't get out of the bedroom, I'll do the same to you'... If the kids got in the way when he was watching the telly, he would punch and kick them out of the way and they would fly across the room - and if they looked at the fish tank, he'd throw a shoe at them, or kick them.

Such violence was also combined with emotional abuse, where, the boy in particular, was frequently told by his father that he hated him and he wished he had never been born.

In a similar vein, Maureen described her children as having ashtrays thrown at them or being thrown across the room when they did anything which annoyed him, and being woken up in the middle of the night and forced to eat food, when he wanted company after he had come home from the pub. In addition, Jean described her ex-partner smacking the '6-week-old baby on the bottom,' because 'he was in a temper,' and she (the baby) had 'interrupted him, when he wanted to have sex'. Thus, these accounts also illustrated that fathers' often abused children, when they interfered with their own needs and interests.

Fathers' abuse and neglect of children during childcare

As in the fathers' accounts, mothers also described abuse towards children occurring or increasing when fathers were specifically caring for children on

their own. They described a range of father involvement from occasional looking after the children when they were out, to more regular involvement where they were working outside the home. Three mothers stated that fathers were involved in looking after children on a regular basis.

For example, one mother, Sonia, described her partner as looking after his 2-year-old daughter from a previous relationship, for half the week. It was his ‘inappropriate’ treatment of this young child and his lack of attention for her safety, which precipitated her leaving the relationship, when her own child was born. She said:

He had another daughter from a previous relationship and I didn’t like the way he treated her. She was only 2 and he would smack her for the silliest things. but it was more mentally abusive. He would threaten to lock her in the bathroom and things like that. He thought he was a good father, because he was willing to have his daughter for half the week, but he wouldn’t do anything with her like take her to the park - it was just sitting indoors – and there were occasions when I came home from work and he was asleep and she was just running riot and anything could have happened basically.

Another mother, Susan, described her ex-partner as having looked after her 3 children regularly for 2 or 3 hours a day while she was out at work, from when the youngest was aged 3, because he worked nights. However, she became aware that one of the children, a boy, was being specifically emotionally and physically abused whilst she was at work only when she took him to the doctor because he had started wetting himself. She said:

It started when he was about 4. He’d get angry at him and call him thick and stupid and hit him around the head and degrade him – and when he got glasses he called him

four eyes. When he was between 6 and 7 years old, he was still wetting himself at school. so I took him to the doctor and the doctor gave me some medication to help stop it. It was only by sheer chance that he let something slip and I realised why he was wetting himself, because his father was hitting him and shouting at him when he was looking after him.

Susan went on to describe how she felt that looking after the children was ‘an inconvenience’ for this father, because they prevented him getting on with ‘the things he wanted to do.’ She said:

Many times when I got home, if he could have physically thrown the children at me he would have done – it was as if that’s my time with them, here you are. He didn’t want to know them. He didn’t take them out to football or to watch a game. He wasn’t interested in what they did. He was only interested in seeing my daughter dancing in shows and he only did that because I paid for his ticket.

As can be seen from the above, both these mothers felt that, although these fathers were directly involved in looking after the children, their actual care was often abusive and deliberately cruel and that children’s specific age-related needs and interests were neglected. Other mothers described how fathers could be abusive towards the children, where they were looking after them for only a short time, when mothers occasionally managed to go out for an evening, when they just went to the shops, or when they were still at home but in another part of the house. Again, such abuse was often directed at very young children. Tina, for example, described how her daughter had told her subsequently to the separation that her (second) partner had force fed them and punched them when she was out doing the shopping. The ultimate event, which precipitated her leaving her partner, was when he pushed her son’s head

and face under the water when he was washing his hair in the bath, because the boy was crying. At the time, Tina was downstairs in the kitchen.

In the context of looking after babies (children under one), 2 other mothers also described fathers 'smacking' them so hard that they left bruises on them. These mothers had threatened them with the police if they ever did it again. This seemed to be the only situation where mothers believed that the police might act on their behalf to protect the children because the children had visible injuries of abuse.

Another mother, Margaret, felt that her first partner's physical violence towards her children when he had to look after them one evening a week was also designed to punish her, because she was going out against his wishes. In describing the impacts on her 3 children (aged, 8, 10 and 11 at the time), she said:

They were all nervous wrecks basically, very introverted, very nervous and not doing well at school. He would shout at them for nothing. They were very frightened to get up and go to the toilet in the night – there was bedwetting – they were all very frightened of their father – but it got to the point when he did start to hit them – that was about 6 months before I left. he punched my youngest daughter Paula – she was 8 and he punched her because she wouldn't go to sleep. He was looking after them one evening a week when I was supposed to be going out – that was just an hour long meeting, and I think he was taking his anger out on them – because I was doing something he didn't want me to.

In contrast to these fathers, Aisha described how her second partner wanted to control ‘his (sic) baby,’ totally when he was born to the extent that he would not let anyone else look after him. She said:

It was, ‘I chose you to have my child – you are therefore the chosen one – that’s my child – I control my child’. I couldn’t have any say about him – it was almost as if I was a surrogate mother. He used to tell me I wasn’t feeding him at the right angle. He took over, even when he had just been born. He didn’t want me to be involved in his upbringing at all. He was so critical of me. He would cut up the clothes I’d bought for him. He didn’t want me to be close to him so he did most of the childcare, but he didn’t want him to grow up. He wanted to keep him as a baby. He wouldn’t let him out of the house to mix with other children – he just wanted control over me and Mal, so he wouldn’t allow us to go out. He was never intentionally violent towards him, but when he was assessed by the psychiatrist during contact, he (the psychiatrist) said he looked at him just as a belonging. He didn’t feel for him. He hadn’t a clue how to treat a child - everything he did he thought he knew best – he even wanted to control his play and how he should be playing and how he shouldn’t.

Aisha’s description of her partner’s ‘childcare’ and his treatment of her and the child highlights that the problem for her and her son was not about her violent partner’s involvement in caring for him but about his own goals to assert his power and control in this context. His ‘inappropriate’ care was related to the way he wanted to dominate his child and his unwillingness to accord him any autonomy nor to recognise or empathise with his needs.

Fathers’ extreme cruelty, maltreatment and sexual abuse of children

A few mothers described fathers carrying out extreme emotional abuse towards children when they were looking after them which included killing and torturing children’s pets and telling children that their mothers were going to die. For example, Margaret related how her second partner told her youngest son, then aged 4, that ‘he was going to take him to his Mam’s grave

when she died,' and described to him 'in detail' how he put the family's kittens 'through a wringer'. He was also told that he had to 'spit at the television when there were women on it and to call women 'whores and bitches'. In addition, he constantly boasted about the size of his genitals to the children as a form of threat and to show he had 'power over them'.

Susan related how her partner would show pornographic videos to her children and how he began to sexually 'groom' her daughter from the age of 13 and encouraged her to physically attack her younger siblings. However, Susan's daughter, Roxanne, never acknowledged that she was being abused by her father.

In addition, whilst some mothers described fathers occasionally playing with the children or cuddling them, they described this as depending on whether fathers *felt like* cuddling or playing, or alternately being destructive towards the children. As in McGee's study (2000), it was the uncertainty and unpredictability of this behaviour, which mothers felt was most harmful. For example, describing the way her partner related to her two young children when he was living with them, Sonia recounted how at times he would kick and throw things at them just because they were in the same room. At other times 'if he felt like it, he would cuddle them, but only if *he* felt like it.' Similarly, Fiona related how the children's father 'at times would play' with her daughters and then just get fed up and stop and she felt 'he had no awareness that the kids can't just switch off like that'. At other times, he

would 'humiliate and shout at them in front of their friends or just ignore or swear at them'.

On the other hand, Margaret felt that her second ex-partner was deliberately tormenting her 4-year-old son, by, 'in public, showing this big display of affection towards him,' but in private 'psychologically disturbing him' and 'mocking him because he could not speak properly'. She said:

That was confusing Simon as well, to be shown only affection in public, but to be tormented in private - it was really horrible for him

Fathers' harmful 'care' of children

As was evident from the fathers' accounts, these women's portrayals of violent men's 'care' of children suggest that their masculinised practices of control, dominance and self-interest applied not only to mothers, but also to children and were carried into the familial childcaring context, thus providing them with greater 'opportunities' to abuse.

Further, it was apparent that neither having, at times, sole responsibility for childcaring, nor the activities of 'care' themselves rendered these men more empathetic or understanding of children's needs. As can be seen above, from Sonia's portrayal of her ex-partner, he believed he was a 'good father' because he had the 'care' of his two year old child for half the week. However, having this responsibility did not mean he was prepared to cater for her specific interests, or pay attention to her safety.

In addition, these accounts, like those of the fathers, suggest that the problem is not just one of violent fathers having low levels of 'involvement in childcare'. Rather, they highlight the need to focus on violent fathers' relationships with children as a whole, and the meanings of *childcare*, and *caring* in this context. Crucially, they indicate that violent fathers' 'care' can be harmful and abusive in a number of different ways and not only in the contexts of 'discipline and punishment' but also where, for example, children are being used and manipulated to serve fathers' own purposes, where children's own needs and interests are ignored or discounted and where father involvement is merely a matter of whim.

The impacts of abuse

As can be seen from some of the accounts above, it was often mothers' increasing awareness of the impacts of fathers' violence and abuse on the children that precipitated them into ending the relationships, even though there were real risks of post-separation violence. They described a series of impacts, which have been indicated in the earlier research (see, for example, Jaffe et al., 1990). These ranged from children being extremely fearful of their fathers, and effects on their behaviour because of this, such as being frightened to go to bed at night, having 'night terrors', being frightened to go to the toilet and hiding from their fathers in case they themselves were violently attacked. In addition, children were described as having a variety of stress-related emotional and behavioural problems which included: children being very quiet, nervous and introverted; bed wetting; not doing well at school and

attacking and being aggressive towards mothers and other children and siblings. One mother also described her partner trying to stop her getting medical care for her children because he did not want to allow her out of the house. Further, as in the other studies with mothers and children discussed earlier, such impacts meant that children's own movements and social relationships were often totally controlled from being confined to certain rooms in the home to not being able to have any friends at home.

Abusive fathering practices in the context of child contact

It was clear from the mothers' accounts that most of the children involved were subjected to a range of different kinds of 'experimental' contact arrangements, in order to get contact 'to work'. Thus, the kinds of abuse that mothers described children as experiencing from violent fathers, varied depending on the kind of contact arrangement, and the different opportunities fathers had to act abusively. For example, more subtle forms of abuse, including sexual abuse, could take place in a contact centre, and depend on whether or not fathers were being observed by others. Moreover, as implied from the fathers' accounts, forms of abuse could shift depending on how long fathers had contact for, and whether they had staying contact. In addition it could depend on contact handover arrangements, because some children experienced simultaneous abuse with mothers during contact handover.

Mothers' understandings of the abuse of children during contact

Bearing in mind these different contact contexts, mothers described a range of abusive behaviour towards children by fathers during contact, which extended

from threatening children's safety and well-being through 'neglectful' behaviour (because fathers were only focussed on their own needs and so put children's safety at risk), to deliberate mental cruelty, physical intimidation and threats, and in two cases, forms of sexual abuse. Few mothers described children as experiencing direct physical violence during contact, and this was related to the children being already so covered by their fathers, that they did not need to use physical abuse, and just the threat of it was enough. In addition, as has been suggested in some of the fathers' accounts, some mothers felt that their ex-partners were possibly aware that physical abuse, which might be revealed through injuries, could be one of the only circumstances when the courts would be prepared to deny or severely restrict their direct contact.

However, as has been noted earlier, children could also be simultaneously physically threatened during contact handover. In the most extreme example in this study, one mother described herself and her four children being held hostage at knife point when her ex-partner burst into the family home instead of waiting at the end of the street to collect them for contact. Her children witnessed her being stabbed during this event.

Mothers' awareness of the kinds of abuse children were experiencing separately during contact was dependent on what the children themselves felt safe or able to tell them. Some of this came more from observing and having to deal with the impacts of contact on them when they returned from visits, or

as contact continued over time. Their knowledge was also supplemented by others such as teachers telling them about children's disturbed behaviour at school, or by other professionals such as psychologists who were involved in doing reports on children, or observations by supervisors or contact centre workers (see below). Mothers frequently described their children as being too fearful to talk about what was happening during contact. In addition some recounted how their children had been sworn to secrecy by abusive fathers. Often, these children only felt safe to talk about the abuse they had experienced sometime after the actual events, or where direct contact had finally stopped. Where contact was continuing, at the time of interview, mothers felt they still did not actually know what was happening during contact, except the little that the children felt able to tell them, but they were more aware of the stress and behavioural problems the children were displaying.

Fathers' cruelty and the emotional harm to children during contact

As has been indicated above, mothers often described the emotional harm to their children during contact and their fear of their fathers as being the most damaging. This was most clearly illustrated where children's contact with fathers had been ongoing for some time.

Tina, for example, whose children had been through a series of 'interim' contact arrangements for two and half years, described a progression of impacts on her children. These increased as the contact progressed from a

contact centre, to weekly visits to the fathers' home and to proposals for overnight staying contact. As has been seen earlier, Tina's two children, a girl, Jane aged 8, and a boy, Tom aged 6, at the time of interview, had been frequently physically abused and threatened when they were still living with their father. It was therefore unsurprising that the children were reluctant to go for contact. However, these fears were not recognised as a reason to deny this father contact by the professionals involved in the dispute. Eventually, although initially opposing contact because of her children's fears, Tina agreed through mediation to contact in a contact centre, but stopped it when it was apparent it was affecting the children. She said,

Tom said he (his father) had bent his fingers back at the contact centre, and he was kicking and screaming and wetting the bed before he had to go, so I stopped it and then it went to court and contact was ordered at another contact centre. They told me they hated me for making them go. Jane said no one believed her and a couple of days before she had to go she would say, 'I'm too ill to go to school and if I'm too ill to go to school, I can't go for contact'. Tom would hit me a lot, he was so angry. He would lash out and say, 'when I get older I'm going to buy a shotgun and kill him'.

When contact started outside the contact centre, she described how the impact on the children began to produce physical symptoms of stress.

Since he got outside contact my daughter's hair has started falling out and she's not been sleeping, whilst Tom keeps chewing his clothes and he has stress spots and I have to dress him.

Once outside contact was set up, she recounted how their father was being deliberately cruel by doing things to them, which they did not like. This included having her son's head shaved when he liked to keep his hair long, and

threatening the daughter with having her hair cut short. Because of these impacts, Tina stopped contact again. Her ex-partner then applied for and got a penal notice and the court ordered that the children had to have overnight staying contact. The judge also told her that the father would get residence of the children, if they did not go. Following this court hearing her ex-partner told the children that if they refused to go for staying contact 'mummy will go to prison.' She said,

Coming back from contact they are very quiet – they don't speak. It was after a few days they started saying he's told them that mummy will go to prison if they don't go. Since they've known they're going for staying contact Jane has asked me what they should do when they wake up – should we stay in the bedroom? I say she should ask him and she says 'I'm too frightened, I'm too scared to ask him'. He's not hitting them - he's a control freak – he doesn't even have to say anything – he only has to look and it's the tone of his voice – he knows they are terrified of him. Jane is now crying all the time and abusing herself, she rubs herself and is very sore. I stay up till eleven or twelve o'clock reading to her because she won't sleep. I don't talk to her about it but she won't go to sleep.

This mother's account illustrates the effects of children's fears of violent fathers in the context of contact, which were so obviously minimised or dismissed in most of the fathers' narratives. Tina's daughter's fears about what they should do when they woke up clearly related back to the physical and emotional abuse they were experiencing when living with this man. These fears were related to the children getting up and making a noise in the mornings, as well as to fears that were connected to more recent experiences of their father during contact visits. Moreover, it was apparent that this father was being deliberately manipulative and cruel to the children, by putting the responsibility on to them for preventing their mother going to prison, thus

making them feel that it would be their fault if they were not compliant with what he wanted.

In order to confirm that she was not `inventing` what the children were experiencing, this mother showed me a recent consultant psychiatrist's report (which, at the time, the court was refusing to accept in evidence). This report describes `the boy` `wanting to grow up like his father so that he could kill him,` and `the girl` `feeling that if she refuses contact, mother will be imprisoned,` and states that `contact arrangements are causing the children undue anxiety and stress` and `should be reviewed in the children's best interests.`

Eventually in this case, 3 months following the interview at a `final` hearing, the mother informed me that the judge had stopped these children's staying contact with their father, but had ordered that weekly visiting contact was to continue whilst the children were further psychologically assessed.

Three other mothers described children being emotionally harmed through contact, through a combination of threats being made against the mother to the children, and direct emotional harm and cruelty to the children themselves. Whilst mothers had described such abuse as occurring also when these fathers were living with the family, in the post-separation context it took on a more extreme form.

For example, Pat described her oldest son John, who was 5 at the time of interview, being repeatedly emotionally abused over 2 years since the father had started having staying contact. In this case the father had been awarded weekly staying contact by the court, even though the court welfare report had portrayed him as unsuitable, because he had a series of convictions for previous violence, and for drunk and dangerous driving. When Pat gave birth to her second son, Simon, he also went for weekly staying contact and was still a baby at the time of interview. In describing the emotional harm to her older son John, Pat stated that part of her awareness of what was happening to him had come from a psychologist's report, which had been initiated by professionals at his school, because he was constantly kicking and hurting other children. When asked the sort of things his father was saying to John, Pat stated:

He was telling him, 'mummy's a liar and don't believe anything she says – she's a thief and she stole your Christmas stocking – daddy's house is better than mummy's and you're going to live at daddy's house soon anyway.... because when you lose a mummy it's not so bad - because sometimes mummies die. And you can misbehave here and what you do here you can do at your mum's house and kick your friends'.

In addition she described how he was constantly told by his father that 'he was useless,' and that he couldn't 'do anything right,' and that since the new baby had come along he was totally ignored by his father.

As a result of this kind of abuse during contact, John had, at the age of 5, been diagnosed by the psychologist as 'depressed' and having various behavioural and stress related problems such as acne, biting his nails, constant bed-wetting,

and attention deficit disorder. Moreover the psychologist's report also highlighted that John's daily kicking and hurting other children at school, was a direct consequence of being told that he should do this by his father, and recommended that contact should be stopped because it was 'damaging the child.' Pat described the impact on John's perceptions of his relationships with others in the following terms.

He thinks now that a relationship is only a relationship if it's hurting and being cruel to someone – he's got no friends - everybody (at school) hates him, he hurts everybody – he doesn't go a day without hurting somebody. He hurts his brother (the baby), but he loves his brother so deeply, I mean he protects him - he never lets me forget about him – but he also hurts him.

However despite the clear evidence of harm to this child which was identified in a psychologist's report, Pat recounted how the judge had told her that she was wasting the court's time, and that the father was merely told that he should not make 'inappropriate comments' to the children.

Emotional harm and the differential treatment of children during contact

Susan also described the emotional harm to her three children as a consequence of weekly staying contact, which had been ongoing for eighteen months. This was mainly manifested through the children's extreme behaviour, because they had been told that they had to keep secret what happened when they were with their father.

The youngest child, a boy aged 9, was described as 'soiling and wetting himself,' every time he came back from contact, kicking the furniture and

attacking his older brother. He was also too frightened to sleep on his own, and was still sleeping with the mother at the time of interview. This child was also in the process of being psychologically assessed because he was refusing to eat as a consequence of repeatedly being told that he was 'too fat,' by his father (a form of humiliation which had also been used persistently against the mother). Her daughter, who was 15 at the time of interview and who the mother believed was being sexually abused, was described as having 'uncontrollable rages,' and had physically attacked the mother with a pair of scissors and been repeatedly violent to the other children.

Her middle child, an 11- year-old son, tended to be just 'silent' and 'resigned' but the mother showed me a copy of a letter he had written to social services who at the time were supposed to be assessing the impact of contact on the children, which said, ' I get scared when my dad gets angry, because I know what he has done to me and my mum, when he gets angry'. This child's experience is a further illustration of how children are affected by domestically violent fathers' unpredictable behaviour which was so minimised in the fathers' accounts.

The quality of contact – emotional and physical neglect

Mothers were also concerned about the quality of contact when fathers had children for longer visits. Tina for example described how her children had told her that when they went to their father's house for the day, he just put a video on and told them to keep quiet and not touch the television. He then fell

asleep and because the children were terrified of doing anything to 'provoke' his abuse, they would just sit there even when the tape had ended. Susan related how her children's father had refused to take two of the children to their Saturday activities of playing football in local teams even though the contact order had stated that the father should support these, and as a consequence they had had to give them up.

Some mothers described children's health and safety being put at risk, because they were neglected during contact visits. Two mothers talked about children being driven back home from contact in a drunk and dangerous way, because these fathers' ideas about contact visits consisted of taking the children to a pub for the day so that they could drink. For example, Fiona described an occasion when her two daughters were returned home from contact 'crying and vomiting,' because he was driving whilst 'drunk.' While Pat described how her ex-partner would never wash the baby when he was changing his nappy, or give him a bath or his medication, when he had weekend contact. These latter examples from the mothers' accounts raise issues about whether children's own interests and needs were being met during contact and which were rarely addressed in the fathers' narratives.

Fathers' abuse of mothers and children at contact centres and during 'supervised' contact.

As has been seen in chapter 1 supported and supervised contact centres are increasingly being viewed as a means of enforcing contact, whilst aiming to

address issues of safety for mothers and children. As in Aris et al.'s research (2002), several mothers and children in this study used contact centres for a variety of purposes, which included contact handover, enforced visits with fathers at centres and/or for assessment purposes. For example, Aisha and her young son, Mal, had to use various forms of supported and supervised contact at contact centres, over a period of two years before contact was eventually stopped by the court.

Initially, Aisha had been told by her solicitor that she must agree to contact, despite being attacked at knife point post-separation and contact handover was arranged at a contact centre. Contact handover was supposed to take place inside a contact centre, but on the first handover, her ex-partner had just snatched the child from her (then one and half years old) outside the centre and driven off in his car without putting his seat belt on. When, however, she related what had happened to one of the contact centre workers she was told, 'oh, you just don't want him to have contact'. Only when her ex-partner threatened the contact centre worker herself, did this worker believe her and contact was eventually ordered by a court to be 'supervised' at another centre, after the father had further abducted the child twice and spent two weeks in prison for contempt of court. However, it was apparent from Aisha's account that this was not 'high vigilance' supervised contact, as is illustrated in the following extract:

Every time it went badly. Mal didn't want to see him so he wouldn't go into the father's room because he was afraid. I think he picked up on my fear because I was

afraid of all the things he had done – he'd broken into the house and jumped me with a knife, sent me death threats and slashed the car tyres and walked up and down outside the house – he was always following me from the contact centre - but because of this I was a nervous wreck and Mal picked up on my fear. But he wouldn't believe his son wouldn't go to him. He stormed into the mother's room and snatched him there from the arms of my friend who was holding him and then the contact centre staff began to see him for what he was. One time he snatched Mal from the supervisor's arms, and she gave evidence in the final court hearing about him. After several visits at this centre it was eventually stopped because the centre refused to have him – they said he was too much of a risk... Finally because Mal was so terrified of the harassment and was refusing to go for contact I had to get a psychiatrist's report to stop it – the psychiatrist wanted to observe him having contact. So he went to another contact centre three times and the psychiatrist observed him. He was three and half years old by this time.'

As seen above, eventually in this case, the mother described contact being ended completely by the court at a 'final' hearing, but only after the judge tried to give the father yet another chance by ordering that he attend a perpetrator programme. However the programme leader was also described as stating that he was 'totally unsuitable.' In the meantime this child had had to endure two years of experimental supported and supervised arrangements before it was finally accepted by the court and some of the different professionals involved that the father should not have contact.

Another mother, Jean, described her daughter who was only one when contact first started with her ex-partner, as experiencing three and a half years of different kinds of 'supervised' contact arrangements before it was finally severely restricted by a court, and the judge made findings of fact that the father was a sexual abuser. Initially in this case the mother described wanting no contact until her ex-partner 'had been investigated,' because she knew there was some kind of problem over contact with a child from his previous

relationship. Jean was however advised by her solicitor that she had to agree to contact and he suggested that she `supervise` it herself, by remaining present during the father's visits, which thus put her own safety at risk. Soon after, it became clear that this problem related to allegations of sexual abuse, and the mother was told by social services to stop all contact until the father had been investigated. However since this father had not actually been convicted a further court hearing granted visiting contact once a week, and the judge told the mother that if she wanted it supervised she had to arrange this herself.

After nearly a year of this form of contact during which the mother had to arrange for male relatives to supervise it, it moved to a contact centre and regular contact went on for another twelve months. Throughout this time the father was observed by contact centre workers as engaging in sexual `grooming` behaviour with the child, when he played with her:

[I was told] he was being very `physical` with her and getting her to jump on top of him and lie on top of him. He would also hold her between her legs. One time, when they were in the garden he had her head on his groin and her legs in his face and he was always trying to play with her where the other workers couldn't see what he was doing – the workers who were observing him recorded details and also this was observed by several court welfare officers. My court welfare officer said in court, that this was typical grooming behaviour by abusers and it concerned them greatly.

Eventually in this case direct contact was limited to twice a year and was ordered to be heavily supervised. It was never taken up by this father. However, what is so significant about Jean's story is that her young daughter had to be subjected to such abusive behaviour by her father at the contact centre and to various interim `supervised` contact arrangements for so long,

whilst different professionals assessed whether she was `at risk`, even though serious concerns about him had been raised by the mother and were then supported by social services at the beginning of the contact dispute.

These mothers' accounts, therefore, suggest that there has little substantial change in the attitudes of professionals, since the earlier research in this area discussed in chapter 2.

Abuse during contact and the overall impact on the children

As has been seen earlier, the impacts on children of ongoing regular contact could worsen effects that were already being experienced when they were living with violent and abusive fathers. However, where mothers had managed to get contact stopped, they described the differences in their children's behaviour and general well being, although there could still be longer term impacts for some children.

Fiona, whose ex-partner was sent to prison for 6 months, for an assault not on her but on a stranger in the street, described the differences in her 2 young daughters, when her partner had had no contact for two years. Despite the fact that the court had wanted to order the resumption of contact when her ex-partner came out of prison, Fiona related how she managed to convince the judge that contact was not in the best interests of the children, although both she and her children had to undergo a 6 month psychiatric assessment as part of this process.

The children used to be really withdrawn and subdued – now two years on (aged 7 and 8) they are outgoing and lively. Sarah (the youngest) was very withdrawn for a long time – at one point she was smearing faeces on the bathroom wall. She had this ongoing fear that she was the one who was going to be hit next. She'd say, 'he's hit you and he's hit Kirsty [older daughter] and he's going to hit me next'. This came out more when we had to see the psychiatrist. Sarah is only just about calm now. Kirsty would cope whatever – but it's all the shouting that she remembers. After two years they are confident little devils – but not in all circumstances. Whenever someone gets angry, Sarah will get terrified because whenever he raised his voice, she knew I would get hit and 'dad' is a fearful word to her now... For sometime after he had gone the kids were still very fearful, because they never knew when he would come back and try and break into the house. For a long time we had a panic alarm and when they took it away they said, 'what are we going to do mum? What are we going to do?'

Margaret described some of the longer term effects where her older children had had ongoing contact with her first violent partner for several years and recounted the impact on her oldest daughter who was eighteen at the time of interview:

She is seeing a psychiatric nurse and is on anti-depressants. This is because she was living on an emotional roller coaster, constantly being badgered and told [by her father] that she was useless, told she was doing her own thing all the time. Yet she was the one who was being responsible and looking after him, but he was the one who wanted control of everyone and who was playing mind games. He made the children feel the separation was their fault – he said if they had done such and such he wouldn't have had to leave – if they had gone to sleep when he told them to he wouldn't have had to lose his temper, So basically he blamed them for his violence and the ending of the relationship. He still feels he has the right to put them on guilt trips - he says to them it's their fault - he says they don't keep in contact with him and they're making him depressed because he doesn't see them, so the tactics have changed – but he hasn't basically.

Another mother, Janine, described how 1 of her 4 children, her oldest son, had become suicidally depressed at the age of 15, because even though he no longer had to have contact with his violent father, his youngest sister was still being forced to have contact with him at a contact centre.

Mothers' views about fathers' contact

Although mothers had concerns about their children's safety and well-being, in the face of having to agree to contact by solicitors or the courts, they described trying to be positive about their fathers to the children, and to reassure them about going for contact visits, despite their own fears and feelings. They therefore often agonised about the right thing to do for their children.

This was illustrated in Jean's account, who, as has been seen above, had to 'facilitate' her daughter's supervised contact with her ex-partner where there were sexual abuse concerns. Jean had also experienced life-threatening violence from her partner when she was living with him, including being half-strangled to unconsciousness, and several incidents of post-separation harassment which had involved getting the electricity services cut off at her home:

Well, I used to tell her she was going to see her dad and have a nice time, but when she got older, it became more difficult to hide what I felt about him. So I phoned up Young Minds, which is a helpline to advise parents and professionals, and they said I should be honest with her, because she would be aware of it anyway. So I told her I didn't like him, but that was just between him and me and (this) shouldn't affect her relationship with him.

In this context some mothers also related how they had initially 'hoped' that fathers, as they got to know their children during contact, would change and that it would become a beneficial relationship. Pat, for example, felt that 'at least' John's father would 'have to get to know him,' and she described how

she tried to represent contact as an enjoyable experience despite John's initial reluctance and before she became fully aware how much he was being harmed by his father. She said,

He didn't want to go at first. He used to scream and run into other people's houses when his dad's car arrived outside and say, I don't want to go mummy - I don't want to go. I didn't realise at the time, but I used to put him in the car and say, 'have a nice time - you'll have a great time at daddy's'. You see I've never said a bad word to him about his dad - I can't play that game - you know I might feel sad and bad inside and if only his dad could do the same...

She went on to relate how she had been told by the psychologist who had assessed John, after eighteen months of regular staying visits, that she should not defend his father when he encouraged him to kick other children and failed to pay him any attention but directed it all towards his baby brother.

I used to say, 'but mummies are good at this and daddies are better at mending television and things' - but the psychologist said 'don't defend him' - but I said, 'if it makes my son feel better'. He said 'no you can tell him you understand how he feels and it's not very nice to feel like that but don't defend his father'.

Over time however her views changed and she described how she felt that her ex-partner was acting in the same destructive way towards this child as he had to her. Margaret also felt that if the children of her first relationship went to stay with their father he would become responsible and it would develop into a beneficial and more caring relationship, and she went to extreme lengths to support his contact.

I felt it was the best thing to do to encourage contact and if he was aggressive towards them they could just walk out the house and come home – I would make them picnics and I gave him money to take them on holidays – I was trying to encourage him to make up for what he had done – give him a chance to get to know the children. I felt I was being supportive in helping the children get to know their father, after basically a life time for them of not knowing who he was except this bully... but it didn't work out that way – he just continued to be aggressive towards them.

She went on to describe how she had to come to realise that his view of being a father prevented him from taking a more `caring` approach.

His view of what a father is, is telling everyone what to do and a father hits everyone if they don't do what they are told – a father has control of everyone and who they can and can't be friends with and what they can do with their lives and what they can't do with their lives and as far as he is concerned his word is law.

Fathers getting revenge

As contact worsened for the children and post-separation violence and harassment continued, some mothers also felt that their partners' motivations for wanting contact was tied up with getting revenge and punishing them for leaving the relationship, and using the children to do this, rather than developing a positive relationship with them. This was illustrated in Susan's account:

When I first filed for divorce – I thought that my ex-partner would become a normal parent and that we could discuss contact between us and that he would have regular contact with the children. It was only afterwards I knew that this could not happen and that contact with the children was traumatic for them... He's told me and told others that he is going to take the children off me one by one and put the final nail in my coffin.

Tina also felt that her partner's actions in contacting social services 3 times to allege that she was abusing the children post-separation was motivated by getting revenge on her. In talking about how the children became increasingly 'disturbed,' by being repeatedly interviewed by child protection professionals she said,

He doesn't think about the impact on the children when he's making these allegations. He's trying to get me into trouble and make out I'm a bad mother, but it's beginning to backfire on him, because social services don't believe him anymore.

Other mothers felt that fathers' self-interests in pursuing contact were illustrated when direct contact was ended or severely limited by the courts. In these situations all the fathers were allowed indirect contact through being able to send letters and cards to the children through an intermediary, but most mothers related how fathers either failed to maintain this, or wrote 'inappropriate' letters to the children which could not be given to them. For example, Maureen related how her ex-partner repeatedly wrote letters which stated that he was going to get back together with them soon and that they would all be one 'big happy family again.' Since these children feared any contact with their father because he had taken them hostage and stabbed their mother, during contact handover, these letters could not be read to them.

These mothers' accounts elaborate on some of the self-interested motivations of their ex-partners, which had been indicated in the fathers' narratives, and which have little to do with meeting children's purported needs. Moreover, in

contrast to some of the fathers' accounts, where they seemed to have no compunction in degrading the other parent to the children, and alleging that 'bitter' mothers were turning the children against them, mothers' accounts illustrate how they often went to extreme lengths to avoid being negative about their ex-partners to the children.

Mothers' views of professionals in relation to fathers' contact

However, as has been seen earlier, when mothers raised concerns about violent fathers to professionals they faced a general climate of disbelief, where they were often blamed for raising problems, or for the children's 'difficulties' over contact, and where the fathers' accounts of what was happening were more likely to be accepted. In this respect, they felt that professionals were operating a gendered double standard where, for example, it was assumed that they were being manipulative and selfish in opposing contact but that the same assumptions were not made about their ex-partners. Thus, it was not usually assumed, that when their ex-partners made derogatory comments and manipulatory allegations about them that they were inventing these; nor that their motivations for pursuing contact might be more to do with pursuing their own self-interests and using the children (see also Aris et al., 2002).

Whilst mothers' concerns were raised about different professionals, judges in particular were seen as 'bending over backwards' to believe fathers even in the face of substantial evidence of their violence and abuse. Aisha, for example, whose ex-partner had abducted her son on several occasions, and had also

been violent towards contact centre workers, described how the judge allowed him to manipulate the court processes in his favour:

He had five different court welfare officers, because each welfare report said there should be no contact. He (her ex-partner) threatened the last court welfare officer and said he would ruin her career and lose her her job - this was in the welfare report. But the judge bent over backwards to give him a chance and was really reluctant to stop contact – because he would challenge every professional he didn't like and the judge allowed him to do this.

Other mothers described judges as accepting fathers' allegations of mutual violence, and therefore regarding their concerns about the children as 'mutual acrimony.' There were also judges who refused to allow psychiatric, psychological or social work reports on the negative effects of contact being admitted in evidence, when they tried to get contact arrangements changed. In this context, where concerns had been raised about a child attacking other children as a consequence of contact with an abusive father, one mother described the judge as dismissing these in terms of it 'being natural for boys to fight.'

Another common allegation that several mothers described violent men making in court hearings was that they were mentally ill or mad, and were therefore imagining that fathers were harming the children. As has been seen in the fathers' accounts implying that mothers are irrational, is a frequent strategy used by fathers to deflect blame, and is reflected in the most recent family law discourses (see for example Children Act Subcommittee, 2001).

Other professionals were also described as being more prepared to believe fathers, and blame mothers where children were clearly reluctant to go for contact, or where mothers raised concerns about harm during contact. Susan, for example, was told by social workers who were supposed to be working with her children to help them overcome 'their difficulties and stress,' that it was *her* issues with contact that were causing her youngest son to attack his siblings and soil himself, when he returned from his father's home. In addition, Aisha described how contact centre workers had initially preferred to believe her ex-partner because he had told them she was 'just a drama queen.' They had therefore dismissed her initial concerns about her son's safety, until he began to threaten and attack the workers themselves. Thus, these mothers' accounts raise further questions about why professionals may be more prepared to believe fathers even where their violence and abuse is patently obvious, and are addressed in the concluding chapter.

In conclusion, these mothers' accounts fill out many of the silences that were so apparent in the fathers' accounts, particularly in relation to fathers' direct emotional abuse of children and the impact of fathers' abusive practices. However, they also confirm and elaborate on a number of common themes which arose from the fathers' accounts, and these are discussed further in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 8 Conclusions

In this concluding chapter, I discuss the implications of these findings and the theoretical questions and policy issues they raise. As the first UK investigation, which has been undertaken with violent men, specifically focussing on the meanings of fatherhood and their fathering practices in this context, this study provides key insights into violent fathers' views and consequently raises some crucial issues in relation to policy and practitioner perspectives in this area. It also supports more extensive feminist research that has been undertaken with mothers and with children, which has highlighted the interconnections between domestic violence and child abuse and provides further understandings of violent fathers from mothers' perspectives. This chapter briefly summarises the findings from the fathers' and mothers' accounts in key themes, and discusses their implications in relation to policy and practice in the father-child contact context, post-separation.

Key themes

Shifting discourses and practices of violent fathering

One key theme to emerge from the fathers' accounts is that the majority did not construct themselves as 'distant' fathers who supported the 'traditional' division of labour in the home and were generally uninvolved in their children's care. Instead, most of these fathers represented themselves as 'new style' men who, when still living with families, were involved in the care of their children, particularly where mothers worked outside the home. Such accounts cut across class boundaries and there was, in general, little indication

that fathers with working class backgrounds were more likely to espouse views about the traditional division of labour within the home, as has been suggested in some of the earlier literature in this area (see for example, Messerschmidt, 1993). Fathers being actually involved in children's care to a greater or lesser extent, was also supported through the mothers' accounts. This study therefore highlights some differences in violent fathering practices from earlier research, which suggested that violent fathers were usually 'distant' and 'uninvolved fathers' who took little part in child rearing activities (Holden and Ritchie, 1991).

Abusive childcare and discourses of dominant masculine practices

However, both the fathers' and mothers' accounts indicated that the childcare context was a key means through which they could continue to constitute and practise dominant masculinities, through abusive parenting practices. Thus, fathers' discourses about looking after children suggested that they frequently viewed very young children as 'provoking' their physical and intimidatory abuse towards them. Such provocations were explained in terms of children making unreasonable demands, such as 'demanding' fathers' attention, or in terms of children 'annoying' fathers. Further, their justifications for their abuse towards children were similar to the reasons they gave for abusing mothers in their accounts. These accounts therefore suggest that there was no simple relation between men's level of involvement in childcare activities and less abusive practices towards children. They also indicate that abuse was not only likely to occur in the specific context of fathers' disciplining of children or

‘over-punishing’ them for wrong-doing (see Farmer and Owen, 2000). In addition, there were some indications from the fathers’ accounts and several from the mothers’ accounts that fathers’ specific abusive practices towards children, could involve deliberate emotional cruelty and threats to frighten and intimidate them and exert their control. Whilst this could occur when fathers were still living with families, it was particularly evident where fathers had contact with children, post-separation. In this setting, fathers’ accounts rationalised such behaviour through constructs of ‘mother blame’ and there was no acknowledgement that such threats and cruelty could impact on the children themselves in their accounts.

Violent fathers’ constructs of children

Fathers’ accounts of their abusive parenting practices towards children in general, in this study, indicated that they constructed children in terms of ‘what they could get from them,’ and the idea that they should even consider what they could offer children, or that children might have their own needs and identities, was usually missing from their accounts. Moreover, although, at times, fathers constructed children, or certain children in families as being ‘special to them,’ and as ‘loved possessions’ or sources of ‘enjoyment’, this did not mean that they were prepared to consider the impact of their violence and abuse on them. The mothers’ accounts further elaborated on this theme, indicating that fathers’ occasional interest in their children, was often a matter of whim. In addition, there were indications in two of the mothers’ accounts, that the ‘specialness’ of particular girl children in families, could also be

related to fathers' expectations that these children could be used to fulfil their sexual needs, through their sexual abuse of such children.

Children as unconditional providers and objects of love

Such constructs of children were also evident in the reasons fathers gave for wanting contact with children. Thus, children were frequently talked about in terms of fulfilling fathers' own emotional needs, or were perceived as objects in which fathers could invest their love, and which would cancel out their violence and abuse. Thus, it was apparent, that such discourses of 'love' had very different meanings from what might be conventionally understood as an unselfish emotional commitment to children's well being.

Discounting of children's own feelings and fears of their fathers

Such discourses of love could also be invested with rights of possession over children and in two cases was used to justify the forcible abduction of children from mothers, when they left the family home because of a partner's violence. Moreover, most men viewed contact as their inviolable right as fathers which could not be interfered with, whatever the children's views and despite having at times acknowledged that their children were terrified of them and that there had been other harmful impacts as a consequence of their abuse.

Violent fathers' own moral rightness, rights and sense of entitlement

Thus, fathers were able to discount children's feelings and experiences of their abuse, because as fathers, they were the ones who were in the right, and who had certain inviolable rights. These discourses can be seen to connect to Stoltenberg's perspective on the way men construct violent masculine identities through their own sense of being morally right. This sense of 'rightness', Stoltenberg argues, enables violent men to obliterate the identities and personhood of others and re-present themselves as victims of injustice, since others have challenged and threatened their perceived rights. In this regard, the few fathers who did acknowledge that their children were fearful or frightened of them in the post-separation context, were also able to use discourses of mother-blame and argue that mothers were influencing children against them. In addition, in arguing for their rights to have contact with children, fathers also constructed themselves as acting in a morally 'responsible' way, and as 'responsible fathers' by seeking contact.

Discourses of violent fathers as victims

Constructs of mother blame and 'equal rights' to children were also used to re-present themselves as victims, either of mothers' allegations, or of the criminal justice system, where discourses of mothers' equal abuse of fathers and/or children could be brought into play to support such a sense of unfairness and injustice in the post-separation context, when arguing for fathers' rights to contact. Another victimisation discourse, which was particularly used by some of the fathers on the more psychodynamically orientated perpetrator programme, was that violence towards women and the abuse of children was a

'cry for help' and related to underlying emotions which were out of their control, rather than being based on a masculine sense of 'entitlement' to have their needs met by others in families (see also Adams, 1988). The use of the above discourses meant that several fathers were able to manipulate the meanings of their violence and represent them in socially legitimate ways (see Cavanagh et al., 2001). At the same time, they also drew on discourses of social legitimacy from family law policies and practices in order to justify their own discourses of victimisation. In contrast, the mothers' accounts indicated that they felt overwhelmingly disbelieved by professionals and suggested, that in general it is violent fathers' meanings and values which were more acceptable to those working in the family law system (see Hearn, 2001). This also meant that their children were not protected and were put at further risk, by being forced to have contact with such fathers.

Discourses of minimisation, omission and contradiction

In addition, as in other research with violent men discussed in the literature review, the fathers' accounts illustrated that they were able to minimise the impacts of their violence towards mothers on the children, through discursive strategies of omission as well as their own limited definitions of violence and abuse, although their accounts were characterised by contradiction in this area. This was also apparent in their talk about their own abusive practices directly towards children, where, for the most part, only direct physical violence was constructed as child abuse. In contrast, the mothers' accounts illustrated that fathers' abuse of children could involve a range of abusive practices, involving

emotional abuse and humiliation of children, intimidation, cruelty and extreme controlling behaviour, as well as in some cases, direct physical or sexual abuse. Such accounts are supported by other extensive research with children and mothers, discussed in chapter 2.

Dominance and superiority

Implicit in the fathers' accounts were discourses of dominance and control over mothers and children, although this was only occasionally directly expressed, and often only emerged when mothers and children were represented as making 'unreasonable' demands on fathers, or where fathers indicated that their views of dominance had been challenged through their attendance on a perpetrator programme. In addition, the fathers' accounts were often suffused with discourses of their superiority to mothers as parents.

Implications for policy and practice in relation to father-child contact

As can be seen from the above, this research indicates that the meanings which domestically violent men apply to their fathering practices are bound up with their own constructions of dominant masculinity and are integrally connected to their violence and control of mothers in familial social relations and not separate from them. This has particular implications for policies on such fathers' contact post-separation.

Current policy suggests that violent men can still be good enough fathers, despite their violence towards mothers, and has not specifically questioned

their fathering practices *per se*. Further, such policies in themselves provide implicit approval of fathers' violence towards mothers and their abuse and neglect of children, by supporting their contact with children in these circumstances (Sturge and Glaser, 2000). Moreover, there are assumptions, that although some children may initially need to be protected from seriously dangerous fathers through short term supervised contact, such fathers will gradually become less abusive, through increased contact and involvement in the care of their children. This research has however suggested that the opposite may be the case, and that looking after the children for longer periods can provide increased opportunities for such fathers to abuse children and thus increase their risks of harm. Further, the literature on risk assessments indicates that violent fathers' parenting practices need to be specifically assessed in considering the risks to children, when decisions are being made about a violent father's contact (Bancroft and Silverman, 2002). However, this literature and legal models which use risk assessment, whilst increasing the safety of children, indicate that there are no guarantees that children will be protected from harm (Chetwin et al., 1999).

Violent fathers and change

There are also assumptions within current policies on child contact, that sending violent fathers on perpetrator programmes, which address some of the impacts of their violence on children, can render them safe to have contact. Yet this research has raised a number of specific concerns about perpetrator programmes in relation to violent men as fathers. In particular, as indicated above, it highlighted that more psychodynamically orientated programmes may merely reinforce violent fathers' perceptions of themselves as victims. However, whatever the approaches of programmes, there were few indications that the violent fathers in this study were able to develop empathy for their children, or that they were able to change their behaviour sufficiently to stop their abusive parenting practices. In contrast, this research suggested that perpetrator programmes could have contradictory impacts on violent fathers and arm some with new discourses to resist change. In addition, the US evaluation research, discussed earlier, indicates that there is little evidence that such programmes are effective in ending men's violence. For such fathers their social and personal identities as men are constructed through practices of violent masculinity, where there are deeply embedded assumptions of not only male power, status and privilege, but beliefs that children as well as women are there to meet their own needs. Concepts such as respect for the personal autonomy of women and children are therefore virtually meaningless whilst concepts of equality are often only applied to themselves where their own interests and status as men are challenged.

Ultimately, therefore, as long as the state continues to ally itself with the interests of violent fathers and rewards them through giving them contact with children, none of the above solutions are likely to be effective in bringing about change and ending the oppression of children and their mothers in this context. Alternately, these policies and practices can be viewed as a key means of reconstituting gendered social relations of power through the idealisation of fatherhood.

References

- Abbott, P. and Wallace, C. (1992) *The Family and the New Right*. London: Pluto.
- Abrahams, C. (1994) *The Hidden Victims: Children and Domestic Violence*. London: NCH Action for Children.
- Adams, D. (1988) 'Treatment models of men who batter: a pro-feminist analysis', in K. Yllo and M. Bograd (eds), *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Alder, C. M. and Polk, K. (1996) 'Masculinity and child homicide', *British Journal of Criminology*, 36 (3): 396-411.
- Amato, P.R. and Keith, B. (1991) 'Parental divorce and adult well-being: a meta-analysis', *Psychological Bulletin*, 110: 26-46
- Anderson, L. (1997) *Contact between Children and Violent Fathers: In Whose Best Interest?* London: Rights of Women.
- Anderson, K.L. and Umberson, D. (2001) 'Gendering violence: masculinity and power in men's accounts of domestic violence', *Gender and Society*, 15 (3): 358-380.
- Arber, S. (1993) 'Designing samples', in N. Gilbert (ed.), *Researching Social Life* London: Sage.
- Arendell, T. (1995) *Fathers and Divorce*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Aris, R., Harrison, C. and Humphreys, C. (2002) *Safety and Child Contact: an Analysis of the Role of Child Contact Centres in the Context of Domestic Violence and Child Welfare Concerns*. London: Lord Chancellor's Department.
- Austin, B. and Dankwort, J. (1999) 'Standards for batterer programs: a review and analysis', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14 (2): 152-168.
- Backcock, J.C. and LaTailedde, J.J. (2000) 'Evaluating interventions for men who batter', in J.P. Vincent and E. N. Jouriles (eds), *Domestic Violence Guidelines for Research Informed Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Backett, K. (1987) 'The negotiation of fatherhood', in C. Lewis and M. O'Brien

- (eds), *Reassessing Fatherhood: New Observations on Fathers and the Modern Family*. London: Sage.
- Bainham, A. (1990) *Children and the New Law: The Children Act 1989*. Bristol: Family Law.
- Bancroft, L. and Silverman, J.G. (2002) *The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Barron, J. (1990) *Not Worth the Paper? The Effectiveness of Legal Protection for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic Violence*. Bristol: Women's Aid Federation, England.
- Barron, J., Harwin, N. and Singh, T. (1992) *Written Evidence to the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee Inquiry into Domestic Violence*. Bristol: Women's Aid Federation, England.
- Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Beail, N. and McGuire, J. (eds) (1982) *Fathers: Psychological Perspectives*. London: Junction books.
- Beail, N. (1982) 'Role of the father during pregnancy and childbirth', in N. Beail and J. McGuire (eds), *Fathers: Psychological Perspectives*. London: Junction books
- Beaumont, B. (1999) 'Risk assessment and prediction research', in P. Parsloe (ed) *Risk Assessment in Social Care and Social Work*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Bennett, L. and Williams, O. (2001) *Controversies and Recent Studies of Batterer Intervention Program Effectiveness*.
www.vawnet.org/domesticviolence/research/vaw. accessed 10.10.2003
- Bertoia, C.E. and Drakitch, J. (1995) 'The fathers' rights movement: contradictions in rhetoric and practice', in W. Marsiglio (ed.), *Fatherhood, Contemporary Theory, Research and Social Policy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bhatti-Sinclair, K. (1994) 'Asian women and violence from male partners', in C. Lupton and T. Gillespie (eds), *Working with Violence*. Basingstoke: Macmillan

- Bograd, M. (1988) 'Feminist perspectives on wife abuse: an introduction', in K. Yllo and M. Bograd (eds), *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Bowker, L.H. (1998) 'On the difficulty of eradicating masculine violence', in L.H. Bowker (ed), *Masculinities and Violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bowker, L.H., Arbitell, M. and McFerron, J.R. (1988) 'On the relationship between wife-beating and child abuse', in K. Yllo and M. Bograd (eds). *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Bowlby, J. (1953) *Childcare and the Growth of Love*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Bradshaw, J., Stimson, C., Skinner, C. and Williams, J. (1999) *Absent Fathers?* London: Routledge.
- Brandon, M. and Lewis, A (1996) 'Significant harm and children's experiences of domestic violence', *Child and Family Social Work*, 1: 33-42
- Brannen, J. and Moss, P. (1987) 'Fathers in dual-earner households – through mothers' eyes', in Lewis, C. and O'Brien, M. (1987) *Reassessing Fatherhood: New Observations on Fathers and the Modern Family*. London: Sage.
- Bream, V and Buchanan, A. (2003) 'Distress among children whose separated or divorced parents cannot agree arrangements for them', *British Journal of Social Work*, 33:227-238
- Bretherton, H. (2002) 'Because it's me the decisions are about', - children's experiences of private family law proceedings', *Family Law*, 32: 450-455.
- British Sociological Association (2002) *Statement of Ethical Practice*.
[www.britisoc.co.uk/library/ethicsguidelines2002.doc?](http://www.britisoc.co.uk/library/ethicsguidelines2002.doc) Accessed 7.7.03
- Brittan, A. (1989) *Masculinity and Power*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Brophy, J. (1982) 'Parental rights and children's welfare: some problems of feminists' strategy in the 1920s', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 10 (2): 149-68.
- Brophy, J. (1985) 'Childcare and the growth of power: the status of mothers in

- custody disputes', in J. Brophy and C. Smart (eds), *Women in Law: Explorations in Law, Family and Sexuality*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Brophy, J. (1989) 'Custody law, childcare and inequality in Britain', in C. Smart and S. Sevenhuijsen (eds), *Child Custody and the Politics of Gender*. London: Routledge.
- Brown, T., Frederico, M., Hewitt, L. and Sheehan, R. (2000) 'Revealing the existence of child: abuse in the context of marital breakdown and custody and access disputes' *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 24 (6): 849-859.
- Buchanan, C. M., Maccoby, E.E. and Dornbusch, S.N. (1991) 'Caught between parents: adolescents' experience in divorced homes', *Child Development*, 62:1008-1020.
- Burgess, A. (1997) *Fatherhood Reclaimed*. London: Vermilion.
- Burgess, A. and Ruxton, S. (1996) *Men and their Children: Proposals for Public Policy*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Burghes, L. Clarke, L. and Cronin, N. (1997) *Fathers and Fatherhood in Britain*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Burton, S., Regan, L. and Kelly, L. (1998) *Supporting Women and Challenging Men: Lessons from the Domestic Violence Intervention Project*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Camera, K. and Resnick, G. (1989) 'Styles of conflict resolution and co-operation between divorced parents: effects on children's behaviour and adjustment', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 59: 560-574.
- Carlson, B. E. (1991) Outcomes of physical abuse and observation of marital violence in adolescents in placement, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 6: 526-534.
- Castells, M. (1997) *The Power of Identity (The Information Age, Vol II)*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cavanagh, K. and Lewis, R. (1996) 'Interviewing violent men: challenge or

- compromise?', in K. Cavanagh and V. E. Gree (eds), *Working with Men: Feminism and Social Work*. London: Routledge.
- Cavanagh, K., Dobash, R.E., Dobash, R.P. and Lewis, R. (2001) 'Remedial work: men's strategic responses to their violence against intimate female partners', *Sociology*, 35 (3): 695-714
- Cawson, P., Wattam, C., Brooker, G. and Kelly, G. (2000) *Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom*. London: NSPCC.
- Chant, S. (1997) *Women-Headed Households*. London: Routledge.
- Cherlin, A.J., Furstenberg, F.F., Chase-Lansdale, P.L., Kiernan, P.L., Robins, P., Morison, D.R. and Teitler, J.O. (1992) *Longitudinal Studies of the Effects of Divorce on Children in Great Britain and the United States*, *Science*, 252: 1386-1420.
- Chetwin, A., Knaggs, T. and Te Wairere Ahiahi Young, P. (1999) *The Domestic Violence Legislation and Child Access in New Zealand*. Auckland: Ministry of Justice.
- Children Act Sub-Committee (Advisory Board on Family Law) (1999) *A Consultation Paper on Contact Between Children and Violent Parents: the question of parental contact in cases where there is domestic violence*. London: Lord Chancellor's Department.
- Children Act Sub-Committee (Advisory Board on Family Law) (2000) *A Report to the Lord Chancellor on the Question of Parental Contact in Cases Where there is Domestic Violence* London: Lord Chancellor's Department.
- Children Act Sub-Committee (Advisory Board on Family Law) (2001) *Making Contact Work: A Consultation Paper*. London: Lord Chancellor's Department.
- Children Act Sub-Committee (Advisory Board on Family Law) (2002) *Making Contact Work*. London: Lord Chancellor's Department.
- Chodorow, N. (1978) *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Choudry, S. (1996) *Pakistani Women's Experience of Domestic Violence in Great Britain. Research Findings No. 43*. London: Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate
- Church, J. (1984) *Violence against Wives: Its Causes and Effects*. Christ Church, NZ: John Church publisher.
- Cicoual, A. (1964) *Method and Measurement in Sociology*. New York: Free Press.
- Cobbe, F.P (1868) 'Criminals, idiots, women and minors: is the classification sound', *Frasers' Magazine*, December: 380-397
- Cockburn, C. (1991) *In the Way of Women : Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organisations*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Cockett, M. and Tripp, J. (1994) *The Exeter Family Study: Family Breakdown and its Impact on Children*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Collier, R. (1995) *Masculinity, Law and the Family*. London: Routledge.
- Connell, R.W. (1987) *Gender and Power*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Connell, R.W. (1995) *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R.W. (2002) 'On hegemonic masculinity and violence: response to Jefferson and Hall', *Theoretical Criminology*, 16 (1):89-99
- Cornwall, A. and Lindisfarne, N. (1994) 'Dislocating masculinity: gender, power and anthropology', in A. Cornwall and N.Lindisfarne (eds), *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*. London: Routledge.
- Coveney, L., Jackson, M., Jeffreys, S., Kay, L. and Mahony, P. (1984) *The Sexuality Papers: Male Sexuality and the Social Control of Women*. London: Hutchinson.
- Creighton, S., Ghate, D., Hazel, N., Field, J. and Finch, S. (2003) 'Putting the Conflict Tactics Scale in context in violence from parent to child', in R. M. Lee and E. Stanko (eds), *Researching Violence: Essays on Methodology and Measurement*. London: Routledge.
- Daniel, B. and Taylor, J. (2001) *Engaging with Fathers: Practice Issues for Health and Social Care*. London, Jessica Kingsley.

- Davidoff, L., Doolittle, M., Fink, J. and Holden, K (1999) *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960*. London: Longman.
- De Beauvoir, S. (1949, 1970) *The Second Sex*. London: New English Library. 6th Edition.
- Dennis, N. and Erdos, G. (1992) *Families without Fatherhood*. London: Institute of Economic Affairs.
- Denzin, N. (1994) 'The art and politics of interpretation', in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Department of Health (1999) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. London: The Stationary Office.
- Dinnerstein, D. (1976) *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Dobash, R.E. and Dobash, R.P (1979) *Violence against Wives: A Case against Patriarchy*. Shepton Mallet: Open Books.
- Dobash, R.E. and Dobash, R.P. (1988) 'Research as social action: the struggle for battered women', in K. Yllo and M. Bograd (eds), *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. London: Sage.
- Dobash, R.E. and Dobash, R.P. (1992) *Women, Violence and Social Change*. London: Routledge.
- Dobash, R.E. and Dobash, R.P. (1998) 'Violent men and violent contexts', in R.E. Dobash and R.P. Dobash (eds), *Rethinking Violence Against Women*. London: Sage.
- Dobash, R.E. and Dobash, R.P. (2001) 'Risk, danger and safety', *Safe: The Domestic Abuse Quarterly, Pilot Issue*.
- Dobash, R.P., Dobash, R.E., Cavanagh, K. and Lewis, R. (1995) 'Evaluating criminal justice programmes for violent men', in R.E. Dobash, R.P. Dobash, L. Cavanagh and P. Noaks (eds), *Gender and Crime*. Cardiff: University Press.

- Dobash, R.P., Dobash, R.E., Cavanagh, K. and Lewis, R. (1996) *Research Evaluation of Programmes for Violent Men*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Office.
- Dominy, N. and Radford, L. (1996) *Domestic Violence in Surrey: Developing an Effective Inter-agency Response*. London: Roehampton Institute.
- Eadley, N. and Wetherell, M. (1996) 'Masculinity, power and identity', in M. Mac An Ghaill (ed), *Understanding Masculinities*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Edleson, J. (1999) 'Children's witnessing of adult violence'. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14: 839-870
- Edleson, J. and Syers, M. (1990) 'The relative effectiveness of group treatments for men who batter', *Social Work Research and Abstracts*, 26: 10-17.
- Edwards, S. (2000) *Reducing Domestic Violence... What Works? Civil Law Remedies*. London: Home Office.
- Eekelaar, J. and Clive, E. (1977) *Custody after Divorce*. Oxford: Centre for Socio-Legal Studies.
- Elliot, B. and Richards, M. (1991) 'Children and divorce: educational performance and behaviour before and after parental separation'. *International Journal of Law and the Family*, 5: 258-274.
- Epstein, C. and Keep, G. (1995) 'What children tell ChildLine about domestic violence', in A. Saunders with C. Epstein, G. Keep and T. Debonnaire, *'It Hurts Me Too': Children's Experiences of Domestic Violence and Refuge Life*. Bristol: Women's Aid Federation of England/ ChildLine/NISW.
- Families Need Fathers (2003) 'Safety and Justice: The Government Proposals on Domestic Violence: Reply to Consultation from Families Need Fathers'. www.fnf.org.uk/briefings. Accessed 9.10.2003
- Farmer, E. and Owen, M. (1995) *Child Protection Practice. Private Risks and Public Remedies. Messages from Research*. London: HMSO.
- Farmer, E. and Pollock, S. (1998) *Substitute Care for Sexually Abused and Abusing Children*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

- Farmer, E. and Owen, M. (2000) 'Gender and the child protection process', in C. Itzen (ed), *Home Truths about Child Sexual Abuse: Influencing Policy and Practice. A Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Featherstone, B. and Trinder, L. (1997) 'Familiar subjects? Domestic violence and child welfare', *Child and Family Social Work*, 2:147-159
- Feder, L. and Forde, D.R. (2000) *A Test of the Efficacy of Court-Mandated Counselling for Domestic Violence Offenders: The Broward Experiment*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.
- Fielding, N. (2001) 'Ethnography', in N. Gilbert (ed) *Researching Social Life*. London: Sage. 2nd Edition
- Ferguson, H. (2001) 'Men and masculinities in late-modern Ireland' in B. Pease and K. Pringle (eds) *A Man's World: Changing Men's Practices in a Globalised World*. London: Z Books.
- Ferri, E. and Smith, K. (1996) *Parenting in the 1990s*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Finch, J. (1989) *Family Obligations and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fortin, J. (1998) *Children's Rights and the Developing Law*. London: Butterworths.
- Foucault, M. (1979) *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Freeman, M. (1998) 'The Next Children's Act', *Family Law*, 28: 341-348.
- Frye, M. (1983) *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*. New York: Crossing Press.
- Furniss, C. (2000) 'The process of referral to a family contact centre: policies and practices', *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 12 (3): 255-281
- Furstenberg, F., Morgan, S. and Allison, P. (1987) 'Paternal participation and children's well-being after marital dissolution', *American Sociological Review*, 8: 695-720.
- Gadd, D. (2003) 'Reading between the lines: subjectivity and men's violence', *Men and Masculinities*, 5 (4): 333-354.

- Gadd, D., Farrall, S., Dallimore, D. and Lombard, N. (2003) *Domestic Abuse against Men in Scotland: Crime and Criminal Justice Findings No. 61*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Office.
- Gelles, R. J. (1983) 'An exchange/social control theory of family violence' in Finkelhor, D., Gelles, R.J., Hotaling, G.T. and Straus, M.A. (eds), *The Dark Side of Families: Current Family Research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Gelles, R. (1997) *Intimate Violence in Families*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 3rd Edition.
- Gibbons, J., Conroy, S. and Bell, C. (1995) *Operating the Child Protection System: A Study of Child Protection Practice in English Local Authorities*. London: HMSO.
- Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. (1992) *The Transformation of Intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gielen, A., O'Campo, P., Faden, R., Kass, N. and Xue, X. (1994) 'Interpersonal conflict and physical violence during the childbearing year', *Social Science and Medicine*, 39: 781-787.
- Gilbert, L.A. (1993) *Two Careers/One Family*. London: Sage.
- Gittins, D. (1985) *The Family in Question: Changing Households and Familiar Ideologies*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goldstein, J., Freud, A. and Solnit, A. (1979) *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child*. New York Free Press. 2nd Edition.
- Gondolf, E. (1988) 'The effect of batterer counseling on shelter outcome', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14:41-61
- Gondolf, E. (1997) 'Patterns of reassault in batterer programs', *Violence and Victims*, 12: 373-387.
- Gondolf, E. (1998) *A 30-month Follow-up of Court-referred Batterers in Four Cities*. Durham, DA: Paper presented at Program Evaluation and Family Research: An

International Conference.

- Gondolf, E. (1999) 'A comparison of four batterer intervention systems: do court referral, program length and services matter?', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 14: 41-61.
- Goodman, L., Dutton, M. and Bennett, L. (2000) 'Predicting repeat abuse among arrested batterers: use of the danger assessment scale in the criminal justice system', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15 (1) 63-73.
- Gordon, L. (1988) 'The Politics of Child Sexual Abuse'. *Feminist Review*. 28: 56-74.
- Graycar, R. (1989) 'Equal rights versus fathers' rights: the child custody debate in Australia', in C. Smart and S. Sevenhuijsen (eds), *Child Custody and the Politics of Gender*. London: Routledge.
- Guardian Newspaper. Fathers Picket Judges over Child Contact.30.10.01.
www.guardian.co.uk. Accessed. 2.11.01.
- Hague, G., Kelly, L., Malos, E. and Mullender, A. with Debonnaire, T. (1996) *Children, Domestic Violence and Refuges: a Study of Needs and Responses*. Bristol: Women's Aid Federation of England.
- Halsey, M. (1992) 'Foreword' in N. Dennis and G. Erdos. *Families without Fatherhood*. London: Institute of Economic Affairs.
- Hanmer, J. (1996) 'Women and violence: commonalities and diversities', in B. Fawcett, B. Featherstone, J. Hearn and C. Toft (eds). *Violence and Gender Relations*. London: Sage.
- Hanmer, J. (1998) 'Out of control: men, violence and family life', in J. Popay, J. Hearn and J. Edwards (eds), *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare*. London: Routledge.
- Harding, S. (1987) 'Is there a feminist method?', in S. Harding (ed.), *Feminism and Methodology*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Harne, L. and Radford, J. (1994) 'Reinstating patriarchy: the politics of the family and the new legislation', in A. Mullender and R. Morley (eds). *Children Living with Domestic Violence: Putting Men's Abuse of Children on the Child Care Agenda*.

- London: Whiting and Birch.
- Harne, L. and Rights of Women (1997) *Valued Families: The Lesbian Mothers Legal Handbook*. London: Women's Press.
- Harne, L. (2000) 'Sexual violence and the school curriculum', in J. Radford, M.Friedberg and L. Harne (eds), *Women, Violence and Strategies for Action* Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hart, B. (1988) 'Beyond the "duty to warn": a therapist's "duty to protect" battered women and children', in J.C. Campbell (ed), *Assessing Dangerousness: Violence by Sexual Offenders, Batterers, and Child Abusers*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Harvey, L. (1990) *Critical Social Research*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Hawkins, A.J. and Dollahite, D.C. (1997) 'Beyond the role – inadequacy perspective of fathering', in A.J. Hawkins and D.C. Dollahite (eds), *Generative Fathering*. London: Sage.
- Healey, K., Smith, C. with O'Sullivan, C. (1998) *Batterer Intervention: Program Approaches and Criminal Justice Strategies*. Pittsburgh: National Institute of Justice. www.njrs.org/txtfiles/168638.txt. Accessed 9.10.2001
- Hearn, J. (1993) *Researching Men and Men's Violences. Research Paper 4*. Bradford: University of Bradford, Department of Applied Social Studies.
- Hearn, J. (1996) 'Men's violence to known women: historical, everyday and theoretical constructions by men' in B. Fawcett, B. Featherstone, J. Hearn and C. Toft (eds), *Violence and Gender Relations*. London: Sage.
- Hearn, J. (1998a) *The Violences of Men: How Men Talk about and How Agencies Respond to Men's Violence to Women*. London: Sage.
- Hearn, J. (1998b) 'Men will be men: the ambiguity of men's support for men who have been violent to known women', in J. Popay, J. Hearn and J. Edwards (eds), *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare*. London: Routledge.
- Hearn, J. (2001) 'Nation, state and welfare: the cases of Finland and the UK', in B. Pease and K. Pringle (eds) *A Man's World: Changing Men's Practices in a Globalised World*.

- London: Z Books.
- Hearn, J. (2002) 'Men, fathers and the state: national and global relations', in Hudson, B. (ed) *Making Men into Fathers: Men, Masculinities and the Social Politics of Fatherhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hendessi, M. (1997) *Voices of Children Witnessing Domestic Violence: A Form of Child Abuse*. Coventry: Coventry City Council Domestic Violence Focus Group.
- Henley, T. and Hershman, D. (2001) 'The representation of children in private law', *Family Law*, 31: 540-541.
- Hester, M., Humphries, J., Pearson, C., Qaiser, K., Radford, L. and Woodfield, K. (1994) 'Domestic violence and child contact', in A. Mullender and R. Morley (eds), *Children Living with Domestic Violence: Putting Men's Abuse of Women on the Child Care Agenda*. London: Whiting and Birch.
- Hester, M., Kelly, L., and Radford, J. (1996) (eds), *Women, Violence and Male Power*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hester, M. and Radford, L. (1996) *Domestic Violence and Child Contact Arrangements in England and Denmark*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Hester, M. and Pearson, C. (1997) 'Domestic violence and children – the practice of court welfare officers', *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 9 (3): 281-290.
- Hester, M., Pearson, C. and Radford, L. (1997) *Domestic Violence: A National Survey of Court Welfare and Voluntary Sector Mediation*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Hester, M. and Pearson, C. (1998) *From Periphery to Centre: Domestic Violence in Work with Abused Children*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Hester, M. and Harne, L. (1999) 'Fatherhood, children and violence: placing the UK in an international context', in S. Watson and L. Doyal (eds), *Engendering Social Policy*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hester, M., Pearson, C. and Harwin, N. (2000) *Making an Impact: Children and Domestic Violence, A Reader*. London: Jessica Kingsley. 2nd Edition
- Hester, M., Hanmer, J., Coulson, S., Moriahan, M. and Razak, A. (2003)

- Domestic Violence: Making it through the Criminal Justice System.*
Sunderland: Northern Rock Building Society in association with the University of Sunderland.
- Higgins, G. (1994) 'Children's accounts', in Mullender, A. and Morley, R. (eds). (1994) *Children Living with Domestic Violence: Putting Men's Abuse of Women on the Child Care Agenda.* London: Whiting and Birch.
- Hill, M. and Tisdall, K. (1997) *Children and Society.* London: Longman.
- Hilton, N.Z. (1992) 'Battered women's concerns about their children witnessing wife assault', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 7 (1): 77-86
- Hoggett, B. and Pearl, D. (1987) *The Family, Law and Society: Cases and Materials.* London: Butterworths. 2nd Edition.
- Holden, G. and Ritchie, K. (1991) 'Linking extreme marital discord, child rearing and child behaviour problems: evidence from battered women', *Child Development*, 62: 311-327.
- Holland, J. and Ramazanoglu, C. (1994) 'Coming to conclusions: power and interpretation in researching young women's sexuality', in M. Maynard and J. Purvis (eds), *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective.* London: Taylor and Francis.
- Home Office. (1999) *Living without Fear: An Integrated Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women.* London: Home Office.
- Home Office. (2003) *Safety and Justice: The Government Proposals on Domestic Violence.* London, Home Office.
- Hooper, C. (1992) *Mothers Surviving Child Sexual Abuse.* London: Routledge.
- Hooper, C. (1994) 'Do families need fathers? The impact of divorce on children', in A. Mullender R. and Morley (eds), *Children Living with Domestic Violence: Putting Men's Abuse of Women on the Child Care Agenda.* London: Whiting and Birch.
- Hooper, C. (1995) 'Women's and their children's experiences of domestic violence: rethinking the links', *Women's Studies International Forum* 18 (3): 349-360.

- Horley, S. (2000) *The Charm Syndrome: Why Charming Men Can Make Dangerous Lovers*. London: Waterstones. 2nd Edition.
- Hoyle, C. (1998) *Negotiating Domestic Violence: Police, Criminal Justice and Victims*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hughes, H.M. (1988) 'Psychological and behavioural correlates of family violence in child witnesses and victims', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 58 (1) 77-90.
- Humphreys, C. (1997) 'Child sexual abuse allegations in the context of divorce: issues for mothers', *British Journal of Social Work*. 27: 529-44.
- Humphreys, C. (1999) 'Judicial alienation syndrome – failures to respond to post-separation violence', *Family Law*: 29: 313-316.
- Humphreys, C. (2000) *Social Work, Domestic Violence and Child Protection: Challenging Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Humphreys, C. (2003) 'Squaring the circle – contact and domestic violence', *Family Law*, 33: 419-423.
- Humphreys, C., Hester, M., Hague, G., Mullender, A., Abrahams, H. and Lowe, P. (2000) *From Good Intentions to Good Practice: Working with Families where there is Domestic Violence*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Humphreys, C. and Mullender, A. (2000) *Children and Domestic Violence: A Research Overview of the Impact on Children*. Dartington, Totnes: Research in Practice.
- Humphreys, C. and Thiara, R. (2002) *Routes to Safety: Protection Issues Facing Abused Women and Children and the Role of Outreach Services*. Bristol: Women's Aid Publications.
- Jackson, S. (1998) 'Feminist social theory', in S. Jackson and J. Jones (eds), *Contemporary Feminist Theories*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Jaffe, P.G., Wolfe, D.A. and Wilson, S. K. (1990) *Children of Battered Women*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jaffe, P.G., Lemon, K. D. and Poisson, S. E. (2003) *Child Custody and Domestic*

- Violence: A Call for Safety and Accountability*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- James, G. (1994) *Discussion Report for ACPC Conference 1994: Study of Working Together 'Part 8' Reports*. London: Department of Health, ACPC Series, Report no.1.
- James, A. and Prout, A. (1990) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. London: Falmer.
- Jefferson, T. (1994) 'Theorising masculine subjectivity' in T. Newburn and E.A. Stanko (Eds), *Just Boys Doing Business: Men, Masculinities and Crime*. London: Routledge
- Jeffreys, S. (1985) *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880- 1930*. London: Pandora.
- Johnston, J., Kline, M. and Tschann, J.T. (1989) 'Ongoing post-divorce conflict: effects on children of joint custody and frequent access', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 59: 576-591.
- Johnston, J. and Campbell, L. (1993) 'A clinical typology of interparental violence in disputed custody divorces'. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 63 (2): 190-199.
- Johnston, J. and Roseby, V. (1997) *In the Name of the Child*. New York. Free Press
- Kaye, M. (1996) 'Domestic violence, residence and contact', *Child and Family Law Quarterly* 8 (3): 50-57
- Kelly, L. (1988) *Surviving Sexual Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kelly, L. (1994) 'The interconnectedness of domestic violence and child abuse: challenges for research, policy and practice', in A. Mullender and R. Morley (eds), *Children Living with Domestic Violence: Putting Men's Abuse of Women on the Child Care Agenda*. London: Whiting and Birch.
- Kelly, L. (1996) 'When does the speaking profit us: reflections on the challenges of developing feminist perspectives on abuse and violence by women', in M. Hester, L. Kelly and J. Radford (eds), *Women, Violence and Male Power*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Kelly, L. (1999) *Domestic Violence Matters: An Evaluation of a Development Project*.

- Home Office Study 188*. London: The Stationary Office.
- Kelly, L., Burton, S. and Regan, L. (1992) 'Defending the indefensible? Quantitative methods and feminist research', in H. Hinds, A. Phoenix and J. Stacey (eds), *Working Out: New Directions for Women's Studies*. London: Falmer Press.
- Kelly, L., Burton, S. and Regan, L. (1994) 'Researching women's lives or studying women's oppression', in M. Maynard and J. Purvis (eds), *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Kelly, L. and Radford, J. (1998) 'Sexual violence against women and girls: an approach to an international overview', in R. E. Dobash and R. P. Dobash (eds), *Rethinking Violence against Women*. London: Sage.
- Kiernan, K., Land, H. and Lewis, J. (1998) *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kimmel, M. S. (2001) 'Global masculinities: restoration and resistance', in B. Pease and K. Pringle (eds) *A Man's World: Changing Men's Practices in a Globalised World*. London: Z Books.
- Kirkwood, C. (1993) *Leaving Abusive Partners*. London: Sage.
- Kline, M., Johnston, J. and Tschann, J.M. (1991) 'The long shadow of marital conflict: a model of children's post-divorce adjustment', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53: 297-318.
- Kramerae, C. and Spender, D. (1993) 'Exploding knowledge', in C. Kramerae and D. Spender (eds), *The Knowledge Explosion: Generations of Feminist Scholarship*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Kropp, P., Hart, S., Webster, C. and Eaves, D. (1995) *Manual for the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide*. Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Institute on Family Violence.
- Kropp, P., Hart, S., Webster, C. and Eaves, D. (1999) *Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide: Users Manual*. North Tonawanda, NY: Multi-health Systems.

- Kropp, P. and Hart, S. (2000) 'The Spousal risk assessment (SARA) guide: reliability and validity with adult male offenders', *Law and Human Behaviour* 24 (1): 101-118.
- Lamb, M.E. (1997) *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. New York: Wiley. 3rd Edition.
- Land, H. (1993) 'Families and law', in A. Cochrane and J. Muncie (eds), *Politics, Policy and Law*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Land, H. (1999) 'The Changing Worlds of Work and Families', in S. Watson and L. Doyle (eds), *Engendering Social Policy*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Layder, D. (1998) *Sociological Practice. Linking Theory and Social Research*. London: Sage.
- Laws, S. (1990) *Issues of Blood: The Politics of Menstruation*. Basingstoke: Macmillan
- Laws, S. (1996) 'The 'single' mothers' debate: a children's rights perspective', in J. Holland and L. Adkins (eds), *Sex, Sensibility and the Gendered Body* Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Lee, R.M. (1993) *Doing Research on Sensitive Issues*. London: Sage.
- Lee, R.M. and Renzetti, C.M. (1993) 'The problems of researching sensitive topics: an overview and introduction', in C. M. Renzetti and R. M. Lee (eds), *Researching Sensitive Topics*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lee, S.J. (1999) *Do Programmes for Men who Abuse their Partners Constitute an Effective Response to the Problem of Domestic Violence? A Case Study*. Phd Thesis, Nottingham University. British Library No.DX206793
- Lees, S. (1997) *Ruling Passions*. London: Sage.
- Lewis, C. (1982) 'The observation of father-infant relationships: an attachment to outmoded concepts', in L. McKee and M. O'Brien (eds), *The Father Figure*. London: Tavistock publications.
- Lewis, C. and O'Brien, M. (1987) *Reassessing Fatherhood: New Observations on Fathers and the Modern Family*. London: Sage.

- London Borough of Hackney (1993) *The Links between Domestic Violence and Child Abuse: Developing Services*, London, Hackney Council Press and Publicity Team.
- London Probation Association (2001) 'Domestic violence assessing the risks', *LPA Newsletter*, 6
www.london-probation.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=635 Accessed 10.10.03.
- London Probation Association (2002) 'New programme targets domestic violence', *LPA Newsletter*, 8
www.london-probation.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=595 accessed 10.10.03
- Lund, M. (1987) 'The non-custodial father: common challenges in parenting after divorce', in Lewis, C. and O'Brien, M. (eds), *Reassessing Fatherhood: New Observations on Fathers and the Modern Family*. London: Sage.
- MacKinnon, C. A. (1982) 'Feminism, marxism, method and the state: an agenda for theory', *Signs*, 7: 515-525
- MacKinnon, C. A. (1989) *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Maclean, M. and Eekelaar, J. (1997) *The Parental Obligation: A Study of Parenthood across Households*. Oxford: Hart Publishing.
- Maidment, S. (1976) 'A study in child custody', *Family Law*, 6:195-202
- Maidment, S. (1998) 'Parental alienation syndrome – a judicial response?', *Family Law*, 28: 264-266.
- Mama, A. (1989) *The Hidden Struggle: Statutory and Voluntary Sector Responses to Violence against Black Women in the Home*. London: London Race and Housing Unit/Runnymede Trust.
- Mann, C. (1996) 'Girls' own story: the search for a sexual identity in times of family change', in J. Holland and L. Adkins (eds), *Sex, Sensibility and the Gendered Body*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Marsiglio, W. (1995) 'Fatherhood scholarship: an overview and agenda for the

- future', in W. Marsiglio (ed.), *Reassessing Fatherhood: Contemporary Theory, Research and Social Policy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mathews, D. (1995) 'Parenting groups for men who batter'. in E. Peled, P. Jaffe and J. Edleson (eds), *Ending the Cycle of Violence: Community Responses to Children of Battered Women*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mathias, J, Mertin, P. and Murray, A. (1995) 'The psychological functioning of children from backgrounds of domestic violence', *Australian Psychologist*, 30: 47-56
- May, T. (1997) *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*. Buckingham: Open University Press. 2nd Edition.
- Maynard, M. (1985) 'The response of social workers to domestic violence', in J. Pahl. (ed), *Private Violence and Public Policy*. London: Routledge.
- Maynard, M. (1989) 'Privilege and patriarchy: feminist thought in the nineteenth century', in S. Mendus and J. Rendall (eds) *Sexuality and Subordination*. London: Routledge.
- McGee, C. (2000) *Childhood Experiences of Domestic Violence*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- McGuire, J. (1982) 'Gender-specific differences in early childhood: the impact of the father', in N. Beail and J. McGuire (eds), *Fathers: Psychological Perspectives*. London: Junction books.
- McKee, L. and O' Brien, M. (1982) *The Father Figure*. London: Tavistock publications.
- McKee, L. and O' Brien, M. (1983) 'Interviewing men: taking gender seriously', in E. Gamarnikow, D. Morgan, J. Purvis and D. Taylorson (eds) *The Public and the Private*. London: Heinemann.
- Mertin, P (1995) 'A follow-up study of children from domestic violence', *Australian Journal of Family Law*, 9: 76-85
- Messerschmidt, J. (1993) *Masculinities and Crime*. Maryland: Rowland and Littlefield.
- Metropolitan Police Service (2001) *Metropolitan Police Service Strategy*:

- Enough is Enough*. www.met.police.uk/enoughisenough/strategy.htm.
Accessed 10.10.03
- Mezey, G. and Bewley, S. (1997) 'Domestic violence and pregnancy', *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 104: 528-531
- Mirrlees-Black, C. (1995) *Estimating the extent of domestic violence from the 1992 BCS*. Home Office Research Bulletin, 37:1-18.
- Mirrlees-Black, C. (1999) *Domestic Violence: Findings from the BCS Self-Completion Questionnaire*. Home Office Research Study 191.
London: Home Office.
- Mooney, J. (1993) *The Hidden Figure: Domestic Violence in North London*
London: Islington Police and Crime Prevention Unit.
- Morgan, D. (1992) *Discovering Men*. London: Routledge
- Morgan, D. (2002) 'Epilogue', in Hudson, B. (ed) *Making Men into Fathers: Men, Masculinities and the Social Politics of Fatherhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mott, F.L. (1993) *Absent Fathers and Child Development: Emotional and Cognitive Development at Ages Five to Nine*. Report for National Institute of Child Health and Development. Columbus: Ohio State University, Centre for Human Resources Research.
- Mullender, A. (1996) *Rethinking Domestic Violence: The Social Work and Probation Response*. London: Routledge.
- Mullender, A. (2001) 'Meeting the Needs of Children' in J. Taylor Brown (ed), *What Works in Reducing Domestic Violence? A Comprehensive Guide for Professionals*. London: Whiting and Birch.
- Mullender, A. and Morley, R. (eds), (1994) *Children Living with Domestic Violence: Putting Men's Abuse of Women on the Child Care Agenda*.
London: Whiting and Birch.
- Mullender, A. and Burton, S. (2001) 'Dealing with perpetrators', in J. Taylor

- Brown (ed), *What Works in Reducing Domestic Violence? A Comprehensive Guide for Professionals*. London: Whiting and Birch.
- Mullender, A., Hague, G., Imam, U., Kelly, L., Malos, E. and Regan, L. (2002) *Children's Perspectives on Domestic Violence*. London: Sage.
- Murray, C. (1990) *The Emerging British Underclass*. London: IEA Health and Welfare Unit.
- National Association of Probation Officers (2002) *Contact, Separation and the Work of Family Court Staff*. London: National Association of Probation Officers.
- National Practitioners Network (1998) *Guidelines for Child Protection*. London, National Practitioners Network. DVIP
- Nazroo, J. (1995) 'Uncovering gender differences in the use of marital violence: the effect of methodology', *Sociology*, 29: 475-95.
- Neale, B. and Smart, C. (1998) *Agents or Dependents?: Struggling to Listen to Children in Family Law and Family Research*. Leeds: Centre for Research on Family, Kinship and Childhood, University of Leeds.
- Neale, B., Wade, A. and Smart, C. (1998) "I just get on with it": *Children's Experiences of Family Life following Parental Separation and Divorce*. Leeds: Centre for Research on Family, Kinship and Childhood, University of Leeds.
- Nicholson, P. (1993) 'Motherhood and women's lives', in D. Richardson and V. Robinson (eds), *Introducing Women's Studies*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Oakley, A. (1976) *Housewife*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Oakley, A. and Rigby, A. (1998) 'Are men good for the welfare of women and children', in J. Popay, J. Hearn, J. Edwards (eds), *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare*. London: Routledge.
- O'Connell Davidson, J. (1995) 'British Sex Tourists in Thailand', in M. Maynard and J. Purvis (eds), *(Hetero)sexual Politics*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- O'Connell Davidson, J. and Layder, D. (1994) *Methods, Sex and Madness*. London: Routledge.

- O'Hara, M.(1994) 'Child deaths in the context of domestic violence: implications for professional practice', in Mullender, A. and Morley, R. (eds), *Children Living with Domestic Violence: Putting Men's Abuse of Women on the Child Care Agenda*. London: Whiting and Birch.
- O'Keefe, M. (1995) 'Predictors of child abuse in maritally violent families', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 10: 3-25
- O'Sullivan, C. (1998) 'Ladykillers: similarities and divergences of masculinities in gang rape and wife battery', in L.H. Bowker (ed), *Masculinities and Violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Office of Law Reform. (1998) *The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order, 1998. SI 1998/1071 (NI 6)*. Belfast: Office of Law Reform.
- Parkinson, P. and Humphreys, C. (1998) 'Children who witness domestic violence – the implications for child protection', *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 10 (2): 147-159
- Parlsoe, P. (1999) 'Introduction', in P. Parsloe (ed) *Risk Assessment in Social Care and Social Work*. London: Jessica Kinglsey.
- Parsons, T. and Bales, R.F. (1953) *Family Socialisation and Interaction Process*. New York: Free Press.
- Parton, J. (1997) 'The joint residence issue'. *Family Law*, 27:75
- Ptacek, J. (1988) 'Why do men batter their wives?' in K. Yllo and M. Bograd (eds), *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. London: Sage.
- Peled, E. (1998) 'The experience of living with violence for preadolescent children of battered women', *Youth and Society*, 29 (4): 395-430.
- Peled, E. (2000) 'The parenting of men who abuse women: issues and dilemmas'. *British Journal of Social Work*, 30: 25-36.
- Pence, E. and Shepherd, M. (1988) 'Integrating feminist theory and practice: the challenge of the battered women's movement', in K. Yllo and M. Bograd (eds), *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Pence, E. and Paymar, M.(1993) *Education Groups for Men who Batter*. New York:

Springer.

- Pinkney, S. (2000) 'Children as welfare subjects in restructured social policy', in G. Lewis, S. Gewirtz and J. Clarke (eds), *Rethinking Social Policy*. London: Sage.
- Piper, C. (1997) 'Ascertaining the wishes and feelings of the child', *Family Law*, 27: 796-800.
- Piper, C. (2000) 'Assumptions about children's best interests', *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 22(3): 261-276
- Pleck, J. (1987) 'American fathering in historical perspective', in M. Kimmel (ed) *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Pringle, K. (1995) *Men, Masculinities and Social Welfare*. London: UCL Press.
- Pringle, K. (1998) 'Men and childcare: policy and practice', in J. Popay, J. Hearn, and J. Edwards (eds), *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare*. London: Routledge.
- Quinton, D., Selwyn, J., Rushton, A. and Dance, C. (1998) 'Contact between birth parents and children placed away from home', *Family Law Quarterly* 10: 1-13.
- Quortrup, J., Bardy, M., Sgritta, G. and Wintersberger, H. (eds), (1994) *Childhood Matters*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Radford, J. (2001) *Professionalising Responses to Domestic Violence: Definitional Difficulties*. Unpublished paper, Belfast, SPA Conference.
- Radford, J., Kelly, I. and Hester, M. (1996) 'Introduction' in M. Hester, L. Kelly and J. Radford (eds), *Women, Violence and Male Power*. Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Radford, J., Harne, L. and Friedberg, M. (2000) 'Introduction' in J. Radford, M. Friedberg and L. Harne (eds), *Women, Violence and Strategies for Action*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Radford, L., Sayer, S. and AMICA (1999) *Unreasonable Fears? Child Contact in the Context of Domestic Violence: A Survey of Mothers' Perceptions of Harm*. Bristol: Women's Aid Federation of England.
- Rendell, K., Rathus, Z. and Lynch, A. (2000) *An Unacceptable Risk: A Report*

- on Child Contact Arrangements where there is Violence in the Family* Brisbane, QL: Women's Legal Service.
- Respect (2000) *Statement of Principles and Minimum Standards of Practice*. London: DVIP.
- Rich, A. (1977) *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* London: Virago.
- Richards, M. (1982) 'Foreword', in N. Beail and J. McGuire (eds), *Fathers: Psychological Perspectives*. London: Junction books.
- Richards, M. (1999) 'The interests of children on divorce', in G. Allan (ed.), *The Sociology of the Family: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwells.
- Rights of Women (1984) *Lesbian Mothers on Trial*. London: Rights of Women.
- Rittmeister, T. (1993) 'Batterers' programs, battered women's movement and issues of accountability', in Pence, E. and Paymar, M. *Education Groups for Men who Batter*. New York: Springer.
- Rodgers, B and Pryor, J. (1998) *Divorce and Separation: Outcomes for Children*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Ross, S. (1996) 'Risk of physical abuse to children of spouse abusing parents', *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 20 (7) 589-598.
- Rossmann, B. (1998) 'Descartes's error and post-traumatic stress disorder: cognition and emotion in children who are exposed to domestic violence to parental violence', in W. Holden., R. Geffner and E. Jouriles (eds), *Children Exposed to Domestic Violence*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Rutherford, J. (1988) 'Who's that man?' in R. Chapman and J. Rutherford (eds). *Unwrapping Masculinity*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Saunders, D. G. (1995) 'Prediction of Wife Assault', in J.C. Campbell (ed), *Assessing Dangerousness: Violence by Sexual Offenders, Batterers, and Child Abusers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saunders, D.G. (1996) 'Feminist-cognitive-behavioural and process-psychodynamic

- treatments for men who batter: interaction of abuser traits and treatment models'.
Violence and Victims, 11:393-414.
- Saunders, D.G. (1998) *Child Custody and Visitation Decisions in Domestic Violence Cases: Legal Trends, Research Findings and Recommendations*.
www.vawnet.org/domesticviolence/research/vawnet/docs/ar-custody.pdf.
 Accessed.10.10.2003
- Saunders, H. (2001) *Making Contact Worse. A Report of a National Survey into the Enforcement of Contact Orders*. Bristol: Women's Aid Federation, England.
- Saunders, H. (2003a) *Failure to protect? Domestic Violence and the Experiences of Abused Women and Children in the Family Courts*. Bristol: Women's Aid.
- Saunders, H. (2003b) *Child Homicide Cases in Cases of Child Contact*.
www.womensaid.org.uk/dv/childhomicidecases.htm. Accessed 3.6.03
- Saraga, E. (2001) 'Dangerous places: the family as a site of crime', in J. Muncie and McLaughlin (eds), *The Problem of Crime*. London: Sage.
- Scott, M.B. and Lyman, S.M. (1968) 'Accounts', *American Sociological Review*, 3: 46- 62.
- Scott, S. (1984) 'The personable and the powerful: gender and status in sociological research', in C. Bell and H. Roberts (eds), *Social Researching: Politics, Problems and Practice*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Scourfield, J. and Dobash, R.P. (1999) 'Programmes for violent men: recent developments in the UK', *Howard Journal*, 38 (2): 128-143.
- Scourfield, J. and Drakefield, M. (2001) *New Labour and the Problem of Men*. Unpublished paper, Belfast, SPA Conference.
- Scully, D. (1990) *Understanding Sexual Violence: A Study of Convicted Rapists*. London: Harper Collins.
- Segal, L. (1990) *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*. London: Virago.
- Sevenhuijsen, S. (1993) 'Paradoxes of gender: ethical and epistemological

- perspectives on care in feminist political theory', *Acta Politica*, 2:
131-149.
- Sharpe, S. (1994) *Fathers and Daughters*. London: Routledge.
- Sieber, J. (1993) 'The ethics and politics of sensitive research', in C. M. Renzetti and R. M. Lee (eds), *Researching Sensitive Topics*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Simpson, B., McCarthy, P. and Walker, J. (1995) *Being There: Fathers after Divorce*. Newcastle: Relate Centre for Family Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Slade, A. (2000) 'Supervised contact between children and violent fathers', *Family Law*, 30: 506-508.
- Smart, C. (1989) 'Power and the politics of child custody', in C. Smart and S. Sevenhuijsen (eds), *Child Custody and the Politics of Gender*. London: Routledge.
- Smart, C. (1995) 'Losing the struggle for another voice: the case of family law', *Dalhousie Law Journal* 18 (2): 104-220
- Smart, C. and Neale, B. (1997) 'Arguments against virtue: must contact be enforced?', *Family Law*: 27: 332-336.
- Smart, C. and Neale, B. (1999) *Family Fragments?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Smith, L. (1989) *Domestic Violence: An Overview of the Literature*. Home Office Research Study 107. London: HMSO.
- Social Research Association (2002) *A Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers*. www.the-sra.org.uk/safe.htm. Accessed 7.7.2003
- Social Research Association (2002) *Ethical Guidelines 2002*. www.the-sra.org.uk/ethic.htm. accessed 7.7.2003
- Southall Black Sisters (1993) *Domestic Violence and Asian Women: A Collection of Reports and Briefings*. London: Southall Black Sisters.
- Spaccarelli, S., Sandler, I. and Roosa, M. (1994) 'History of spouse violence against mother: correlated risks and unique effects in child mental health', *Journal of Family Violence*, 9: 79 -98
- Stanko, E.A. (1994) 'Challenging the problem of men's individual violence' in T.

- Newburn and E.A. Stanko (Eds), *Just Boys Doing Business: Men, Masculinities and Crime*. London: Routledge
- Stanko, E., Crisp, D., Hale, C and Lucraft, H. (1998) *Counting the Costs: Estimating the Impact of Domestic Violence in the London Borough of Hackney*. Swindon: Crime Concern
- Stanko, E. (2000) *The Day to Count*. www.domesticviolence.data.org. Accessed 3.4.2003
- Stark, E. (2002) 'Assessing risk' in A. R. Roberts (ed), *Handbook of Domestic Violence Intervention Strategies*. Cary, NC: Oxford University Press.
- Stark, E. and Flitcraft, A. (1988) 'Women and children at risk: a feminist perspective on child abuse', *International Journal of Health Service*, 18 (1): 97-118.
- Stark, E. and Flitcraft, A. (1996) *Women at Risk: Domestic Violence and Women's Health*. London: Sage.
- Sternberg, K., Lamb, M., Greenbaum, C., Dawud, S., Cortes, R., Krispin, O. and Lorey, F. (1993) 'Effects of domestic violence on children's behaviour problems and depression', *Developmental Psychology*, 29: 44-52.
- Stoltenberg, J. (1990) *The End of Manhood*. Glasgow: Fontana.
- Straus, M.A., Gelles, R.J. and Steinmetz S.K. (1980) *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family*. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- Straus, M.A and Gelles, R.J. (1986) 'Societal change and change in family violence from 1975 to 1985 as revealed by two national surveys', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 48(3): 465-79.
- Sturge, C. and Glaser, D. (2000) 'Contact and domestic violence – the experts court report', *Family Law*, 30: 615-629
- Tasker, F. and Golombok, S. (1997) *Growing up in a Lesbian Family: Effects on Child Development*. London: Guildford Press.
- Taylor, K. (1996) 'Keeping mum: the paradoxes of gendered power relations in interviewing', in E. Burman (ed.), *Challenging Women: Psychology's*

- Exclusions*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Taylor, B. G. , Davis, R.C. and Maxell, C. D. (2001) 'The effect of a group batterer treatment programme in Brooklyn', *Justice Quarterly*, 18: 170-201
- Teft, P. (2000) 'Work with men who are violent to their partners: time to re-assert a radical pro-feminist analysis', *National Probation Journal* 8 : 11-18.
- The Scottish Office (2000) *Scottish Crime Survey*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Office.
- Thurston, R. and Beynon, J. (1995) 'Men's own stories, lives and violence', in R.E. Dobash, R.P. Dobash, L. Cavanagh and P. Noaks (eds). (1995) *Gender and Crime*. Cardiff: University Press.
- Toch, H. (1982) *Violent Men: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Violence*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Tolson, A. (1977) *The Limits of Masculinity*. London: Tavistock.
- Tosch, J. (1996) 'Authority and nurture in middle-class fatherhood: the case of early and mid-Victorian England', *Gender and History* 8 (1): 48-64.
- Tosch, J. (1999) *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middleclass Home in Victorian England*. Yale: Yale University Press.
- Walby, S. (1986) *Patriarchy at Work: Patriarchal and Capitalist Relations in Employment*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Walby, S. (1997) *Gender Transformations*, London: Routledge.
- Walby, S. and Myhill, A. (2001) 'Assessing and managing the risk of domestic violence', in J. Taylor Brown (ed), *What Works in Reducing Domestic Violence? A Comprehensive Guide for Professionals*. London: Whiting and Birch.
- Walklate, S. (2001) *Gender, Crime and Criminal Justice*. Devon: Willan.
- Wallerstein, J.S., and Kelly, J.B. (1980) *Surviving the Breakup*. London: Grant McIntyre.
- Warin, J., Solomon, Y., Lewis, C. and Langford, W. (1999) *Fathers, Work and Family Life*. London: Family Policy Studies Centre.
- Weisz, A.N., Tolman, R.M. and Saunders, D.G (2000) 'Assessing risk of severe

- domestic violence: the importance of survivor predictions', in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15 (1): 75-89.
- Willbourne, C. and Cull, L. (1997) 'The emerging problem of parental alienation', *Family Law* 27: 807-808
- Williams, F. (1989) *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Williams, F. (1998) 'Troubled masculinities in social policy discourses: fatherhood', in J. Popay, J. Hearn and J. Edwards (eds), *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare*. London: Routledge.
- Williams, O.J. and Becker, L.R. (1994) 'Partner abuse programmes and cultural competence: the results of a national study', *Violence and Victims*, 9: 287-295
- Williamson, E. (2000) 'Caught in contradictions: conducting feminist action orientated research within an evaluated research programme', in J. Radford, F. Friedberg and L. Harne (eds), *Women, Violence and Strategies for Action*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Wilson, M. (1996) 'Working with the Change men's programme', in K. Cavanagh and V.E. Gree (eds), *Working with Men: Feminism and Social Work*. London: Routledge.
- Wilson, M. and Daly, M. (1992) 'Till death do us part', in J. Radford and D. Russell (eds), *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*. New York: Twayne.
- Wilson, M and Daly, M. (1998) 'Lethal and nonlethal violence against wives and the evolutionary psychology of male sexual proprietariness', in R.E. Dobash and R.P. Dobash (eds), *Rethinking Violence Against Women*. London: Sage.
- Wolfe, D.A., Zak, L., Wilson, S. and Jaffe, P. (1986) 'Child witnesses to violence between parents: critical issues in behavioural and social adjustment', *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 14 (1):95-104

Men's Abuse checklist

Many men regret hurting their loved ones and want to stop, but they find it too difficult to admit what they have done so only reveal a fraction of their violence. The following categories represent some of the behaviours men report using against their partners/ ex-partners and children. Please read the categories carefully and put a tick if you have acted in that particular way within the last 2 years of your most recent relationship.

Physical abuse

spit at her ___	punch with fist ___	cut or slash with knife
poke or prod ___	kick or knee her ___	violent sex/rape ___
push, pull or trip ___	burn or scald ___	throw things at her ___
hold, grab or shake ___	twist her arm or leg ___	use a weapon or object
pin her to wall or floor ___	bang her head or body ___	violence to pets
slap or hit ___	head butt ___	tie or lock her up ___
pull her hair ___	choke or strangle ___	throw her around ___
sit or stand on her ___	smother mouth ___	hold her under water ___

Intimidation

Use aggressive looks gestures ___	rip her clothes ___
swear, shout and scream ___	pound your fists or punch the wall ___
make her do degrading things ___	throw food, objects around ___
harass her by spying, stalking, ___	smash possessions ___
checking up on her ___	not leave when asked ___
threaten to hurt her ___	stand over her ___
threaten harm to other family	
members ___	prevent her from leaving ___
threaten to harm the children ___	
threaten with weapon or object ___	threaten to kill her ___

Sexual Abuse

get angry if you don't have sex ___	make fun of her sexually ___
touch her sexually without consent ___	treat her as a sex object ___
use pressure or threats to get sex ___	forced use of pornography ___
make her perform sex acts against	
her will ___	forced prostitution ___
force her to have sex ___	physically attacked sexual parts of her body ___

Financial Abuse

you decide on family spending ___	sabotage her paid work ___
make her beg for money ___	withhold money ___
make her account for every penny ___	be secretive with money ___

Psychological abuse

criticise her or call her names ___	force her to do the housework to your standards ___
Make her out to be stupid/mad ___	treat her as a servant, act as Lord of the Manor ___
make fun of or humiliate her ___	interrupt her or not let her speak ___
blame her, make her feel guilty ___	ignore her, blank her refuse to listen ___
twist her words ___	threaten to involve social services ___
threaten to commit suicide ___	tell her what to wear ___
Accuse her of having affairs ___	ogle other women, threaten affairs ___
Deprive her of food or sleep ___	prevent her contact with friends or family ___
listen to her phone calls ___	make her account for every moment of her time ___
open her mail ___	not let her go where /when she wants ___

Abuse towards children

psychological/emotional abuse

manipulate children to take sides ___	force children to keep secrets ___
shout at or swear at children ___	regularly criticise children ___
frighten, threaten children ___	humiliate children ___
threaten to harm mother ___	harm mother in front of children ___
damage children's possessions ___	never allow them to see friends ___
threaten to put children into care ___	not allow children to go out ___
threaten children's pets ___	force children outside of house ___
tell children they aren't loved ___	ignore children ___
force them into criminal activities ___	humiliate mother in front of children ___

Physical abuse or neglect

hit or slap children hard ___	shake children ___
slam or throw objects to frighten ___	deprive them of clothes ___
leave young children unsupervised ___	threaten to hurt them ___
lock them in room in house ___	throw them across room, downstairs ___
fail to feed children ___	pull their hair ___
deprive them of medical care ___	punch, kick them ___
threaten to kill them ___	throw a heavy object at them ___
try to strangle or suffocate them ___	intentionally burn/scald them ___
threaten them with sharp weapon ___	beat with them strap or other instrument ___
use children to attack mother ___	