

# Understanding Sexed and Racialised Violence: An Intersectional Approach

by

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'I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own'

- Audre Lorde, 1984

*For all the women who took part in this study,*

*And for all women affected by violence.*

*This thesis is dedicated to  
Joyce and Colin Monk,  
My Mum and Dad, with love.*

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to address the relative effectiveness and usefulness of intersectionality as an elastic concept which can span more than the theoretical arena. To do this, the prevailing social problem of violence against ethnicised women is examined in all its complexities. Intersectionality works on two strategic levels – firstly, the framework recognises that individuals are comprised of numerous identity markers and that these characteristics take on a multiplicative relationship, and secondly, that structural systems of power exist within society to reinforce hierarchical privileges and oppressions that are predicated on identity. This thesis presents intersectionality as a possible way of framing the various interactions of social divisions, and the regimes of inequality which cut-across them, in the context of violence against ethnicised women. This violence is analysed through theoretical, policy and practical responses with particular attention being paid to how the three spheres deal with difference on a variety of analytical levels. A content analysis of New Labour government policy adopts intersectionality as a lens with which to ascertain how valuable this frame is as a methodological tool. Ten interviews with service providers from the violence against women field are conducted in order to gain experiential insight into how identity is seen to shape experience and appropriate responses. This thesis demonstrates that competing perceptions of identity, which are contextually and historically contingent, create a series of specific problems for ethnicised women that are frequently rooted in discourses of marginality, difference and homogeneity. Intersectionality is a useful way of

creating increased fluidity between theory, policy and practice, and of heightening an understanding of the heterogeneity of women's experiences. It has much to offer the VAW field in the UK.

# Contents

	<b>Page No.</b>
<b><i>Abstract</i></b>	i
<b><i>Acknowledgements</i></b>	vi
<b><i>Abbreviations</i></b>	viii
<b>Introduction: Introducing and Framing Violence Against Ethnicised Women</b>	
Introduction	1
Aims	3
Journey	4
Setting the Scene – Violence Against Women	8
Justifying the Project	16
Justifying Terminology	17
Intersectionality	20
Foucault	22
Conceptualisation	24
Theory-Policy-Practice	25
Chapter Summaries	26
<b>Chapter One: Literature Overview: Violence Against Women Discourses</b>	
Introduction	32
Violence Against Women	34
Activism	39
Violence Against Ethnicised Women	42
Activism	51
Defining the ‘Problem’	55
Conclusion	61
<b>Chapter Two: Theoretical Frameworks: An Intersectional Approach</b>	
Introduction	64
Theorising Gender	65
Theorising Race & Ethnicity	70
Racing the Feminist Agenda	73
The Consequences of Isolating Gender and Race	75
Intersectionality	87
Limitations to an Intersectional Approach	101
Intersectionality and Violence Against Women	103
Conclusion	112
<b>Chapter Three: The Research Process: Methodological Considerations</b>	

Introduction	117
Feminist Research Methods	118
The Research Context: The Politics of Difference	123
Power, Discipline and Violence: Methodological Questions	124
Content Analysis	129
An Intersectional Content Analysis	132
Trustworthiness	137
The Empirical Journey	138
Formulating Research Questions	141
Establishing Contact – First Interviews	148
First Interviews	151
Establishing Contact – Second Interviews	153
Second Interviews	156
Negotiating a Research Role	158
Grounded Theory	158
Doing Grounded Theory	160
Comparative Analysis	164
Memos	164
Feminist Research Methods and Grounded Theory	166
Ethical Questions	169
Conclusion	173

#### **Chapter Four: From Theory to Policy: New Labour Policy on Violence Against Women**

Introduction	176
Content Analysis and Intersectionality	177
New Labour and Violence Against Women	178
New Labour – Things Can Only Get Better?	180
‘Safety & Justice’	184
Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004	197
‘Domestic Violence: A National Report’	199
‘A Wrong Not A Right’	205
‘Saving Lives. Reducing Harm. Protecting the Public’	208
The Draft (Partial) Immigration and Citizenship Bill	209
National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan 2008-2009	211
‘Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy’	212
Discussion	217
Conclusion	221

#### **Chapter Five: From Theory to Practice: Service Providers accounts of an Intersectional Vision**

Introduction	225
Local Context – Demographics, Prevalence and Costs	226
Local Context – Local Strategies	227
The Women Who Took Part in this Study	229
Perceptions of Identity	239
Needs-Based Provision	250
Official Discourse	261
Discussion	268



Conclusion	276
<b>Chapter Six: Intersectionality: Advances for Theory, Policy and Practice</b>	
Introduction	279
Intersectionality	280
Main Findings: Policy	281
Main Findings: Practice	287
Main Findings: Links Between Theory-Policy-Practice	293
Main Findings: Intersectionality	300
Recommendations	306
Limitations	308
Conclusion	311
<b>Conclusions: Acting on the Intersections: Violence Against Ethnicised Women</b>	
Introduction	315
Summary of Chapters and Main Themes	316
Where Next?	330
Conclusion	331
<b><i>Appendices</i></b>	335
<b><i>Bibliography</i></b>	343

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**BIA** - Border and Immigration Agency

**BME** – Black and Minority Ethnic

**IND** – Immigration and Nationality Department

**LDVP** – Lancashire Domestic Violence Partnership

**NGO** – Non Government Organisations

**UKBA** - United Kingdom Border Agency

**VAW** – Violence Against Women

**VAWG** – Violence Against Women and Girls

**WAFE** – Women’s Aid Federation of England

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Introducing and Framing Violence Against Ethnicised Women**

Today there is an undeclared war against women in this country. This is no exaggeration.<sup>1</sup>

The color of our gender mattered.<sup>2</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The last forty years has seen a (re)discovery of enduring and pervasive acts of violence against women (VAW), with their problematic social and cultural dimensions being acknowledged throughout the UK and other Western countries. For centuries, VAW has been ignored, denied, justified, excused and legitimised. In the new millennium, so-called culturally constructed violence, associated almost exclusively with ethnicised women and men, has found its way onto the public and political agenda, receiving unprecedented media attention. This shift of focus has redirected the attention of dominant discourses to culture, ethnicity and to a nuanced series of exonerations and validations. This thesis will address how men's violence against ethnicised women is put into discourse and constructed as a contemporary problematic in theory, policy and practice<sup>3</sup>. Intersectionality, a theoretical and conceptual

framework informed by critical race feminism<sup>4</sup>, will be posited as the most effective way to strategise against men's violence.

Once thought to be private occurrences, acts of VAW, including acts of forced marriage, honour-related crimes and female genital mutilation, incidentally crimes that were once thought to happen elsewhere, are now recognised as part of a larger scale domination of women as a social group. Through shared experience and a united political voice, feminists attempted to transcend difference, and failed to acknowledge the all-important intragroup diversities amongst women. In the context of VAW, this transpired in the privileging of gender over other significant identity categories such as race, ethnicity, class, age and sexuality. Discourses which persist in producing these responses invariably marginalise and homogenise women in all categories. My thesis aims to contribute to the growing body of innovative work that addresses the interconnectedness of sexed and racialised violence. This analysis will open up new ways of theorising race-based differences between women that will challenge universal frameworks that inform policy decisions and provision, and lead to better outcomes for women.

The pervasiveness of men's violence has been researched heavily yet much self-labelled critical work has neglected the idea that acts of violence carry an undeniable racialised and ethnicised dimension. VAW has at its heart the intersecting power relations of gender and ethnicity. Intersectionality attempts to make visible the multiple factors that structure our experiences of

both privilege and oppression through an analysis of the interplay of social divisions and power relations. Intersectionality places emphasis on how ‘...race as a system of power interacts with other structured inequalities to shape genders’ (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, 1996: 324). I will use ethnicised women in particular throughout this thesis to illustrate why an integrated and cohesive approach to VAW is necessary, alongside a distinctive and multiplicative approach to the specificity of experience and need. Importantly this work comes at a decisive juncture where intensive VAW policymaking in the UK is starting to collide with a new wave of critical scrutinies of multicultural discourse and community cohesion agendas, as well as unrelenting neo-liberal and authoritarian motivations. The problems emanating from narrow definitions of VAW and inequitable distribution of provision will be analysed in this context.

## **AIMS**

How is it possible to capture the complexities of VAW whilst simultaneously highlighting both similarities and difference so as not reproduce homogenous representations of socially defined groups? It is clear that we must attend to cultural specificities, but how do we best do that within the mainstream VAW agenda? These are questions that this thesis is hoping to address through the adoption of a wide-ranging intersectional vision. Is intersectionality, which is arguably becoming a new paradigm in critical social theory (Winker and Degele, 2011), a framework which can be viably and

meaningfully applied to domains other than theory? This thesis seeks to address whether intersectionality can be used effectively and productively in the realms of polity and practice. Can intersectionality be used as a lens with which to critique government policy? And is it an approach which would work in practice?

This thesis addresses two central original aims. Firstly, to develop a methodology which uses intersectionality as a frame in order to conduct a content analysis of three policy documents commissioned under the term of New Labour. The policy analysis spans the period 2003-2009. Secondly, to carry out ten interviews with service providers working in the VAW field to ascertain whether a version of intersectionality is utilised in practice, and what the effects of theory and government policy are on contemporary service provision. The thesis also seeks to provide a critical account of intersectionality and to advocate this as a potential approach to capture the complexities of VAW. More generally, this thesis intends to contribute to the wider body of innovative work, exploring the links between acts of sexed, ethnicised and racialised violence, and between multiple group identities. The objective that underscores the whole process is the realisation of making a difference to the lives of women who suffer violence at the hands of men and family members, and to make the challenge to this behaviour more compelling, through a better understanding of intersectional identities and operations.

## **JOURNEY**



This thesis, as with any I suspect, has been a journey for me and has taken place against a backdrop of an ever-increasing cultural discourse on sex, violence and crime. I came to this research topic through a series of poignant moments in my life, although my enthusiasm and interest in feminism is instinctual. As an undergraduate I read two texts that resonated with me and changed the course of my academic interests. The first was *The Lust to Kill: A Feminist Investigation of Sexual Murder* (1987) by Cameron and Frazer. The realisation that the main perpetrators of violence against women were ordinary men – fathers, brothers, husbands, friends – and that to paint ‘serial’ or sexual murderers as somehow detached and distant from ‘ordinary’ men and their typical and aberrant behaviours erases the everydayness of violence, was an important first step. The second text, Sue Lees’ *Losing Out* (1986), built upon and extended my new found thinking around the construction of men’s and women’s sexuality and the prevailing destructive power of discursive hegemony. I became increasingly connected and concerned with VAW<sup>5</sup>. Alongside this came the understanding that when I attempted to speak about violence, gender inequality and the polemical attitude I was developing towards a society that tolerated these harms and inequities, I was mocked or silenced. I became frustrated with incessantly being told that we *had* achieved gender equality; that men experienced domestic violence just as much as women; and that if it was *that* bad she would just leave. What did come out of the dismissal of my opinions was the appreciation that I could not just keep moaning. I needed to start making a difference; however small that may be.

I began volunteering at a local refuge in 2001 and gained a great insight into the practicalities of refuge and outreach work and the lived experience of other women who had been through violent experiences. This connection to the problem of VAW as it was happening around me has been absolutely instrumental in the completion of this project. I never wanted to sit at a desk and pontificate about the enduring social problem; this 'real life' interaction was vital, however transitory in the latter stages, and has been a driving force behind the more theoretical outlook of the thesis. I have also been able to start teaching in and around the topic of VAW and have felt a deep sense of inspiration and admiration for the countless students who have told stories, posed questions and gained greatly from engaging with difficult and sensitive topics. Experiences in the classroom and in service provision have confirmed to me that however difficult and sensitive questions around VAW may be, we must continue to fight and continue to act. We must further expand the discursive space given to issues around deeply sexed and racialised harm and we must, in whatever way we can, continue to talk about the violence that blights the lives of so many women and children in order to break the silence that constrained generations before us.

I could be deemed as a white, privileged researcher, which indeed I am, suggesting ways to 'save' ethnicised women. The thorny question of speaking for others and the impact of social locations on opportunity and discourse are themes that are constantly addressed throughout this thesis. I am aware that I

produce cultural criticism from a dominant position and that my whiteness acts as a benchmark against which all other ethnicities and cultures are judged. Through adopting an intersectional lens and being culturally aware and sensitive, I made the decision to pursue a thesis principally concerned, in a contextual sense, with ethnicised women. I would feel uncomfortable if I had made the decision not to engage with this research topic for fear of being racist, culturally insensitive or offensive, or lacking a 'race' match with the women I was aiming to help. The reluctance to engage with issues of power, identity, community and agency due to the constraints of multiculturalism are common. Whilst I understand the need for 'earning the right to criticise' and 'doing one's homework' (Spivak, 1990b), the current cultural climate should not be used, however well intended, to withhold support, help or research. I live in a multicultural part of the UK. The women who need help and assistance locally are a diverse range of ethnicities, religions, ages, and abilities. They have different stories, different backgrounds and different needs. When I come across women in my capacity as a volunteer or as a tutor when students confide in me and ask for support, I do not question whether I should help. I try my best and point them in the direction of the people who are most equipped to attend to their needs. I take the criticisms of essentialism, elitism and ethnocentrism that have been levelled at academics and activists very seriously and I am extremely critical of these practices myself. I have a real commitment to reducing VAW, and in order to do this tricky and controversial topics need to be broached.

## **SETTING THE SCENE – VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

We know that every day, in every country, women are harassed, beaten, raped and killed in a variety of contexts. And we know that this violence is systematic, routine and part of a much wider discourse on identity, equality and denial. VAW encompasses a wide remit of acts and accounts for a host of perpetrating agents. This umbrella term pertains to acts of so-called domestic violence, domestic homicide, physical violence, emotional assault, rape and sexual assault, sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation, sex and human trafficking, abuses within the sex industry, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour-related crimes and a whole array of coercive acts such as the monitoring of finances, movement and friendships. Violence can also take the form of representation or symbolism – reductive stereotypes, marginalisation or exclusion from official discourse, or ethnocentric constructions in hegemonic rhetoric, for example.

Violence is something which pervades the lives of many people around the world through direct or indirect experience. Overwhelmingly, the victims of (personal) violence are women and the perpetrators men. Kofi Annan recently stated that VAW is ‘...perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace’ (Kelly and Lovett, 2005: 17). It is estimated that there are 12.9 million incidents of domestic violence perpetrated

against women in England and Wales each year, 190,000 incidents of sexual assault and 47,000 rapes or attempted rapes (Walby and Allen, 2004). One in four women in England and Wales will suffer from domestic violence at some point in their lifetime and two women a week are killed in this context (Home Office, 2003). These experiences will largely be perpetrated by men known to the women in question; the agents of violence are often loved ones or relations. Every minute the police receive a call about a 'domestic' incident (Home Office, 2003), and this crime carries the highest risk of repeat victimisation of all violent crimes (Hoare and Povey, 2008). This risk is significantly higher for women than men (Hoare and Povey, 2008). The Forced Marriage Unit dealt with over 1,600 suspected cases in 2008 (Stobart, 2009) and the Southall Black Sisters suggest that over 20 honour killings took place in the UK between 2001-2003 (RWA, 2003). As with all acts of VAW these statistics paint a muted picture due to low levels of reporting and recording. Globally VAW is just as prolific – it is estimated, for example, that over 5,000 women are killed worldwide each year in the name of honour (UNFPA, 2000) – yet it has failed to be thrust onto the centre stage in the theatre of international problems. All communities are guilty of ignoring or burying VAW and women's plight in interpersonal relationships and state-sanctioned disadvantage (Dasgupta, 2007).

It is a sobering thought that despite the rapid growth of the refugee movement, and the development of extensive provision for women and children experiencing violence in the last forty years, there is no way that all the women who suffer violence, nor even all the women who seek help, could be

housed during the first push for services in the 1970s or today. The tireless work of feminist campaigners, activists and researchers has led to increased public awareness and official discursive space, but the construction of violence in the home, communities and the private sphere in general, has facilitated the law's assertion that this violence is a lesser crime than that committed in public spaces (Patel, 2005). The pervasiveness and routine manner in which VAW is perpetrated, conceptualised and discussed prompted Howe to state that men's violence is hard to challenge because of '...the normality of it, rather than the abnormality of it, [and] that makes it such a challenging and complex problem' (1998: 36). Although there is now increased 'talk' about VAW, a closer examination of policy reveals that there is still so much to be done (Walklate, 2007).

In 2004 Walby calculated the financial cost of domestic violence in the UK. The figures produced covered a variety of ways in which interpersonal violence places yearly economic strain on the public purse and the monumental impact that this crime has in monetary value. Domestic violence costs the UK £23 billion a year (2004: 12), which equates approximately, to £404 per head of the population. Broadly speaking, the costs are divided into £3.1 billion use of services including public services such as the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and the NHS, £2.7 billion lost economic output including sickness/absence from work at a loss to both the employer and the employee, and £17 billion accounts for the human cost of pain and suffering<sup>6</sup> (2004: 96-97). Although the cost to victims of domestic violence is surely immeasurable.

I am uninterested in the etiological and deterministic 'why' questions that surround VAW as a discourse. My answer to 'why' men are violent towards women, individually and collectively, is because they can be; they still live in a society that largely ignores, tolerates and permits VAW. Although we have seen an overhaul in the way we discursively construct VAW, and the issue is on the political agenda and rooted in public consciousness, this 'publicity' has led to levels of desensitisation around the ordinariness and everydayness of violence. Paradoxically, as a society we still suffer from a persistent reluctance to really acknowledge how widespread and commonplace men's violence is, coupled with an unwillingness to accept that it is 'normal' men who inflict this violence, and states and institutions designed to help and support us, that maintain it (Brownmiller, 1975; Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Genovese, 2000; Gordon, 1988; Howe, 2008a; Kelly, 1988; Krug et al., 2002; Millett, 1969; Pharr, 1993; Stanko, 1985; Stark, 2007). The frequency and nature of VAW is unnerving and it is a sad indictment that we are still no closer to ending this pervasive problem. However, the crucial questions that we need to address are not 'why' questions but 'how' questions. Most pertinently, how can we work towards a better future for women?

I make no apologies for addressing the omnipresent problem of VAW in this thesis, and for concentrating predominantly on men as the perpetrators (I do address violence enacted by family members). Although it would be foolish not to acknowledge that some men experience violence, the above statistics

and statements support my decision to focus on women and to assert that so-called domestic violence is still very much a women's issue. There is a misconception that equality is now commonplace in the UK and this continues to fuel the belief that violence is a gender-neutral issue, and that the services which deal with this problem should cater for both men and women survivors of violence<sup>7</sup>. This thesis is steadfast in its belief that interpersonal and coercive violence disproportionately affects women.

VAW has deep rooted historical and cultural undertones<sup>8</sup>. Individuals from all cultures practice discriminatory and oppressive acts but, crucially, all VAW denotes levels of entrenched hegemonic masculinity, some of which are wrapped up in cultural scripts and contexts. In the UK a man was legally allowed to beat his wife with a stick if its breadth was no thicker than his thumb (Heise, 1993). This is commonly referred to as a facet of domestic violence – a practice that is ingrained in many Western societies and British culture. Chinese culture once openly tolerated the use of concubines and foot-binding, and to a lesser extent these acts still occur in a society underpinned by patriarchy (Almedia and Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999). Some African nations support the use of milder forms of female circumcision despite there being nothing at all in African culture about the enactment of violence and injustice (Heise, 1993). In the particular context of this thesis, acts of violence against ethnicised women can be comprised of any from the rubric of VAW. However, there are some acts which are statistically more prevalent in some cultures than others (Dustin and



Phillips, 2008). This thesis contends that these are not, however, cultural practices or traditions.

Honour-related crimes are those which are seen to be motivated and widely justified by predominantly women's violation of traditional and culturally inflected honour codes. These crimes are often homicides and '...the killing of women for suspected deviation from sexual norms imposed by society' (Faqir, 2001: 66) are currently discursively classified as honour killings. There have been several high profile honour killings in the UK in recent years and the media continue to report these crimes in a sensationalised manner. In 1998 the murder of Rukhsana Naz, 19, propelled the issue into the media spotlight. Rukhsana, who was pregnant at the time, was strangled to death by her brother as her mother held her down (Allison, 2003). After being forced to marry an elder man, Rukhsana had found happiness with her first boyfriend and was carrying his child. This act led to her demise as she had shamed her family and broken her enforced honour codes. Johal confirms that honour is still retained as a central consideration to 'community' discourse surrounding VAW and can be used to justify violence as a punishment for contravening honour codes (2003). Although honour crimes are readily related to a particular cultural discourse in the UK, and elsewhere, honour codes and standards exist in all communities and cultures (Gill, 2004; Meeto and Mirza, 2007). Popular discourse would have us believe that certain ethnicised communities and, by extension, religious practices and cultural 'traditions', justify the use of violence in the name of honour, yet the reluctance of the state and other official

institutions to respond to this violence for fear of being perceived as racist, equally accepts the validity of honour and compounds these behaviours as wrong but impenetrable (Gupta, 2003; Meeto and Mirza, 2007; RWA, 2003). Under no circumstances should honour be used to rationalise or excuse violence; the term is a misnomer.

Honour can be one of a number of reasons why some women are forced into marriage. A forced marriage takes place when one or both parties do not give their consent to the union, or have done so under duress. Physical, emotional or a combination of violent acts are used to force women (and men) into marriage. Forced marriage is predominantly associated with Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim communities in the UK, and South Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa worldwide (Stobart, 2009). However, victims of this human rights violation can come from an array of cultural and geographical backgrounds. No culture or religion in the modern world justifies or supports forced marriage. The independent consent of both parties is a prerequisite of Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh marriages. Forced marriage should not, therefore, be discussed as a religious issue. This promotes and reinforces prejudice, intolerance and misunderstanding. The crucial difference between a forced and arranged marriage is choice. In forced marriage there is no choice (Stobart, 2009).

In the UK there exists two layers of specialist and non-specialist service provision, ranging from feminist inspired specialist services, faith-based

provisions and generalist services. There are several women's specific or specialised ethnic services available across the country to help women who are suffering from violence<sup>9</sup>, including specialised refuge services<sup>10</sup>. Other refuge associations offer a variety of services to ethnicised women but also help and house white women. Evidence points to the meagre provision of specialist refuges or projects – Coy et al. identified 57 ethnicised domestic violence projects across the UK, many of which are situated in London (2007: 25). They also found that nine out of ten local authorities have no specific services predicated on ethnicity (2007: 25). It is argued that this sector is under-resourced and under-developed (Inam, 2003; Wilson, 2010).

The discourse and climate change from multiculturalism and to community cohesion has altered and extended some other persistent problems. State organisations have a history of non-intervention in cases of violence against ethnicised women (Gupta, 2003). The current social and political conditions are exacerbating this reluctance. The fear of being deemed racist and liaising with influential community leaders can impede involvement from government agencies and some women's organisations (Johal, 2003). Furthermore, the conditions of community cohesion are complicating the very existence of specialist services (Patel and Sen, 2010; Wilson, 2010). West suggests that the 'self-imposed rule of silence' that many minority communities established with regards to VAW has now been lifted (2005: 157). Hopefully, this will contribute to the ongoing discussions between and amongst the

government, women's organisations and feminist activists and academics about the priority of women's safety.

## **JUSTIFYING THE PROJECT**

As the above statistics, examples and arguments demonstrate, VAW is still a prolific and devastating social problem, and one that is too serious, and overwhelmingly packed with concerns and dangers to be ignored. This thesis takes the opportunity to review and analyse the current situation of how violence against ethnicised women is put into theoretical, political and practical discourse, and to consider the usefulness of intersectionality as a theoretical framework for interrogating the interaction between sexed and racialised identities, and the cross-cutting effects of structural power systems. In order to move the concept beyond the metaphorical and experiential realms, a central aim is to 'test' the validity of intersectionality as a lens of analysis and to examine how it may be managed in practice. These are objectives not previously attempted.

There are, of course, many other social divisions that I could explore - the more obvious of these being age, class and sexuality<sup>11</sup>. My predominant focus on race, ethnicity and gender reflects the current trends and directions of activism, theory and practice in the VAW field as well as the unprecedented attention on the changing nature of VAW in the UK, attributed largely to migration and immigration patterns. My own desire to articulate these

particular forms of identity is also a factor that shapes the prominence of race, ethnicity and gender. I live in a multi-ethnic part of the country and through volunteering have witnessed the effects that unilateral thinking and policy can have on diversely-situated women in the VAW arena. Moreover, whiteness as a racialised category has been rendered largely invisible. I purport that it is as important to recognise and analyse privileges as well as oppressions, and similarities as well as differences. My largest privilege is the fact that I am white. It makes me different from many scholars who utilise and promote intersectionality. But an obvious similarity is that I, along with other advocates of this approach, see the many benefits of exploring and taking into account different facets of identity and how they work for each other in varying ways depending on historical, social and political contexts.

## **JUSTIFYING TERMINOLOGY**

It is impossible to write this thesis without the use of certain concepts. These include 'black', 'minority ethnic', 'white' 'ethnicised' and 'race'. There are two important points which need to be noted in regards to their usage. Firstly, race is socially constructed and is, therefore, in a constant state of flux. Secondly, these categories are often reducible to mere representations or stereotypes notwithstanding the diversity of cultures, ethnicities and the myriad of differences between individuals. As Ware suggests we become 'white' or 'non-white' (1992: xii) despite the unmitigated lack of biological significance. Yet recently we have witnessed a shift in academic and popular discursive focus

from 'race' to 'culture' and, therefore, the terminology I have chosen to use reflects this change. Many existing conceptualisations, such as 'black and minority ethnic', risk subsuming culture to race, and so over-generalising ethnicity from one minority group. Therefore, the term 'ethnicised' is used most frequently to incorporate the operational process of *becoming* 'ethnicised' or 'othered'. Meeto and Mirza (2007) advocate this approach, noting that those who are classified as 'Other' are 'ethnicised' by dominant discourses based on their cultural customs. Consequently, I use this term in a critical way. At particular points, especially when local contexts are utilised, specific ethnic groups are readily identified. The experiential narratives gained from the case study element of the thesis direct attention towards South Asian women distinctly and this demographic does reflect the local composition of communities across Lancashire. Government publications and much activist work is organised around the collective term 'black and minority ethnic' (BME) so, at times, this language is used.

When embarking upon this doctorate I had, previously, no need to question the unchallenged status of whiteness or my own ethnicity. At juxtaposition to this complacency was my ready identification that ethnicity was an integral part and central theme of my research. Ethnicity would inform and inflect every decision I made. The acknowledgement of my own race and ethnicity and the (invisible) history of whiteness as a racial category impacted severely on the way this thesis has turned out. Race, it is assumed, in both theories, research and practice, is about being 'black', not about being 'white',

for example. In a similar way that 'gender' is often taken to mean 'woman' or 'female'. The invisibility of whiteness affords 'white' as a 'race' to be placed outside analytical thought. Connectedly, this invisibility privileged whiteness to such an extent that the meaning of it as a racial category was left undiscovered. The historical context or relationship between white groups and those marked culturally as 'other', failed to be analysed despite its power to inform and control social dynamics and knowledge production. Against the unmarked category of whiteness, as the normative ethnicity, ethnicised women have become '...subjected to a field of visibility' (Foucault, 1977: 202). Certain racial and ethnic categories are problematised and used interchangeably throughout, depending on specific relevance and context; this includes the category of white.

The decision to use VAW as an overarching terminology is covered in depth in the next section of this chapter. Briefly, VAW more accurately names the victims and survivors of this violence and gestures quite explicitly at the main perpetrators – men. This terminology allows the links between violent acts to be highlighted and maintained without ever resorting to compartmentalisation. This, in turn, negates a hierarchical construction of seriousness and priority, and treats all violent acts as serious and connected. This conceptualisation also retains the social context and social construction of the problem and is in line with prominent feminist arguments (Kelly and Lovett, 2005). The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' will also be used interchangeably depending on perspective and applicability. The expression 'victim' is useful as it

highlights how official and popular discourses continue to further victimise survivors of men's violence (Ward, 1995). This also keeps in tandem with the rise of victimology studies (Zedner, 2002). However, the use of 'survivor' acknowledges more readily the gravity of many women's situations, and recognises agency, strength and courage.

There are several themes which animate this thesis and they are threaded throughout the different chapters in both isolated and overlapping ways. I will now present each of them before turning to the individual summaries of each chapter.

## **INTERSECTIONALITY**

The call for race and ethnicity to become centralised concerns in the feminist movement is now a well established argument in many disciplines,<sup>12</sup> although the degree of application varies significantly. The 'new' discourse of multiculturalism is similarly charged with sidelining gender (Meetoo and Mirza, 2007). Ethnicised women are peripheral to both the uniformed gender response to VAW and the gender-blind multicultural drive for community cohesion. Intersectionality can be used to combat the privileging of any division, choosing instead to view facets of identity as intermingling and non-reducible. Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that acknowledges that we hold multiple group memberships that occupy an interactive and compounding space, and that these identities work together to produce specific effects. At



the same time, these modalities are cut across by systems of power and the structuring forces of privilege and oppression. 'Intersectionality thereby allows us to think about the enactment and experience of violence as the product of multiple, sometimes contradictory, often shifting, but always intersecting identities' (Mason, 2002: 65).

As VAW is commonly viewed as a threat to the safety, security and boundaries of the nuclear family, many theories strategise around the concept of gender, patriarchal conditions and the power imbalance between men and women, with other facets of social location being viewed as additional or subsidiary. We need to consider systems of power and their organising forces in acts of VAW not just relationships or individualised contexts (Bograd, 2005; Crenshaw, 1991; Dasgupta, 1998; Gill, 2004; Kanuha, 2005; Meeto and Mirza, 2007; Richie, 1996; Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005a, 2005b; Sokoloff and Pratt, 2005). Ethnicised women are invariably absent in traditional discourses on VAW in the West (Bograd, 2005; Carby, 1982; Mama, 1989; Meeto and Mirza, 2007; Sokoloff and Pratt, 2005).

The lack of intersectional analysis or organising around significant ethnicised issues, prompted numerous theorists and activists to rigorously explore this neglected area (Allard, 1991; Coker, 2003; Crenshaw, 1991; Richie, 1996; Rivera, 2003; Spivak, 1990a; Valencia-Weber and Zuni, 2003; Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1993). Research into these racialised and cultured specificities began to show how important multidimensional approaches are to strategising

against violence, but also how the dearth of existing material, in comparison with the unprecedented amount published on white women's experiences, was significantly affecting strong, aligned theory acceptance and policy impact. This thesis seeks to contribute to the growing body of work on VAW by applying an intersectional lens to the current operations of policy and practice in the context of ethnicised women who suffer VAW in the UK. This is a previously underused framework in VAW discourse in the UK (Thiara and Gill, 2010). Ethnicised women are distinctly marked as both highly visible and ignorantly invisible. The increasing landscape given to acts of violence, particularly those with specific ethnic and cultural connotations, has illuminated ethnicised women in public and popular discourse and has further hegemonised the idea that violence is more frequent, more accepted, and more barbaric in ethnicised cultures (Gupta, 2003)<sup>13</sup>. In opposition to this is the continued marginalisation of ethnicised women in government policy (Howe, 2008b) and in service provision (Beckett and Macey, 2001). In what Meeto and Mirza call a 'collision of discourses' (2007: 188) the visibility/invisibility nexus is a dangerous place for ethnicised women suffering the effects of violence in a society that uses the veil of multiculturalism to relinquish responsibility for women at the margins. This thesis aims to correct this moral blindness.

## **FOUCAULT**

The relationship between feminist ideas and those of Philosopher Michel Foucault are often constructed as irreconcilable<sup>14</sup> although many

feminists, in a range of guises, have used his work to great effect (Alcoff, 1993; Lees, 1986; Smart, 1995). Some of his central ideas – the rejection of a universal ‘truth’ (1997b), the relationship between power and knowledge (1997a), and the regulation of sexuality and the body (1979) – make him an ideal companion for contemporary feminist problematics. Certainly he provides many methodological tools for feminist analysis<sup>15</sup> and prompts our use of categories as sites of resistance (Hekman, 1996). Foucault can be used to encourage feminists to reconsider their conceptualisation of power and identity, and his methods of analysis provide an apparatus for commentary on the control and regulation of language and subjectivity (Lees, 1986). Ramazanoglu (1993) suggests that Foucault’s theory on how power is constantly created allows us to view the effects of this power on women’s lived experience. Moreover, she argues that Foucault provokes feminists into reconsidering their own understanding of power relations through the abandonment of universal norms (Ramazanoglu, 1993). Foucauldian thought tends to understand resistance as specific and localised. For this reason, as well as the ones identified above, it has had a substantial impact on some sections of feminist thought (McLaren, 2002) - this includes the critical approach to constructionist intersectionality (Prins, 2006).

Foucault’s conceptualisation of discourse is all encompassing. It allows us to view everything that can be said about a certain field so is useful for bringing together diverse types of discourse. ‘...*discourse* refers to a group of statements...statements identified as belonging to a single discursive

formulation' (Smart, 1985: 40; his emphasis). Foucault is therefore used throughout this thesis in a methodological way to interrogate a variety of discourses and to discern '...discursive patterns of meaning, contradictions and inconsistencies' (Gavey, 1989: 467). The relationship between power and knowledge, along with the construction of 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1997b) are also inextricably locked into an intersectional understanding of the complexities of VAW.

## **CONCEPTUALISATION**

As Itzin (2000) confirms, the language used throughout VAW discourse can make real differences to lived experience and the visibility of both survivors and perpetrators. This thesis seeks to address the problems and inconsistencies with conceptualisations throughout the various chapters, paying particular attention to the different definitions used across government policy, and the effect these definitions can have on strategic thinking. Hearn (1998) has suggested that it is still unclear '...to what extent it is analytically and politically useful to consider men's violence as a unified set of activities' (1998: 5). Using Kelly's concept of a continuum<sup>16</sup> (1988) and the underpinnings of intersectionality, one aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the use of a broad, consistent and cohesive definition of VAW, covering a wide remit of violent acts and agents, is favourable for theory, policy and practice that wishes to attend to all victims of VAW. It is argued that acts of violence have undeniable connections with one another, and are seldom separated in lived

experience – the separation of them in theory, policy and practice is therefore problematised, as is the inconsistency of discursive formulation inherent in government publication. I intend to establish that it *is* analytically and politically useful to view men’s violence as integrated episodes whilst retaining the view that at the heart of this violence are the intersecting power relations of social divisions and hierarchies, which bring with them a whole host of further connections and distinctions.

### **THEORY-POLICY-PRACTICE**

‘Research provides evidence for change; it is formative in the development of theory and practice’ (Hanmer and Itzin, 2000: 1). Social change can only occur when we start to think differently, when we ask different questions, when we adopt new conceptual frameworks and when we are prepared to engage with research that has lived experience at its core. The relationship and degree of match between theory, policy and practice is a principal concern for this thesis and only when we begin to address the links between this nexus can we establish critical analysis. An intersectional theoretical lens will be adopted to see if it can aid the ‘fit’ between the three spheres.

Any attempt at social change will have to negotiate and enter into a relationship with the state. At present, the feminist and activist movement appears to be doing this relatively successfully and government policies

addressing VAW have accelerated since New Labour's administration began in 1997 (Harwin and Barron, 2000). They also carry with them an undeniable feminist undertone (Howe, 2008b). Dobash and Dobash (2000) suggest that it is vital to consider the political climates and contexts that surround the different governments that we have had in power since the battered women's movement began. The welfare orientated administration of the 1970s gave way to the neo-liberal Thatcher years which, in many regards, continue through the Blair and Brown era. Additionally, we must also contend with the management of race relations through the frame of community cohesion (Worley, 2005). We must now operate within the framework of the modern state and the particular political persuasions of the party in power. These persuasions largely provide the context for the interconnection between theory, policy and practice.

## **CHAPTER SUMMARIES**

Chapter 1 provides an overview of existing academic, activist and popular discourses on VAW in order to progress on to the literature survey of articulating multiplicity and intersectionality in chapter 2. The overview consists of some traditional approaches to the causation of VAW, as well as the crucial organising of the battered women's movement. Some of the conceptual and practical differences of attending to the complexities of violence against ethnicised women are highlighted, alongside stark warnings about the propensity of cultural relativism adopted in current approaches. Importantly for the rest of the thesis, this chapter concentrates on how VAW is put into

discourse and what discursive constructions are deemed acceptable in changing political climates.

Chapter 2 outlines the levels of essentialism and hegemony of feminisms that resulted in the exclusion of ethnicised women from academic and popular discourse, paying particular attention to the thorny issue of whiteness and the elevation of gender. Intersectionality is then presented as a theoretical framework that aims to articulate the formulation and experience of numerous subjugations via the modes of identity and power. A prerequisite for an intersectional analysis is an exploration of the dominance of the singularity of social divisions in theoretical terms. The problems and limitations inherent within an intersectional approach are also identified. In the context of violence against ethnicised women the themes of agency, culture and structure are discussed via a critical review of relevant literature.

Chapter 3 details the different methods that are utilised in order to carry out the research for this thesis. Feminist research methods are used to guide the ethical ethos and central aims of the project. The methodological relevance of Michel Foucault is also rehearsed and his understanding of discourse is used to frame the components of the methodological approach. Content analysis is adopted to carry out the analysis of policy, and the process of appropriating an intersectional lens is fully explained. Finally the empirical element of the thesis is explained with comprehensive information about the choice of participants, interview structure and a dedicated ethics section. The method of grounded

theory is discussed as the tool of analysis for the interview data in order to revise the theory of intersectionality.

Chapter 4 takes recent government policies and initiatives and subjects them to content analysis. This Chapter has two central objectives – to ‘test’ the effectiveness and viability of intersectionality as a lens with which to analyse policy documents, and to document and discuss the findings from this analysis. Three of New Labour’s most prominent papers on VAW are subjected to content analysis, although the chapter provides an illustrative history of how this particular government discursively constructs this prevailing social problem.

Chapter 5 adds a localised, experiential narrative element to the thesis. Ten interviews with local service providers were carried out to establish whether a form of intersectionality is implicitly practiced in the VAW field, or whether this is deemed a feasible option. The interviews also draw out the effects of theory and policy on service providers’ practice, thus establishing a dialogue about the relationship between the three spheres. The chapter begins by providing some local context and then introducing the women individually. Some of their narrative is then highlighted and interweaved with analysis derived from the utilisation of grounded theory methods. As such, the Chapter is structured around the presentation of various codes and categories, and the conceptual findings are included in a detailed discussion.



Chapter 6 draws together the research carried out in the previous chapters and analyses the degree of match between theory, policy and practice. It poses two central questions – what do we learn about theory, policy and practice via the adoption of intersectionality in various guises? And, crucially, what do we learn about intersectionality through the course of this research? In light of these queries, the limitations of this thesis are outlined along with some broad recommendations for the three domains. A summary of intersectionality's benefits to the VAW more generally are contained within the conclusion.

In sum, this thesis has several goals. It aims to challenge current understanding of VAW through a consideration of intersectionality and the atomising of social divisions' impact upon the experience of violence and harm. Violence is used to denote both a site of personal harm, and a representation of the state's power and ability to discriminate. I offer a reading of the relationship between theory, policy and practice in the enactment of violence against ethnicised women. This contributes to the wider debate on VAW, and brings into focus a marginalised group within VAW discourse. It seeks to address whether the success intersectionality has had in theoretical terms can be matched by its use as both an analytical framework and a mechanism for practice. Ultimately, can an intersectional approach '...facilitate an understanding of the fluidity in and between identity categories' (Shields, 2008: 308) across different discursive spheres?

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- <sup>1</sup> Phillips (2007)
- <sup>2</sup> Alexander and Mohanty (1997: xiv).
- <sup>3</sup> The VAW field is a live field with academic, activist, policy and practice streams constantly in flux. The majority of the discourses used throughout this thesis were accessed up until 2009, although a few later publications do appear throughout the thesis due to specific relevancy.
- <sup>4</sup> Critical race feminism was born out of the necessity to build racial and ethnic considerations into feminist inquiries so that these dimensions were on par with the acknowledgment of gender. As with most theoretical standpoints, critical race feminism has progressed and now operates in a much more interactive and intersectional manner. For a comprehensive take on critical race feminism see Wing (1997).
- <sup>5</sup> My undergraduate dissertation was motivated by my engagement with critical texts and with VAW. This was probably the first time I began to tackle intersectional identities and acknowledge that the category of 'woman' needed to be broken down. I decided to look at violence against lesbian women through the discursive violence enacted by dominant discourses, and how this violence often manifests itself as punishment, through the two criminological themes of self-policing and penalty.
- <sup>6</sup> The inclusion and explanation of the cost of Human and Emotional suffering is outlined within the publication. A summary is provided here. 'Domestic violence leads to pain and suffering that is not counted in the cost of services. It has become usual to include an estimate for human and emotional costs this is in order that this impact is not ignored in public policy. This is practice in the Home Office (for crime) and the Department for Transport (to estimate the cost of road traffic accidents and hence cost-benefit analysis of road improvement schemes). The methodology to estimate these costs is based on the public's 'willingness-to-pay' to avoid such trauma' (Walby, 2004:11-12).
- <sup>7</sup> For example, Women's Aid in Scotland, Wales and Ireland are now services dedicated to any survivor of interpersonal violence, and many other services are struggling to justify a service devoted solely to women. Women's Aid Federation England (WAFE) is battling to stay as a women-only organisation. For details see [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)
- <sup>8</sup> See Watts and Zimmerman (2002) for an overview of the global scope of VAW.
- <sup>9</sup> The largest and most well known being services offered by the Southall Black Sisters and IMKAAN. See [www.imkaan.org.uk](http://www.imkaan.org.uk)
- <sup>10</sup> The Newham Asian Women's Project is the most comprehensive place to start and provides a mini co-ordination service for many ethnicised specialist providers. See [www.nawp.org](http://www.nawp.org) for more details.
- <sup>11</sup> For a discussion on violence, gender and class, see Wilcox (2006); violence, gender and sexuality, see Mason (2002); violence, gender and disability, see Hague, et al. (2007).
- <sup>12</sup> This is covered extensively in chapter 2 of this thesis.
- <sup>13</sup> This idea is also intimately connected with the current fear surrounding islamophobia and contemporary moral panics about attacks on Britishness. See Penketh (2009).
- <sup>14</sup> Hekman (1996) suggests that feminism's three major issues with the utilisation of Foucault in their arena, are that he is a 'malestream' theorist, that he ignores or marginalises issues on women and gender, and that the heavy use of deconstruction would eradicate the use of the category 'woman'. It is no surprise then, that postmodern and poststructuralist feminists have most heavily utilised Foucault (Weedon, 1997).
- <sup>15</sup> These methods are covered in chapter 3 of this thesis.
- <sup>16</sup> Kelly uses the concept of a 'continuum of sexual violence' to reveal the variety of violent acts women experience and the daily occurrence of such violence (1988). In *Surviving Sexual Violence* (1988) Kelly explores the idea that, at some level, *all* women will experience sexual violence at some point in their lifetime. In addition, her research aims to draw links between the different forms of sexual violence encountered by women through the use of the term 'continuum' (1988: 75). The concept allows one to recognise the links between 'typical' and 'aberrant' behaviour and to apply theoretical analysis to lived experience. The concept is defined in two ways: 'a basic common character that underlies many different events' and 'a

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continuous series of elements or events that pass into one another and which cannot be readily distinguished' (1988: 76).

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## CHAPTER 1

### Literature Overview: Violence Against Women Discourses

Periods of silence are as significant as periods of concern.<sup>1</sup>

Feminist explanations of men's violence did not come from criminological theories or vocabularies, but rather from activists and ideas that had been developing outside academic criminology.<sup>2</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of how VAW has been put into discourse. I will explore and evaluate some of the traditional approaches to VAW in line with emerging contemporary challenges. The chapter is essentially structured around two cross-cutting discursive constructions: VAW and violence against ethnicised women. These two threads demonstrate the often simultaneous work that has been carried out by academia and activism, the exchanges that took place between and amongst the spearheads of both movements, and some consistent problems, such as the nature of service provision and the conceptualisation of this social problem. Underpinning this discussion is the ongoing debate about the compatibility, and dynamics, of multiculturalism and community cohesion, and the sustained effort to highlight and enhance women's rights. It is important to note that

intersectionality as a theoretical framework and the literature that surrounds the conception of the idea, and its current progress, is covered in an exploration in Chapter 2. For this reason, Chapter 1 is illustrative of previous research and activism rather than a comprehensive exploration. The underlying premise of the chapter is to consider how VAW has been put into discourse and what processes have influenced the development of this discourse. It is important to interrogate the *construction* of VAW discourse as opposed to the *origin* (Genovese, 2000: 117; my emphasis). As indicated in the introduction, political climates can largely dictate the extent to which discourses are disseminated and as hooks suggests, VAW discourse is, therefore, ‘a place of struggle’ and one that shapes subjectivity and experience (1989: 28). The aim of the chapter is to highlight the specificities of violence against ethnicised women as well as, importantly, the similarities that underscore many acts of VAW.

Hanmer and Itzin (2000) suggest that feminist activists and researchers have made three serious contributions to the study of VAW. These are identifying male violence as an act of social control, evidencing this social control as problematic and introducing this violence to public and political agendas across the globe (2000: 1). This chapter will now illustrate these three phases, using seminal texts and arguments to provide a snapshot of the vast scholarly activity that comprises the VAW field before allowing the influential women’s movement to be illuminated for its central role in placing men’s violence on the public and political agenda. The chapter then moves on to the

real heart of the matter - contextualising discourses and current concerns surrounding violence against minority ethnicised women.

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Early modern feminist texts concentrated predominantly on a wide analysis of male power that was used to subordinate women through social, economic, political and ideological institutional control. Male violence and aggression were not necessarily addressed, or considered to be central to the maintenance of male power and patriarchal conditions. The 1970s saw classic texts written on men's monopoly of all powerful institutions including politics, law, industry, finance and the military, yet the majority of them failed to include violence and force as key weapons in a male dominated society. Firestone (1974), Millett (1969), Mitchell (1971) and Rowbotham (1973), amongst others, confronted issues around power, inequality and exploitation, and moved away from the typical gender-blind work of the time. When violence was addressed specifically, patriarchy and male power were offered as dominant causal factors and the family was treated as the 'chief' institution of masculine authority (Millett, 1969). Many groundbreaking texts began to locate the problem of men's violence in the entrenched patriarchal systems that govern western societies (Brownmiller, 1975; Edwards, A., 1987; Schechter, 1982).

Of the seminal texts produced at the time, Brownmiller's book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975) is arguably the most groundbreaking

and influential, and represents a landmark in feminist thinking by placing rape and men's violence against women at the centre of investigations. The family was constructed as a site of oppression and the preservation of unequal gender relations – this institution was seen as the first line of defence for patriarchal power. Martin (1976) states in her eye opening book *Battered Wives* that 'the door behind which the battered wife is trapped is the door to the family home' (Martin 1976 in Bergen et al, 2005: 159). Through these early feminist explorations, the family, the home, and the private spheres emerged as the environments in which women were in most danger. The institutional regulation of marriage and 'the very structure of the family' (Smart, 1984: 744) fosters and sustains patriarchal conditions through themes of dependence, compulsory heterosexuality, gender socialisation, and gendered binaries (Bergen et al., 2005; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; 1987 Edwards, S. 1987; Smart, 1984; 1989). Structurally, through the operation of divorce laws and androcentric judicial and state responses, these domestic conditions are supported and become hegemonic. Violence then becomes an instrument of control, interwoven with patriarchy through men's commitment to maintain and reinforce their dominance over women. This commitment to patriarchy was evidenced through heterosexual and institutional relations comprised of power, dominance and control. Thus, domestic violence and rape came to be articulated as a systematic abuse of power, and control, manifested through patterns of violence and coercion (Bergen et al., 2005; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Edwards, A., 1987; Smart, 1984; 1989; Stanko, 1985).

Evidently, gender differences came to be understood as the result of complex social processes, and academics began to theorise around these concepts. There was a discursive shift from a flat and static notion of patriarchy (Bradley, 1992; Walby, 1990) to analytical terms that could deal with deep and interconnected forms of women's subordination. Here, patriarchy was compiled in structural forms of inequality, one of which was identified as men's violence (Walby, 1990). This reallocated gendered regimes of power as the cornerstone of VAW. Many academics attempting to convey the conditions that have been historically constructed as patriarchal prefer to use the conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity<sup>3</sup> (Connell, 2002; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Hall, 2002; Jefferson, 2002; Thornton, 1989). Hegemonic masculinity dictates that men have legitimated power over women *and* other men by displaying normative masculine behaviour including aggressiveness, control and sometimes physical violence. Cultural scripts would suggest that men of differing ethnicities adopt diverse versions of hegemonic masculinity, and that due to pervasive ethnocentrism, white men reap the full benefits of these conditions. Taking some of these ideas and reconceptualising the problem, theories around masculinity, or more accurately the 'crisis' of masculinity, and its inextricable link to VAW have a very definite class element to them (Anderson, 1997; Connell, 1995; Macmillan and Gratner, 1999; Newburn and Stanko, 1994). This 'crisis' of masculinity is often marked as a point at which the traditional gender order operating in society can be challenged.



Connell's (2002) notion of gender orders, gender regimes and gender relations are instrumental in explaining the contemporary view of gender as an unstable concept, and one which is cut across by a variety of power relations and simultaneous regimes of inequality<sup>4</sup>. Through these notions VAW is understood at a variety of analytical levels. The gender order is reflected in micro contexts within households and family structures, across generations and through organisations at a meso level, and through the composition of the public body and the operation of the State at macro levels (Connell, 2002; Morris, 2009). Violence in households and amongst families, therefore, amplifies gender regimes and the totality of the gender order, which are available to members outside of the domestic sphere. Men and women are consequently situated in hierarchical relationships, but ones which are in flux due to their negotiation with other regimes of inequality, and their differing levels of performance (Jackson, 2006; Walby, 2009). As a result, those organisations that are intended to respond to VAW are themselves gendered (Connell, 2002; Morris, 2009).

These organisations often construct deeply gendered constructions of victims. VAW is often referred to as a 'hidden crime' (Walklate, 2007) and it is intimately connected with the rise of victimology in criminology (Walklate, 1989; Carrington, 2008). A positivist approach suggests that the problem may actually lie with the victim – types of women, such as 'paranoid', 'depressed' and 'masochistic', are more likely to stay in violent relationships (Wright and Hill, 2004). These victim-blaming strategies are underpinned by assumptions of

gender relations, which suggest that women are responsible for their own victimisation by staying in violent partnerships (Walklate, 2007). These recuperative strategies are dismissed by feminist academics and activists who rationalised the numerous reasons why women stay in abusive relationships, not least including the desire to live, be economically equipped to feed and house children, and through fear (Mooney, 2000). This connection with victimology studies also enabled feminist academics to insist that the fear of crime was a worthy criminological concept, and a significant body of literature refuted the dominant claim that women's fear of crime was amplified or excessive (Lee, 2007). Feminist criminologists unravelled the idea that the 'stranger' is of the most threat to women (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Stanko, 1985).

Gender regimes are also evident in the police and other official agencies' response to VAW. The privacy and family setting of much VAW severely impacts upon the commitment and willingness of the police to intervene, and to the levels of policy direction the police are given (Hoyle, 1998). Smart (1989) has been rightly critical of law as a site of resistance. The acknowledgment that the law and the legal system operate in a masculinist way, saturated with andocentric ideas, was offered as an explanation as to why less justice and protection is afforded to women, especially those challenging the status quo by reporting male violence (Edwards, S., 1989; Radford, J., 1987; Stanko, 1985). Indeed, the contravening of gender roles or a challenge to hegemonic masculinity, can construct women as somehow responsible for the violence

they suffer – ‘provoking her own demise’ (Edwards, S., 1987) – and how law enforcement agencies all too readily follow this line of thinking. This has since become a permanent fixture on the feminist agenda (Gupta, 2003; Wells, 2000). There are numerous reasons why women do not report the violence that is perpetrated against them (Coleman and Norris, 2000; Edwards, S., 1987; 1989; Kennedy, 1992; McColgan, 1996; Radford, J., 1987; Stanko, 1985). These discourses create a complex picture of both structural and personal factors underpinned by the holistic operation of gender regimes. For example, the misogyny and phallogentric power of the law is exercised throughout cases of VAW to define and police acceptable gendered behaviour, and to maintain, through discursive and representational terms, desirable codes of sexuality and femininity (Naffine, 1997; Radford, L., 1987; Smart, 1976; 1989; 1995).

## **ACTIVISM**

Many discourses emerged from the achievements of the battered women’s movement and the frontline activism played a crucial part in VAW becoming rooted in public and political consciousness (Dobash and Dobash, 1979, 1987; Pizzey, 1974; Stanko, 1985). The first refuge for women suffering from violence was opened in Chiswick by Chiswick Women’s Aid in 1972<sup>5</sup>. This strand of activism whose central focus had been placed in the private sphere, in homes, amongst couples, within families, was now gaining public attention and recognition. The battered women’s movement lodged a challenge at both the individual and societal level by raising questions about institutions that

maintained male dominance and, therefore, implicitly supported the use of violence. The refuge movement began to grow through an 'explosion of activity' (Dobash and Dobash, 1987: 170) that saw many safe houses open their doors across the country. The continued dedication of campaigners, women's groups and volunteers provided a momentum that drove the movement forward, and enabled innovative responses to be produced when new issues arose due to increased public awareness and provision.

The secure placing of VAW on the public and political agenda did not come easily, however the first decade recorded many local and national achievements. These accomplishments include gaining community support and creating pressure to place on the Criminal Justice System and other state agencies, and establishing provision, which consists of refuges, helplines and some outreach programmes – in ten years (1972-1982), 128 refuges were opened in England and Wales (Dobash and Dobash 1987: 171). Arguably, the biggest political shift saw the publication of the *Report from the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage* (Vols 1 and 2, 1975 in Dobash and Dobash, 1987: 173) which, as testament to the dedication of feminist activists, suggested that violence was inextricably linked to women's position within patriarchal society, and was serious and in need of quick and effective state responses. Equally as important was the installation of the National Women's Aid Federation in 1974<sup>6</sup>, that sought to provide temporary refuge to women and children experiencing violence, to challenge patriarchy and men's power, and to

educate and inform the public and various authoritarian institutions, amongst other goals<sup>7</sup>.

More recently, Women's organisations, Non Government Organisations (NGOs), and effective service provision, remain pivotal in the implementation of policy, and this frontline approach can empower women to actively participate in their own recovery (Gupta, 2003; Hanmer and Itzin, 2000; Johal, 2003). More consistent and effective links are being made between activism, theory and the workings of official agencies. For example, Betsy Stanko (2007) now works for the London Metropolitan Police Service as a strategy advisor, bringing examples of best practice into focus so as to direct police response and evidence-based decision making. She notes several improvements to the way policing is now experienced by victims of crime (2007).

There have been, however, concerns around the current depoliticisation of a great deal of the voluntary sector, including the refuge movement<sup>8</sup>. The hierarchical structure of many voluntary agencies now means that management committees are comprised of local professionals whose main priority may not necessarily be VAW<sup>9</sup> (Inam, 2003: 54). This, coupled with a more business-like attitude of many workers and volunteers, has led to a reduction in active political engagement at grassroots levels. Furthermore, funding regulations and competitiveness, plus a general rivalry between organisations instigated by these conditions, has meant that whilst some sections of 'service delivery' have improved, these enhancements have been at the expense of political mobility.

In theoretical and activist circles, it is often persistently maintained that cultural politics and the various fluctuations that surround its main concerns and priorities, must remain central to any campaign or personal political agenda. As Gunew suggests in a discussion with Spivak '...one of the strategies...is to make sure that you are constantly involved in political campaigns, that you are in touch with what is happening, that you are in touch with the very specific politics of trying to bring about certain reforms' (Spivak, 1990b: 63). The link between practice and policy, and by extension, theory, may be more in need of attention than ever.

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST ETHNICISED WOMEN**

It is widely accepted that all women have individual and unique experiences of violence. It is now acknowledged that ethnicised women's experience of VAW is 'conditioned by their gender and community identity' (Anitha, 2008: 190), and specific problems such as difficulties with language, familial relationships and community network intervention, isolation, loneliness, destitution, exclusion from an array of public services, the complications that the concepts of honour and shame can bring, ethnocentrism and cultural racism (Anitha, 2008; Burman and Chantler, 2004; Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Gupta, 2003; Sokoloff and Pratt, 2005) often emanate from these conditions. These complexities have highlighted the conceptual and practical differences in strategising against, and responding to, VAW. However, in contemporary discourses on VAW a misuse of the term culture has served to ethnicise many

acts and contexts. This process has taken place against a backdrop of cultural relativism located within a centralised drive towards multiculturalism and, more recently, the State's drive for community cohesion. The inextricable link constructed between minority ethnicised groups and the operation of culture, within a multicultural rather than a gendered framework, has populated the public and political consciousness across Europe (Rostock and Berghahn, 2008; Siim and Skjeie, 2008).

Multicultural discourse in a UK context remains highly contested (Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Meeto and Mirza, 2007), but it is widely acknowledged that with the advent of New Labour in 1997, came a more definite ethnicised tone to multiculturalism. However, this nuanced construction was not without its own problems, many of which directly impact upon the political and public discourse associated with VAW. A heavy focus on race, ethnicity and culture within the overall position of multiculturalism has given rise to a paradoxical problem. Ethnicised women are simultaneously visible and invisible (Meeto and Mirza, 2007) and this 'homogenised absence' and 'pathologised presence' is used to inform service provision (Burman et al, 2004: 332). This has facilitated the exclusion of women from services (Anitha, 2010; Burman and Chantler, 2004), an ethos of non-interference (Meeto and Mirza, 2007), and a symbolic use of culture to 'normalise' VAW in certain community contexts (Burman et al, 2004). Ethnicised women are, therefore, often trapped in precarious positions amidst the cultural essentialism of a particular form of multiculturalism.

Overwhelmingly, gender is compromised in a multicultural vision and the tensions between this stance and the women's movement are well documented (Gupta, 2003). It is argued that a concentration on difference, diversity and tolerance, has obscured the centrality of gender and the operation of hegemonic masculinity that helps to comprise violence against ethnicised women, concealing the similarities between violence perpetrated within and against majority and minority cultures (Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Burman and Chantler, 2004). Indeed, Burman et al. (2004) argue that over-emphasising the role of culture, at the expense of gender, can have devastating effects. It is therefore imperative to adequately capture the intersections of culture, ethnicity and gender, so as to highlight the specificities of violence against ethnicised women, as well as the general conditions facing all abused women.

For Dustin and Phillips (2008), the key to effectively addressing violence against ethnicised women lies in the ongoing conversations that take place across discursive borders. They argue that we must avoid pitting women's rights and multiculturalism against each other, and root our representation of these struggles in activism and coalition. Certainly, it is worth remembering that whilst the spotlight has been problematically placed on some ethnicised communities through the symbolic depiction of acts of FM, HBV and FGM, these have also been the focus of years of determined campaigning. Whilst there is scepticism around the timing of the public and political interest in violence against ethnicised women, particularly in the wake of September 11 and the construction of the Muslim Other (Gilroy, 2008; Meeto and Mirza, 2007), there



are simultaneous calls for further policy, resources and provision for these women in order to continue their move from the margins (Amnesty International and the Southall Black Sisters, 2008; Thiara and Gill, 2010). Once again, the VAW field is a site of struggle, both discursively and practically, reflecting the complexity of theory and activism.

Currently, there exists a two tier system of general and specialist service provision for VAW survivors in the UK. Specialist service provision often runs along gender-specific, ethnic-specific and/or religious-specific lines. These are deemed necessary for effective response and the exercise of agency (Anitha, 2010; Inam, 2003; Parmer et al, 2005). There is evidence to suggest that when these services are available, women use them (Reavey et al, 2006). However, other insights also suggest that fears of being traced within close-knit communities, and uncertainty around confidentiality (Burman et al., 2004) prompt some women's preference for generalised services. Alternatively, close community links and networks can be used to empower women and create dynamic identities (Dwyer, 1999). Services are often structured based on wider assumptions of culture and, as such, both specialised and generalist services can exclude and homogenise ethnicised women (Burman et al., 2004). As New Labour move away from multiculturalism, and towards a community cohesion agenda, the existence of specialist VAW services hangs in the balance (Patel and Sen, 2010).

The ‘...complex and alienating web of bureaucracies’ (Mama, 2000: 49) can create an intricate chain that women must negotiate when accessing services. For ethnicised women this chain is often complicated by ethnocentric responses, the acquisition of ‘undeserving’ victim statuses, a lack of equity across provision and reluctance on the part of official agencies to intervene (Almedia and Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999; Almedia and Lockard, 2005; Dasgupta, 2005; Mama, 2000; Shaw, 2000). In particular, the lack of ethnic equality across access to public housing has been noted and so too has the vital importance of gaining independent accommodation (Mama, 2000; Morley, 2000). The overarching issue is the lack of cultural understanding or consistency, prompting many feminists to question whether cultural cues are imbedded or misunderstood (Almedia and Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999; Singh and Prabha Unnithan, 1999) and whether cultural models of intervention and provision should be adopted (Almedia and Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999; Almedia and Lockard, 2005; Bhandari Preisser, 1999; Singh and Prabha Unnithan, 1999). The overriding opinion is the recommendation of culturally competent approaches that remain attached to a more mainstream structural context – these approaches all advocate a cohesive analytical framework (Almedia and Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999; Almedia and Lockard, 2005; Bhandari Preisser, 1999; Meetoo and Mirza, 2007; Singh and Prabha Unnithan, 1999). This would facilitate the continuation of a two-tier system of specialist and generalist help; both of which are seen as critical to the success of effective provision (Anitha, 2008; 2010; Burman et al., 2004).

Views on intersecting ideas around culture, ethnicity and religion are often confused, and women from ethnicised communities can be faced with the racist assumption that they are passive victims of their culture (Mohanty, 2002). Violence against women from minority groups is presented as cultural rather than gendered (Razack, 1994). This view has been taken on board and critiqued assertively by those who suggest that what counts as culture, is contested within cultures (Narayan, 1997; Mohanty, 2002). These paradoxes continue through the use of honour and shame as ordering concepts in the analysis of violence perpetrated within minority ethnic communities. They are principally used in two ways: to explain how women are inhibited and why women are reluctant to report or disclose information on the violence they may be experiencing, and to 'explain', not excuse, why some violent actions occur (Gill, 2004; Hunjan and Towson, 2007; Sanghera, 2007; Welchman and Hossain, 2005). Yet, these concepts are often misunderstood and filter into anti-minority discourse (Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Welchman and Hossain, 2005). There is, nevertheless, much evidence to suggest that their disciplinary nature does impact upon the overall experience of abuse (Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Gill, 2004; Sanghera, 2007). What we do know from research and practice is that themes of secrecy, shame and silence universally affect victims and survivors of VAW (Burman et al., 2004; Collins, 2000; Stanko, 1985). However, shifts in wider political climates can amplify the feelings of shame and the pressures of upholding honour for minority ethnicised women. In the heightened suspicion of the post September 11 climate, South Asian women's experience of honour and shame has been compounded (Anitha, 2010; Meeto and Mirza, 2007).

Similarly, the cultural heritage of Irish survivors informed particular escalated feelings of secrecy and shame during well publicised times of bombing (Burman and Chantler, 2004). By extension, many ethnicised women are disinclined to report violence for fear of reinforcing racial stereotypes or generating racial shame (Chigwada-Bailey, 2003; Crenshaw, 1991; Gill, 2004; Gupta, 2003). For example, Collins (2000) suggests that some black women may stay in abusive relationships or be compliant with violence so as not to retain the stereotypical image of the single, black matriarch. The tension between emphasising racial stereotypes, of either women or men, and the need to protect women from violence, can be more heightened in ethnicised communities (Crenshaw, 1991; Mama, 2000).

Within this narrow framework of honour and shame, acts of VAW are constructed as being inextricably bound up in culture or, implicitly, culture free. Those dowsed in culture are associated with minority ethnicised groups (or the East) and these crimes are explained and represented by honour. In contrast, 'ordinary' VAW associated with majority ethnicised groups (or the West) is motivated by individual deviation, often encapsulated as crimes of passion, underpinned by jealousy and threat (Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Phillips, 2003; Volpp, 1996). This dichotomy has many implications (Rostock and Berghahn, 2008), several of which have already been discussed. The over-use of honour, in problematic contexts, means that, according to Dustin and Phillips (2008: 413; their emphasis) we run the risk '...that 'honour' will become the shorthand term for *all* forms of domestic violence and child abuse within minority ethnic

communities'. Crucially, this construction can imply that both victims and perpetrators act and respond without agency. Bradby (1999) argues that the two imperative notions of honour and shame are the crucial interplaying factors between the 'victim' and silence. These constructs are utilised as tools with which to attempt to morally oblige women into secrecy and submission. 'No price the women will pay would be greater than the shame they would bring on the family if they chose to end their marriage' (Ayyub, 2000). Furthermore, these paradigms are used to coerce women into tolerating unacceptable levels of intimidation and degradation. 'Within this cultural framework, male violence against women may be seen as necessary and proper to preserve the integrity of the man and the family' (Gill, 2004: 476).

Current concerns around the unequal treatment of immigrant and refugee women similarly stumble across the issue of avoiding feeding into moral panics around migration and escalating Xenophobia (Joshi, 2003). Recent marriage migrants who come to the UK to set up residency with their fiancées/husbands are subject to immigration control, and must earn citizenship by adhering to a two year probationary period – known as the two year rule (Home Office, 2003). If during this period their relationship breaks down, they are not entitled to stay in the UK, and the likely action taken against them will be deportation. During this time they cannot access public funds, including housing benefit, and are, effectively, living outside of the central welfare systems that operate in this country. The two year rule and no recourse to public funds stipulation, both of which are part of wider immigration controls

designed to limit entrance to the UK (Gill and Sharma, 2007), have particular effects for women in violent relationships. After much campaigning, a domestic violence concession was added to the Immigration Rules whereby women could apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain if they could provide requisite evidence that their marriage had broken down due to domestic violence. The specificities of this new domestic violence rule, and the differential gendered impact of immigration rules is discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

However, Anitha (2008) argues that the viability and value of the domestic violence rule needs to be offset against the reality of marriage migrant women's experiences. Findings from a recent research project into the experience of women with uncertain immigration status suggests that the realities that shape the nature of domestic violence, barriers and pathways to access, and the overall experience of service provision, complicate the usefulness of the concession (Anitha, 2008). A failure to take into account the multiple dimensions of disadvantage that marriage migrants face, and the intersections of immigration status, ethnicity and class, hamper the effectiveness of new legislation and impact upon the safety and welfare of women (Anitha, 2008, 2010; Gill and Sharma, 2007). In many instances, the uncertain status of immigration, and the difficulty in using and accessing provision, is a tool with which abuse can be maintained and escalated, trapping women in violent situations for longer, and sustaining co-dependency (Joshi, 2003). Here, the structural State immigration laws intersect with gendered domestic oppression in a particularly potent way, complicating further the

ability to act in an autonomous way. Furthermore, a retreat from multiculturalism is likely to have significant consequences for migrant women, especially in light of the fact that, arguably, only certain groups of women (those outside the EU) are perceived to be entering the UK with a dishonest agenda (Hall, 2002).

## **ACTIVISM**

Whilst the nature, incidence of, and response to, violence against ethnicised women is saturated with complexities and misunderstandings, activists and those within the academy have worked tirelessly to raise awareness around these issues and gain both standardised and specialised access to provision, and policy and practice that are rooted in multilayered, specific contexts. Much of this activism has opened up cultural dialogue in public and political discourse; a practice fraught with danger but one that is absolutely necessary for progression (Burman and Chantler, 2004; Dustin and Phillips, 2008). It is argued that some of these difficulties are eased when there is a history of activism and when important decisions are reached through coalescing. For example, the recent decision that forced marriage will remain uncriminalised was reached through a consultative process, with the implementation of a Working Group comprised of prominent activists (Home Office, 2000; 2006).

This coalition work is in progress and the two streams of activism identified in this chapter do not occur in mutually exclusive terms. There have been ongoing discussions between white and minority ethnicised women – sometimes strained, sometimes more of an exchange, and, of course, women of all ethnicities are welcome to support the intertwined causes. Debates about race and racism were part of Women’s Aid networks in the 1970s, and many organisations committed to tackling VAW continue to organise around these concepts. As the social issue of VAW becomes more prominent in public and political agendas, but the prevalence of VAW and severe problems with policy decisions, government operations and the CJS response remain worryingly consistent, significant activist groups are increasingly coming together to produce coalition work. Of importance, is the recent ‘No Recourse’, No Safety’ publication by Amnesty International and Southall Black Sisters (2008) with contributions from a variety of generalist and specialist organisations, and the End Violence Against Women coalition that is spearheading a campaign for the government to develop and implement a National integrated approach to end all forms of VAW through strategic and streamlined action.

The Southall Black Sisters are a resource centre designed to provide advice and advocacy specifically to black and minority ethnic women suffering the effects of violence. They have been at the forefront of many successful, high profile campaigns and continue to place pressure on the government to address many unresolved issues within their community<sup>10</sup>. Much of their work has been defined by the cases of Kiranjit Ahluwalia and Zoora Shah. Johal (2003)



compares the reactions of the Southall community to these two prominent cases, first brought to light in the 1990s. Using the dichotomy of 'deserving' and 'undeserving', the cases are used to illuminate many perpetual myths and culturally inflected regressive ideas about domestic violence that exist, importantly, within and across 'community' lines. Kiranjit killed her husband after sustaining ten years of brutal abuse. She was charged with murder and imprisoned for life. After years of unrelenting campaigning<sup>11</sup> she was released in September 1992, after serving three years and three months of her original sentence. Zora was abandoned by her husband after an arranged marriage had brought her to England. She was befriended by a married man, Azam, and was sexually enslaved. Zora was sexually and physically abused by Azam for many years, and the fear that he would go on to abuse her daughters led to her administering arsenic that killed him. She was charged with countless offences including murder. Her tariff was initially set at 20 years and was reduced by the then Home Secretary to 12 years in 2000. To expose the difference in sympathy and support for these two women, Johal describes Kiranjit as,

...the archetypal, virtuous housewife who had tried everything in her power to make the marriage work. She was a paragon of the 'fragrant' housewife before she took the desperate step of killing her husband, setting him alight after ten years of abuse.

(2003: 35)

This view fuelled both the men and women of Southall to offer support to her, and to vocalise their condemnation of such violent behaviour on the part of her

husband, and rightly so. Moreover, women felt a sense of identification with her actions and her plight (Johal, 2003: 35). In contrast, Zoora was viewed in a much more prejudicial way - her sexual morality seemingly cancelling out firm community support and women's affinity with her ordeal. As Johal puts it,

She was in a relationship outside of marriage and the abuse was of a sexual nature. Here the community reverted to the principle that women are still upholders of *izzat* (honour) and that Zoora had other more 'respectable options' to follow. Even those women at our centre who had experienced domestic violence found it difficult to confront their own prejudices about Zoora, making it clear that we still had a long way to go in challenging attitudes to sexuality and rape within our communities. These issues remain taboo.

(2003: 36; her emphasis)

Phillips (2003) confirms that cultural provocation defences appear only to be available to those women who conform to the subservient wife whose honour is still intact. These two cases exemplify the work of the Southall Black Sisters, and why their conscious-raising must continue. Aside from the practical, legal and emotional support offered to both women, the cases illustrate the restraining and disciplinary notions of the intersections culture, ethnicity and gender, from both outside and within their own communities. This contested nature of culture is tackled by many organisations that attend to the problem of VAW but it gives rise to the necessity of provision that understands the complexity of regimes of inequality and subjectivities shaped by the interface of multiple locations.

The tireless campaigning of all those committed to ending all forms of VAW has served to secure numerous conceptualisations in the public consciousness, and these dominant understandings continue to be heavily utilised today. However, there is great debate around the language that is used to constitute the problem of men's violence, not least around issues of accuracy and acceptability. The following section discusses some of these debates as they are integral to the operation of intersectionality in the VAW field that spans across theory, policy and practice.

#### **DEFINING THE 'PROBLEM'**

The discursive formulation of VAW and the rhetoric these constructions embody have always been problematic. The 'naming' of this social problem is as important, if not more so, than the origins of men's violence. Attributing a 'name' to experiences that harm or disadvantage people cannot be undervalued, nor can investing these 'names' with accurate and unambiguous meaning. Both Gordon (1988) and Genovese (2000) allude to the fact that when VAW was placed on the political agenda it was done so by a masculinist state, so its construction in the public domain was 'male', leading to the preference of more acceptable 'names' such as 'domestic' violence and 'family' violence that retained considerable neutralising techniques.

There are several ramifications of continuing with inconsistent and imprecise conceptualisations of VAW. Definitions can fail to accurately name VAW via erroneous, universal, socially acceptable or gender-neutral terms (Hearn, 1998; Howe, 1998; Stark, 2007); they can also fail to acknowledge significant links between acts of violence through separate and compartmentalised conceptions (Edwards, A., 1987; Kelly, 1988); women may fail to locate their own experiences leading to a lack of 'fit' between discursive and experiential conceptualisations (Mason, 2002; Mehrotra, 1999); many of the well used classifications fall short of incorporating a multidimensional understanding of VAW, or of including a diverse range of women's voices (Bograd, 2005; Gunew, 1991; Gupta, 2003); these inaccurate and often changeable categories direct social policy and service provision (Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Stark and Flitcraft, 1996); and the use of transposable 'names' strictly dictate what gets measured or analysed in social science research (Heidensohn, 2006; Stanko, 1985).

The favoured terminology throughout the 1970s when domestic violence really began to emerge took its lead from the activist movement that exploded at the same time – the battered women's movement (Martin, 1976; Pizzey, 1974). Battery, or battering, was seen as the correct appropriation for violence enacted repeatedly within the same relationship and, for this reason, it is still widely used throughout the world today (World Health Organisation, 2002). VAW is touted as a cohesive and umbrella term, credited with covering the multiple acts women can experience, including domestic violence, sexual

violence, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation (Kelly and Lovett, 2005). Men's violence against women is the term used to rid academia of any gender blindness (Howe, 2008a). In further widening perspectives, the term 'gender violence' has been adopted by those who wish to address a broader range of violence including violence against children, same sex violence and violence perpetrated by women albeit mediated by their gender (Skinner et al, 2005). A more international vocabulary appears to be 'intimate partner violence' (World Health Organisation, 2002). Alternatively, some scholars suggest locating and designating different names to specific types of violence, rather than adopting a framing concept, is beneficial (Johnson, 1995). Finally Stark (2007) calls for the problem of domestic violence to be reframed as 'coercive control' (2007). 'Coercive control' is comprised of '...three equally important tactics: intimidation, isolation, and control' (2007: 5) and is offered as a move away from, and beyond incident specific crimes of assault and on to ongoing crimes against liberty and freedom. Moreover, Pharr (1993) suggests any violent act committed against a woman because of her gender be labelled a hate crime, in line with the discursive construction of crimes motivated by ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, and heterosexism<sup>12</sup>.

Domestic violence, however, is the most utilised terminology throughout theory, activism, policy and practice (Hague and Malos, 1998; Hoyle, 1998; Vincent and Jouriles, 2000) and is, therefore, most synonymous in the public imagination. Established organisations such as Womens Aid still organise around the term, and many activist groups continue to use domestic violence

whilst locating it within an overarching definition of VAW in order to attend to a broader set of violent practices. Yet this term has been heavily critiqued for being inaccurate (Howe, 1998), gender-neutral (Romito, 2008), compartmentalising (Kelly and Lovett, 2005), benign (Genovese, 2000), homogenous (Mehrotra, 1999) and gentle (Pharr, 1993). The 'domestic' modifier also suggests that this conceptualisation can only be applied to violence experienced in the home or a family/intimate setting. However, it is necessary to concede that domestic violence has a vast amount of discursive currency and is embedded within the public consciousness.

The constant shift in thinking around the definition of violence has been plagued with inconsistencies for many years. It has also become clear throughout the last 40 years that an appropriate term would also need to be able to demonstrate the 'everyday' practices or occurrences of violence (Stanko, 1985), or the potential for this violence to be experienced frequently. After the commonplace division and classification of separate violent acts, scholars and activists alike began to recognise the need for naming and viewing VAW as a 'unitary phenomenon' (Edwards, A., 1987). Correspondingly, if we begin to adopt a characterization of VAW that includes everyday occurrences of violence, the investigation of many of our social structures and social institutions needs to be incorporated. Many theorists assumed a framework that would allow them to use the term violence in both a structural and individual way – any action or structure can be violent and unjust. These ongoing debates within academia continue unabated. However, the terms

domestic violence and VAW have taken on a more definite shape recently that allow both to be used to refer to separate theoretical spaces and practical applications. Domestic violence is often located within the broader, overarching framework of VAW, and is used to denote violence perpetrated within some personal relationship, by partners or family members, including in-laws (Kelly and Lovett, 2005). From 2009 the wider VAW concept informed government policy, reversing the decision to include forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM under domestic violence (Home Office, 2009b). This move, locating a variety of violent acts, including domestic violence, under the overall banner of VAW, has brought with it some consistency and unison across the spheres of theory, policy and practice.

The diversity of what can be included under the rubric of VAW demonstrates the complexity of defining this problem, and why underpinning an accurate definition with a gender analysis is seen as so important. The following provides a snapshot of some of the expansive work in this field. MacKinnon was instrumental in cementing a broader, more complex and extensive view of VAW. In *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (1979), she reaffirmed the idea that institutions could also be a site of violence, and that abuse experienced in the home could be paralleled by employers or fellow employees in the workplace. Ramazanoglu (1987) similarly discusses the violence of academia as an institution and details the widespread defence of male privilege and dominance in such a setting. Rich (1980) and Dworkin (1981) examine pornography and how these images portray and reinforce levels of

male power and female degradation. Barry (1979) interrogates female sexual slavery and associated issues of sado-masochism. Bell explores incest and the prevailing myths surrounding this crime (1993). McNeill (1987) addresses the issue of flashing and how this restricts women's freedom and adds to the climate of fear women feel in public. Hudson (1987) discusses how psychosurgery as a form of psychiatry is used on and against women in order to modify their behaviour, or more accurately, their reaction to male violence. Lees (1986) considers how language used to discuss women's sexuality constructs their sense of themselves and the social world. Maher and Curtis (1992) debate the relationship between women's liberation, sex work and drug use. More recently, Sanders (2005) guides us through the complexities of the indoor prostitution market, Kempadoo's (2005) collection, rooted in a globalised context, examines trafficking, sex work and prostitution and Cudd (2006) tackles rape as a weapon of war.

In the specific context of ethnicised women, a summary of recent work also displays great variation. Singh and Prabha Unnithian (1999) discuss what they call the symbol of abuse in Indian communities – wife burning. Rudd (2001) examines incidents of dowry murders and highlights the Indian Women's Movement as a model of good practice for the prevention or reduction of these deaths. Abraham (1999) reveals that sexual violence, predominantly that which happens within a marriage or between close family members is the last taboo in South Asian communities. Adopting the use of a continuum (Kelly, 1988), Abraham (1999) uncovers how South Asian women characterise their own



experiences in the context of prevailing cultural norms. Ahmed-Ghosh (2004) considers the simple recognition that sons are privileged and daughters exist to serve their fathers until the point of marriage in some Hindu communities. The levels of patriarchy evident in the operation of some societies, she warns, must not be lost to the theme of culture and ethnicity. Finally, publications on honour-related crimes, forced marriage and female genital mutilation are extensive (Meetoo and Mirza, 2007; Siddiqui, 2003; Toubia, 1993). What these diverse interrogations suggest is that we may need to rethink a unilateral focus on gender and build in other significant ordering concepts that cut across the expansive site of VAW.

## **CONCLUSION**

Clearly, modern feminisms have served many purposes, and continue to do so. They also find themselves, at times, in conflict with other identity-focused agendas such as multiculturalism and community cohesion. With many traditional discourses taking a mono-causal approach to explaining or attending to VAW, Harding suggests that how much traditional feminism deals with issues of 'race' and ethnicity is no more productive or progressive than the original critique of the '...add women and stir' approaches to gender issues' (1991: 212). Equally, multiculturalism has served to sideline gender with a directed focus on ethnicity and culture. The failure of much work on VAW to incorporate an approach that gives equal weight to other facets of identity other than gender will be the focus of the next chapter. These additive analyses

and the discursive and political suspension of ethnicised women between competing academic and activist camps will be thoroughly interrogated before intersectionality is presented as a way of combating these issues and effectively strategising against VAW.

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- <sup>1</sup> Gordon (1988: 2).
- <sup>2</sup> Daly and Maher (1998: 9).
- <sup>3</sup> This terminology is covered in more depth in chapter 3 of this thesis.
- <sup>4</sup> The theorising of gender, and its relations with other regimes of inequality is covered in more detail in the next chapter
- <sup>5</sup> Erin Pizzey, founder of Women's Aid wrote about the struggle to establish, and keep open, the first safe house for women and children escaping violence. The groundbreaking book *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours will Hear* (1974), presents the voices of women and children in an attempt to infiltrate popular discourse.
- <sup>6</sup> It is important to note through the genealogy of the refuge movement, that Chiswick Womens Aid stayed separate from the national coalition.
- <sup>7</sup> See Sutton (1978).
- <sup>8</sup> However, through informal chats with a variety of service users, it has become apparent that some women feel the political tone of refuge work is the last thing that they are concerned about when searching for safety and comfort.
- <sup>9</sup> This is not to say that many related, or unrelated professionals, who sit on management committees, are inactive or unsupportive of both the direct and wider practical and political struggles associated with VAW.
- <sup>10</sup> The Southall Black Sisters have an extensive website which can be found at [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk). They have published several counter-documents to recent government policy initiatives which can be found on the site, some of which are utilised throughout this thesis. See Gupta (2003) for an edited collection detailing the history, works and successes of the organisation. Patel (2000) provides an illuminating history of the Southall Black Sisters and discusses her own experiences of working with survivors of violence.
- <sup>11</sup> Predominantly by the Southall Black Sisters. To view more visit [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk) and follow the links to the Kiranjit Ahluwalia campaign section.
- <sup>12</sup> I like the way that Pharr detects a note of irony in the common expression 'man-hater' when, despite overwhelming evidence of VAW, 'woman-hater' is very rarely used (1993).

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## CHAPTER 2

### Theoretical Frameworks: An Intersectional Approach

When I say I am a black feminist, I mean I recognize that my power as well as my primary oppressions come as a result of my Blackness as well as my Woman-ness, and therefore my struggles on both these fronts are inseparable<sup>1</sup>

What happened was like an accident, a collision. Intersectionality simply came from the idea that if you're standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you're likely to get hit by both<sup>2</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Western feminist literature has only in the past 30 years or so, and very intermittently, come to recognise the way in which it has ignored how gender differentially affects women from diverse ethnic and racialised groups. Critical social theory, feminist or otherwise, has predominantly adopted strategies to combat VAW that attend to race *or* gender. Intersectionality<sup>3</sup>, as a theoretical concept, originated through the work of Kimberle Crenshaw, an African-American law professor, in the early 1990s. However, there have been calls in some political circles for a simultaneous and interlocking approach for many years. Taking the yawning gap that existed in work that attended to the connection of race and gender as a starting point, this chapter will expand on chapter 1 by providing an illustrative critical history of how feminists from the

academy have dealt with and conceptualised the questions of multiple subjugations through the initiation, and adoption, of various forms of critical race feminism. I will present intersectionality as a theoretical way of framing the various interactions of ethnicity, race and gender in the context of VAW<sup>4</sup>. The chapter ultimately seeks to document the ongoing conversations and debates within feminism concerning the relationship between gender, race and ethnicity, and how best to articulate this, and to highlight the importance of intersectionality to the theorisation of, and the practical and political responses to, VAW.

## **THEORISING GENDER**

Firstly, it is important to rehearse some of the major feminist debates of the past fifty years in order to add some context to the following discussion on intersectionality and its quest to be free from unilateral and essentialising practices. Whilst one of the main aims of this thesis is to highlight the multiplicity of social divisions that comprise identity, affect experience and shape others' and institutions' response to an individual, it is crucial that gender and race, and their turbulent association with feminism are analysed and subsequently conceptualised.

Put simply, there is widespread acceptance that sex refers to one's biological sex and that gender refers to behaviours, languages and roles more closely associated with either men or women (Jackson and Scott, 2002). Sex

finds its expression through anatomy and physiology that dictate one's male *or* female body and gender is articulated through the concepts of masculinity and femininity, or what it culturally means to be a man or a woman. The distinction therefore lies in the 'naturalness' of sex differences and the culturally produced differences between the genders (Oakley, 1972). This distinction was at the forefront of feminist intervention in the 1960s and 1970s, and gave rise to the idea that we are given a sex but acquire a gender - a belief that prompted Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal text *The Second Sex* (1974) to state that 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. Constructed as a system of differences, Western language and ideology organises categories through binary oppositions. Sex and gender, therefore, take on a dichotomous relationship, sex/gender reads as biology/culture or body/identity (Richardson, 2008: 8), and the two genders are also placed in binary opposition to each other: men/women. The two categories represent not only distinct variables but '...one is typically cast as positive and the other negative' (Beasley, 2005: 11). These binaries justify and systemise a dependent hierarchy where the first term is privileged and normalised. The first term becomes a benchmark by which the second term is assessed. Furthermore, it is argued that the second term actually exists within the first term (McLaren, 1995: 128). However, this definition of gender, the dichotomous relationship articulated as men/women, is based on a primitive form of difference, and as such, '...where we cannot see difference, we cannot see gender' (Connell, 2009: 10). This approach obscures the multiple forms of gender that are now acknowledged, the idea that masculinity and femininity can be presented in different ways, and that we can acquire a

mixture of both masculine and feminine traits at the same time. Gender is rightly constituted in contemporary debate as fragmented, flexible and unstable (Connell, 2009; Jackson, 2006; Morris, 2009).

Gender is now also thought to operate through social arrangements and relations. As gender is constantly in flux and negotiation, an analytical framework would suggest that gender operates with or within existing social structures, bringing them into being via the gendered process of human behaviour. Connell (2009) offers a model of gender that is organised around the ideas of relations, regimes and orders. A fluid concept of gender means that both difference and similarity are understood to be central in the formulation of gender relations. Here, gender relations are socially produced, and whilst they often appear unchanging, the nature of these gender patterns provides the space for possibility and action. Such gender relations and arrangements often manifest themselves within institutional structures and can be understood as gender regimes (Connell, 2009). These regimes can take on a hierarchical order, creating conditions in which gender is enacted. An example of a well established gender regime is the institution of the family and its ability to act as a collective site for the production of specific gendered behaviours and relations (Connell, 2009; Morris, 2009). These individual and institutional relations and regimes form part of the wider patterns that Connell (2009: 73; her emphasis) calls ‘...the *gender order* of a society’. She argues that contemporary gender structures are ordered by four main dimensions – power relations, production, emotional relations and symbolism (2009). These dimensions interlock with one

another and condition how each functions. Framing gender in this way enables us to move away from flat concepts of patriarchy and to constantly reconfigure the terrain upon which new, and differently gendered, social struggles arise.

However, there are disagreements amongst feminist and gender theorists about the formulation of gender structures. Whilst Connell (2009: 76) asserts that to fully understand gender we must attend to other forms of social relations and how they mutually condition each other, often through structural forms of inequality, we must not root our analysis of gender *in* inequality. Walby (2009) also builds a model of a gender regime that accounts for other identity-based components whilst retaining a separate analytical system. However, she grounds this analytical framework directly in what she calls 'regimes of complex inequality'. In Walby's latest model there are four modes of abstraction; the most conceptual of which is the existence of a gender regime or a system of gender relations (Walby, 2009: 259). These gender regimes are distinguished by differing domestic and public forms and they create varieties or versions of gender regimes. The third level of abstraction sees Walby identify four institutional domains in which gender relations occur – economic, polity, violence and civil society (2009). Within these domains, gender relations interact with other regimes of inequality and contribute to the production of multiple sets of social relations. Finally, distinctions are made between gender relations at meso and micro levels (Walby, 2009: 260). Similarly, Jackson (2006) contends that gender is used to structure hierarchical categories and positions that are inextricably associated with inequalities. These patterned forms of



inequalities have differing effects at differing levels of society. Although the above theorists may depart from each others understanding in terms of 'democratic' and 'unequal' models of gender, each retains the idea that as gender is changeable and overlaps with other social categories, there is room for both structural conditioning and individual autonomy.

Yet despite having a certain degree of self-rule over how we construct our own gender, there is pressure to conform to what many people believe we 'naturally' are<sup>5</sup>. As Butler states 'we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right' (1990: 140). This accounts for the undeniable political dimension of the concept of gender. There are two broad arguments that clarify gender's political features. Firstly, there is an overwhelming and indisputable political element in the form of gender ordering and gender privileging - that one gender (men) has power and privilege over the other gender (women). These hierarchies denote political authority and influence and can dictate economic positions and stability, and access to resources and divisions of labour (Jackson, 2006). However, gender ordering is not confined to a dual between the genders. A hierarchy or level of privilege can also exist within genders, for example, to depart from the dominant forms of masculinity can hold great political, and therefore social, significance for men who are gay, bi-sexual, effeminate, placid, weak etc.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, gender has an inherently political dimension as the concept itself is frequently privileged over other social divisions. Moreover, a definition based solely on dichotomy, solely on gender, fails to locate and name the differences amongst women, for example.

A political analysis of gender can only be fully explored through the idea of social constructionism. Social constructionism as a perspective explores 'the assumptions embedded in the labelling of people and places and emphasizes the importance of social expectations in the analysis of taken-for-granted or apparently natural social processes' (Clarke, 2001: 266). The construction and production of gender and the meanings that this concept takes on in specific cultures, across specific time frames, is constantly filtered and circulated by ever-changing discourses. 'Gender is, above all, a matter of the social relations within which individuals and groups act' (Connell, 2002: 9). I will argue that gender is a social construct with deeply embedded dominant meanings, yet it can be, and frequently is, actively constructed and deconstructed on fluid social arrangements which are reproduced by ever-changing discourse, powerful structures and new human practices. Thus, as gender embodies all the key characteristics of a system, this thesis will engage with gender as a regime.

## **THEORISING RACE AND ETHNICITY**

Like gender, race is also a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups (Thiara and Gill, 2010). Race is a label attached to a category of people who are grouped together because they may share some biological traits including skin colour. Due to such similarities, people are observed and treated in a similar way. Again, we see the idea that there are some essentialist characteristics pertaining to particular individuals because of their race.

However, these traits are culturally determined and socially constructed. Race has no strictly scientific basis. DNA suggests that the variants of biological categories that exist do not conform to the specified race categories that have developed over time (Smedley and Smedley, 2005). People and groups can move from one racial category to another depending on the historical, geographical and political climate of the time. For example, an individual may be 'white' enough to be classed as white, despite having significant heritage that would suggest otherwise. Some groups, who were once defined and treated as immigrants, the 'Irish' for instance, are now classed as white in terms of their racial category. Society however, now also draws a distinction in terms of ethnicity. Ethnicity refers to smaller group membership based much more predominantly on geography and language, and thus, stresses a more social definition (Reed, 2002). So using the example identified above, one could describe themselves as White – Irish; White denoting their race, and Irish their ethnicity. Once more language is used to classify people through the emergence of different categories and groups.

Racialisation is a process by which a group, or the characteristics of a group, are collectively identified and how social structures, ideologies and language are given and retain racial meanings (Murji, 2001). In contrast to the idea that race is determined by fixed biological categories, racialisation is a way of articulating the construction of racialised categories and how these categories are used in exclusionary ways. More specifically, viewing race and racialisation processes as a social construction enables one to view how race is

used to offer an understanding or an explanation of a particular event. This process has now taken on a distinctly ethnicised form. Crucially, for this thesis, certain acts of VAW have come to symbolise a distinct ethnicised criminality, and one that is unfoundedly constructed as more brutal and severe than VAW perpetrated in white communities. Racialisation and ethnicisation also, clearly, can be used to define the process of acquiring attitudes, values and beliefs that contribute to racism and ethnocentrism. Racism can manifest itself in many forms, including a type of cultural racism in which aspects of society can explicitly or implicitly view whiteness as synonymous with normality, and stereotype ethnicised people as different, devalued, less-than or a homogenous group through various Othering practices. The process of racialisation and ethnicisation is therefore active and productive. In a similar way to gender, race and ethnicity can be articulated as ordering concepts which are underpinned by hierarchical regimes of inequality (Walby, 2009).

Over the past five years there has also been significant movement in race scholarship, with varying debates on certain concepts' usefulness and meaning, in a way that echoes the developments around sexed status. Gilroy (2008) contends that we are suffering from a 'crisis of raciology'. Through shifts in various political, historical, ethical and cultural discourses, the meaning we attach to racial difference has changed significantly. Gilroy advocates that this 'crisis' can be used strategically '...to free ourselves from the bonds of all raciology in a novel and ambitious abolitionist project' (2008: 520). Racial (biological) hierarchies have begun to diminish, and are now replaced by

cultural and ethnic differences. The discourse on ethnic difference is now comprised of discussions around cultural traditions, variations and nationalist inclinations. This modification gained speed under the wing of the New Racism movement. The hallmark of the movement is, indeed, to concentrate on cultural difference rather than inherent biological ordering. Multiculturalism broadly evolved through the acknowledgement of ethnic and cultural diversity, and was intended to be a celebration of Britain as a multiethnic country. More recently, multicultural discourses have been heavily criticised, not least for its actual failure to recognise heterogeneity amongst and across different cultures, and importantly, for its negation of significant gender issues. The dominance of culture, as opposed to the biological and visible markers of race, is an important shift in thinking about VAW, and especially violence committed against ethnicised women. For example, violence against ethnicised women is often represented as being bound up in a variety of cultural codes that are billed as much more integral to the understanding of these actions than race itself.

## **RACING THE FEMINIST AGENDA**

Despite the explosion of feminist activity in the 1970s and 1980s there was little mainstream consideration on how women's experiences were mediated by race and ethnicity. However, 'black feminist thought' sought to challenge this marginalisation (Collins, 1998; Mirza, 1997) and this body of work has created a conceptual space from which theory has been refined, leading to an overall better understanding of the complexity of ethnicised women's

experience, as well as how to address and work with difference. hooks argues that this scholarship 'reclaimed' the term feminist for black women's political and theoretical use (1989). Nonetheless, these discussions remain 'fairly scarce' in mainstream debates (Thiara and Gill, 2010: 33). There are, conversely, now significant pockets of feminism that include a focus on difference and diversity as standard practice. For example, this correction has been enhanced by the perspectives of postmodernism (hooks, 1989), poststructuralism (Weedon, 1997) and critical whiteness studies (Frankenburg, 1993). These ideas have been embraced by a variety of scholars including white western feminists. However, there remain ongoing debates about how to best approach and conceptualise gendered forms of racism and ethnocentrism, and ethnicised forms of sexism, as well as how best to 'do' coalition.

Moreover, by extension, a critical question remains as to how we can retain commonalities amongst women whilst attending to the specificity of difference. Walby (2009) suggests that there have been several approaches to this problem. Succinctly, she collapses them into four main categories. The first, which will be critiqued below, remains steadfast in its mono-causal approach to gender at the expense of other regimes of difference. The second and third categories reject gender as a total system. They focus on identity at the point of its intersection with other social divisions, or by moving away from unitary categories and towards difference, respectively. Finally, the fourth category, 'the middle way', dictates that gender is made up of several elements, so neither follows a single base approach nor attempts to build in an infinite

number of differences (Walby, 2009: 254). These categories can be plotted throughout the history of feminism, and can be seen in the ongoing, argumentative conversations about race and racism within both the women's movement and academia. Furthermore, we must be cautious not to conflate difference and diversity, and to be alert to issues of power and inequity.

## **THE CONSEQUENCES OF ISOLATING GENDER AND RACE**

However, significant issues have arisen as gender and race have been considered and campaigned for in isolation from each other. There have been several consequences of this mono-causal approach, including the homogenisation of identity groups, the prioritisation of certain groups or certain identity modal, and the lack of consideration around how different identity memberships interact with one another to create specific effects and to shape experience. Similarly experiences can impact upon how our identity is constituted or how we view and understand ourselves. The chapter will now address the main consequences in turn, highlighting some of the modes of analysis that led to the conceptualisation of intersectionality.

- **Homogenisation**

As a political movement, mainstream feminism placed gender as the primary focus of theory and research. Subsequently, the premise of the movement was predicated under an umbrella of 'sisterhood' – the category

'woman' conceptualised as a singular, monolithic property. Lorde (1984) warned that the need for unity is often mistaken for homogeneity. This is problematic on two main accounts. Firstly, this lead to a prioritisation of divisions. Furthermore, these divisions were conceptualised as internally homogenous, denying specificities and failing to attend to exclusionary power relations within them. When race was given consideration in feminist work it was to point to different cultures or ethnicities, rather than to rethink the unitary category of 'woman' and how this category is modified by other group memberships. This leads to a tendency within mainstream scholarship, and many disciplines who deal with VAW, to talk about women's position in a dichotomous relation to the dominant 'male' – as though women were undifferentiated in terms of sexed and ethnicised identity. Spelman argues that the supposition of a generic woman conceals the specificity of women and obscures any heterogeneous consideration for feminist theory (1988: ix).

The foundational category 'woman', therefore, works problematically to essentialise groups of women (Thiara and Gill, 2010). For example, much existing feminism works with stereotypes, portraying ethnicised women as being subsumed by a particular form of patriarchy, locked into situations in which they are helpless victims or are complicit with their inhibited lifestyles (Reed, 2002; Volpp, 1996). Such a homogenous viewpoint also suggests that, by extension, white women, are more liberated and free from the constraints of male dominance. Furthermore, as Volpp argues in the specific context of a reply to the argument that all cultural defences should be rejected, such a



perspective labels all ‘...non-European immigrant culture as “male”, and feminism as “American”’ (1996: 168). This is another example of a dichotomous relationship that gains authority by appealing to taken-for-granted sensibilities – the supposedly progressive Western societies versus the unliberated and controlled Eastern way of life (Mohanty, 1988).

The use of a single axis framework – privileging gender over other social forces such as race, class and sexuality status – erases the intersection of multiple oppressions and forces ethnicised women to set up ‘competing political camps’ (Volpp, 1996: 170). This is a form of gender essentialism. By privileging gender, some feminists working at the centre of academia neglect the way women’s experiences are shaped by race and ethnicity, and racism and ethnocentrism. A homogenous technique is used to submit that all ‘minority’ women face the same pressures that subordinate them. This focus fails to acknowledge the way culture is contested differently between and among all communities (McLaren, 1995). Consequently, these ideas are predicated on cultural racism and cultural relativism (Dustin and Phillips, 2008). Cultural racism shapes the existence of ethnicised women as dependent on cultural norms and traditions whilst white women are articulated as progressive. This is a form of epistemic violence – an othering technique that discursively marginalises through language.

Spivak has called for ‘...a persistent critique of what one is up to, so that it doesn’t get bogged down in this homogenisation...’ (1990b: 63). Spivak is

warning against the danger of constructing the Other as a unified category, denying specificities and treating oppression or experience as the 'same' based on certain social divisions. In order to avoid the pitfalls of homogenous analysis, we must be constantly aware of whom we are representing. Whether this is self representation or representing others, the issue of homogenisation must be constantly monitored and indeed it has '...to be kept alive as a problem' (Spivak, 1990b: 63).

For white feminists, Spivak suggests '...the careful project of unlearning our privilege as a loss' (1990b: 195). This involves a process of working back critically through your own history in order to establish and view the privileges that you have been afforded. These privileges can prevent people from obtaining a certain knowledge of all those labelled as Other. Spivak suggests that this absence of knowledge is a loss. The experience and historical and political knowledge gained by virtue of being Othered can be used effectively and strategically at any point of discursive struggle. Ironically, much mainstream feminism failed to acknowledge that there are different forms of othering practices than divisions based on gender. bell hooks argues that academia and theory can be sites of struggle, with words used as a method of resistance (1990). Further, she suggests that retaining knowledge and seeking new knowledge can be driven by the desire to fight, to progress, and to create 'spaces of radical openness' at the margins (1990: 34). This unlearning as a loss does not simply mean tolerance or understanding but a critical, reflective project in which you interrogate your position in order to embrace anti-racist

theory and practice (Thiara and Gill, 2010). This practice represents the ongoing struggle within the feminist movement to negotiate the implications of differential and cross-cutting regimes of inequality.

- **Exclusion**

Historically, ethnicised women have been on the periphery of both the feminist and anti-racist movements. 'In a curious twist of fate, we find ourselves marginal to both the movements for women's liberation and black liberation, irrespective of our victimization under the dual discriminations of racism and sexism' (King in Guy-Sheftall, 1995: 299). Ethnicised women experience multiple forms of oppression including racism, ethnocentrism and sexism, yet each separate movement or faction attended to one division or another. As a result, ethnicised women were, and to some extent still are, forced to privilege one form of oppression over the others in terms of political activism. The second wave feminist movement was predominantly predicted on the needs and grievances of white, western women largely from the middle classes (Breines, 2002). The anti-racist, civil rights movement was based around the furtherance and equality of ethnicised men. Ethnicised women were, therefore, on the borders of both, suspended between feminism and race theory, theoretically and politically.<sup>7</sup> In the US, the Combahee River Collective alluded to the futility of privileging divisions and neglecting or denying mutuality as early as 1974. The black lesbian feminist organisation from Boston stated with vigour the need to connect class, gender, race and sexuality relations in order to provide a

competent and useful analysis of experience and inequality (Daly & Stephens, 1995: 194). *A Black Feminist Statement* published by the Collective in 1977 put forward the notion that the synthesis of sexism and racism is what predominantly creates the life experiences and circumstances of black women. As such, the Collective were '...actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression' (1977: 272).

Moreover, ethnicised women are penalised in every day life and this has been consciously noted for some time.

Not only are colored women with ambition and aspiration handicapped on account of their sex, but they are almost everywhere baffled and mocked because of their race. Not only because they are women, but because they are colored women, are discouragement and disappointment meeting them at every turn.

(Terrell in Guy-Sheftall, 1995: 64)

This disciplinary punishment was often experienced as exclusion, particularly in reference to the complex operation of both theory and activism. Reagon Johnson talks about the metaphorical term 'barred rooms', which is used to describe the categorisation process of identity politics. 'The women's movement has perpetuated a myth that there is some common experience that comes just [be]cause you're a woman' (1983: 28). The term 'barred rooms' suggest that certain women are included within political movements whilst some are excluded – 'you don't really want Black folks, you are just looking for

yourself with a little colour to it' (1983: 27). The contradiction between an essentialist experience shared by all, and the exclusion that ethnicised women face when resisting male domination, comes from taking the word 'woman' and managing it as a code (Brah, 1996). This effectively includes and excludes women with different social locations, and leads to discriminatory practices. This consequence of isolating gender, race and ethnicity is mirrored in the women's movement and in State action and policy. For example, in the context of VAW, women with certain social locations are offered different levels of help and assistance when they engage with service provision.

- **Additive Analysis**

Sue Lees' (1994) chapter "Lawyers' work as constitutive of gender relations' focuses on the way women are constituted as victims and offenders by the criminal justice process. Drawing on a number of pleas, such as provocation and self-defence in the context of sexed crimes, Lees attempts to outline the experiences of ethnicised women. In doing so, Lees adopts an additive analysis – an analysis that ignores the different contexts in which sexism and racism interconnect, and one that assumes women feel oppression through their various facets of social location separately rather than cumulatively. She states that 'for Asian women appearing in murder trials in the UK, there is an *added* dimension' (1994: 92; my emphasis). The particular racialised and ethnicised factors that shape the experiences (in very specific ways) of any person, are excluded when an additive analysis is used. Spelman

argues that the adoption of an additive analysis ‘...treats the oppression of a Black woman in a society that is racist as well as sexist as if it were a further burden when, in fact, it is a different burden’ (1988: 123), albeit one that is mediated by and intimately linked, to the former burden. Whilst sexism and racism will interact rather than mount one another, one could be more prominent in a given situation. Furthermore, how one form of oppression is experienced can affect, and is affected, by how another form of oppression is experienced.

Not only does an additive analysis delete the realities of racism and ethnocentrism, it further asserts the production of ethnicised women as yet another unitary category of persons.

An analysis of ‘sexual difference’ in the form of a cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy or male dominance leads to the construction of a similarly reductive and homogenous notion of what I shall call the ‘third-world difference’ – that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all women in these countries.

(Mohanty, 1988: 63)

This process of discursive homogenisation suggests that women are a constituted group. By homogenising ethnicised women, feminists imply that an analysis can transcend race and ethnicity by being universally applied to all women from specific cultures (Mohanty, 1988: 63). The homogenous group produced by transcendence or additive analysis constructs ethnicised women in

'third world' countries as sexually constrained by cultural factors, most pertinently tradition, religion, honour and shame, and as victimised by her world status. Similarly, ethnicised women in so-called progressive Western societies are constructed as being more inhibited than white women, and as living outside of dominant norms and values.

The construction of a concept that adequately addressed the multiplicity of social divisions was taken up by Beale, a critical black American feminist who introduced the expression 'double jeopardy' (1970). This term refers to the dual discriminations of racism and sexism that oppress ethnicised women. She stated that black women '...suffer all the burdens of prejudice and mistreatment that fall on anyone with dark skin. [And] As women they bear the additional burden of having to cope with white and black men' (Beale in King, 1988: 46). The hallmark of her essay *Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female* (1970) is the idea of a 'double burden' – the burden of racism and the burden of sexism<sup>8</sup>. Whilst Beale was an influential and important early critical voice in the black power movement, there are some minor limitations to her conceptualisation. Firstly she does not fully convey the dynamics of asymmetrical forms of discrimination<sup>9</sup>. Secondly, she applies 'double jeopardy' in an additive way – suggesting that racism is an additional or extra burden on top of sexism. This produces an inadequate analysis as Beale is essentially suggesting that one division can succeed or replace another. Furthermore, by producing an additive analysis, 'double jeopardy' fails to acknowledge the multiplicative relationships between the social divisions. That is, the way different systems of oppression

intersect and interact with each other and compound upon the way each is experienced and manifested in society. The wider implication of reducing these relationships to 'add-on' is that they fall within the parameters of white, western structural definitions that privilege themselves accordingly. Nonetheless, in the political and academic climate of the time and the way in which 'women' and 'gender' were used as unitary categories, her observations were timely and astute.

King (1988) expands Beale's characterisation of ethnicised women's experiences from one of 'double jeopardy' to 'multiple jeopardy' and 'multiple consciousnesses'. King details the first attempts of a typology of the race-sex analogy<sup>10</sup> - namely, how people who identify as ethnicised women are similarly oppressed or positioned. In various feminist critiques of patriarchy, this analogy is also drawn on comprehensively<sup>11</sup>. Conversely, ethnicised women, who identify with both categories, gain no specific theoretical understanding or advancement.

The experience of black women is apparently assumed, though never explicitly stated, to be synonymous with that of either black males or white females; and since the experiences of both are equivalent, a discussion of black women in particular is superfluous. It is mistakenly granted that either there is no difference in being black and female from being generically black (i.e., male) or generically female (i.e., white).

(King, 1988: 45)



It is the inherent differences between black men and black women *and* between white women and black women that King highlights as crucial for an understanding of 'black womanhood' (1988: 46). However, the real area of contention in her article is the non-productive and ineffective previous analyses of the asymmetry of social divisions that suggest these divisions can displace one another or be simply added on. Multiple jeopardy is submitted as a more appropriate and useful terminology. 'The modifier "multiple" refers not only to several, simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well' (King, 1988: 47). Multiple jeopardy has led ethnicised women to develop a multiple consciousness of which feminist consciousness is an integral part. Her framework recognises the inseparability of holding multiple group memberships and the impact that these memberships have on experience and social location.

- **Whiteness**

The inadequacy of several approaches to the study of ethnicised women's experiences also highlighted the swallowing of minority cultures by an indifferent white population. A process of normalisation has rendered the white race invisible. Moreover, '...the supposed neutrality of white culture enables it to commodify blackness to its own advantage and ends' (McLaren, 1995: 133). Casting a critical eye over large proportions of feminist work reveals racist and oppressive undertones. Ware argues that '...racial domination is a system that positions or constructs everyone who falls within its orbit' (1992: 143). With or

without conscious acknowledgement, racism shapes all our daily experiences (Frankenberg, 1993: 47). In many cases, however, being aware of racism means being aware of black oppression instead of white privilege (Frankenberg, 1993: 49). Whiteness is a concept that can open up spaces in racial discourse for those caught up in it against their will. It is important to note that whiteness has not been invisible to those who do not identify as such. From colonialism and slavery onwards, whiteness was constructed by ethnicised peoples, as a race that carried its own stereotypical representations.

hooks argues that ‘...ideologically the rhetoric of white supremacy supplies a fantasy of whiteness’ (1992: 169). This fantasy facilitates some white people’s view that their race represents goodness, innocence and normality. In the black imagination the picture is very different. Whilst many white people do not see the construction of their race, black people view whiteness as synonymous with terror (hooks, 1992: 169). The inability of some white feminists to address the issue of whiteness, or by extension black fear, is an accumulation of the legacy of white domination and power. Examining the association of my race with terror and domination and deconstructing whiteness, allows me to break its hold over my work and my social location. Using critical race feminism and intersectionality, I can adopt a critical perspective on the questions of racialised, ethnicised and sexed identities. Although Ware doubts ‘...whether whiteness, as a racialised category, can ever be redeemed from centuries of association with domination’ (1992: 144), a

persistent auto-critique of my work will enable me to be aware of my own position and privileges, and to refrain from homogenisation practices.

Through realising the inadequacy of homogenous, exclusionary and additive approaches, feminists from all corners of the movement began to formulate nuanced ideas about how to address simultaneous subjugations and intricate social locations. These complex issues remain firmly on the feminist agenda, manifesting themselves in both fruitful and strained exchanges. Unsuccessful attempts at effectively articulating the manifold and multifaceted experiences of ethnicised women, and the way in which power, domination and control, negotiate social relations, are not isolated to mainstream feminism. Thus, when continuing the debate about how to best deal with defining and clarifying an approach which has at its core multiple forms of identity, we must address both privilege and oppression without reproducing stereotypical representations of subjectivity. Adopting what has come to be termed 'intersectionality' is one way forward for critical social theory. The next section of this chapter will introduce intersectionality and the emergence of different forms of an intersectional approach.

## **INTERSECTIONALITY**

- **Intersectional Theory**

Theorists and activists have, for several decades, recognised that they simultaneously occupy marginalised race, gender, class and sexuality spheres, and they began to theorise in the gap that existed in literature with regards to connecting divisions. Working with the intersections of identity, and discussions about accepting difference (Lorde, 1984; Mohanty, 1988) is not in its infancy, and pre-dates the more conceptual understanding of 'intersectionality'. Still, African-American Legal theorist Kimberle Crenshaw was the first to use the term 'intersectionality' in discussing black women's unique position in anti-discrimination law (1989). Crenshaw initially used intersectionality as a way of uncovering the futility of the law in employment discrimination cases. She pointed out that '...dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis' (1989: 57). A single axis framework allows the law to compartmentalise experience and discrimination, concentrating on race or gender. Crenshaw also draws out the erosion of ethnicised women in terms of conceptualisation and remediation and further indicates the limited inquiry that can be sought when such a narrow approach is adopted. In practice this translates to '...in race discrimination cases, discrimination tends to be viewed in terms of sex-or class-privileged Blacks; in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race-and class-privileged women' (1989: 57). The adoption of a multiple axis or intersectional agenda acknowledges that ethnicised women may suffer from both race and gender discrimination. The sum of racism and sexism is not equal to the actual intersectional experience of ethnicised women. Moreover, it is as important to identify the realities of how different social divisions interact together to

produce specific effects. To do this, Crenshaw suggests that the existing framework for translating 'women's' experience and 'black' experience needs to be recast in its entirety. Racism and sexism readily intersect and interact in the lives of ethnicised women yet they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices.

Concurrently purporting that feminist theory, in its loosest form, must include an analysis of race, and that antiracist politics must mount a considerable challenge against 'patriarchy' and sexism, Crenshaw advocates a move that will '...recenter discrimination discourse at the intersection' (1989: 73). By placing ethnicised women in the centre, academics and activists concerned with identity politics can resist the categorisation of oppressions as singular and monolithic issues whilst simultaneously rebutting the '...normative view of society that reinforces the status quo' (1989: 73). Crenshaw elaborated on the concept by stating that:

The basic function of intersectionality is to frame the following inquiry: How does the fact that women of color are simultaneously situated within at least two groups that are subjected to broad societal subordination bear on problems traditionally viewed as monocausal – that is, gender discrimination or race discrimination?

(Crenshaw, 1993: 114)

This original broad framework has continued to be modified and refined and, is consequently, often used in a variety of ways and across a variety of contexts. It

is not surprising then that one uncertainty associated with intersectionality is its ambiguity (Nash, 2008; Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006). However, feminist scholars tend to agree on several points which underpin most uses of the theoretical and conceptual tool.

It is widely acknowledged that we hold multiple group memberships and that social divisions are interactive and intermeshed with each other (Yuval-Davis, 2006) – they occupy both productive and compounding space. Referring to what Collins (2000) calls the ‘matrix of domination’ intersectionality insists that people are characterised by a multitude of social divisions, that these divisions are socially constructed and that they create specific social locations (Burgess-Proctor, 2006: 36). Elements of identity work multiplicatively to mould one’s social location in transient ways, producing specific and unique experiences. These intersections are taken to characterise ‘...the diverse subjectivities and positions of “women” and “men” arising from a cross-cutting, rather than additive understanding of inequality and identity’ (Daly and Maher, 1998: 1). As such, regimes of inequality systemised through intersecting social divisions create both privilege and oppression (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, 1996; Walby, 2009; Yuval-Davis, 2006) - sometimes this can occur simultaneously, though not necessarily in equal measure. As Zack (2005) points out, the fact that some women experience privilege in some quarters of their identity (for example, I am white) does not mean that they do not suffer repression in others (I am a woman and I am working class). Systems of power and structuring forces of inequality, therefore, create advantages and

disadvantages, and as categories such as race, ethnicity and gender are socially defined, oppression and opportunity are subject to change. As Mason (2002) suggests, social divisions work for, rather than with each other, and in particular instances will be required to work more vigorously. The interplay of hierarchies of power and difference takes place on both a structural and individual level, meaning that social divisions and identities are fluid, multiple and unstable. Theorisation of these is thus 'both historicised and contextualised' (Thiara and Gill, 2010: 38).

Analytically, intersectionality enables theory to metaphorically and conceptually explore experience and discourse as the product of intersecting identities and multiple systems of domination, facilitating the deconstruction of single categories to reveal diverse aspects of women's location. Yet, the contested nature of the analytic formation of intersectionality continues. Whilst the centrality of the intermingling relationship between social divisions is generally accepted by all those who contribute to the debate, the different analytical levels at which intersectionality operates, divides scholars who employ this approach. As Yuval-Davis (2006) suggests, the interpretation of intersectionality as an additive or constitutive process remains highly critical to the articulation of a coherent methodological vision, and will therefore, be addressed first.

- **Differing Intersectional Approaches**

There has been a long-standing debate in social theory regarding the primacy of structure and agency, and although contemporary constructions move towards a reconciliation of the two (Giddens, 2009), the critical ideas that underpin the debate raise particular questions for the VAW field generally, as well as the operation of an intersectional approach. The relationship between socialisation and autonomy is animated with various queries. Succinctly, to what extent are individuals externally determined by social systems or 'structuring forces' (Lynch, 1996: 4), and to what extent does agency allow individuals to shape and structure their own social worlds and behaviour, are questions that continue to prick discussions about the constitution of identity and social divisions.

The tensions between structure and agency are considered by many scholars who adopt an intersectional approach. Nash advises that intersectionality needs '...to grapple with the amount of leeway variously situated subjects have to deploy particular components of their identities in certain contexts' (2008: 11). This strain is expressed by Ludvig (2006) as the static notions of identity that are shaped by political structures and how they contrast with the flexible constructions perceived by individuals. Through examining a narrative life-interview, she discusses the intersecting relationship between difference and identity, as presented by the subject themselves, and pays particular attention to how these self-identifications are located in space and time. The work of Verloo (2006) also illustrates the political competition that is fostered between inequalities when it is assumed that categories of difference are comprised in similar ways through structural rigidity. Indeed,



complex relationships between social positioning, social and individual identity, and political values and goals, continue to heighten the tensions between structure and agency. Prins (2006) identifies, although a little 'too absolute' for some, two predominant approaches to intersectionality – systemic and constructionist. The former, she associates with US scholars, including the aforementioned Crenshaw and Collins, and the latter, with British academics (Prins, 2006: 278). These two approaches symbolise the polarised debate between socialisation and autonomy.

Prins (2006) contends that the foregrounding of the impact of structure upon the formation of our identities, primarily suggests that human subjects are constituted by systems of domination, subordination and disempowerment. This approach, systemic intersectionality, exposes the marginalised positions of social categories such as gender, ethnicity and class, but does so along unilateral lines of power which reveal the governing sides of the structural binaries as absolute. This matter of categorisation can serve to erase the means by which subjects opt to identify. To support the lack of consideration given to agency in the complex and transitory formation of identity, Prins (2006) uses Foucault's understanding of the operation of power. The acknowledgment that power is shifting, productive and can be utilised in resistant ways (Foucault, 1997b), opens up the dynamic potential for intersectionality to destabilise the complacency of ordering concepts and structures. It is not that a systemic approach ignores the role of agency, but that a weighted analysis of power is privileged.

Conversely, a constructionist approach to intersectionality ‘...has adopted this more relational and dynamic view of power’ (Prins, 2006: 279). It rejects a static view of the meaning of categories and regimes of inequality, as single systems which justify binaries. Prins’ own work (2006) uses this perspective of intersectional theory. She argues that the issue of origins – ‘the quest for one’s roots’ (2006: 277) – can be effectively examined through life story narratives, using intersectionality, without succumbing to systemic, additive or essentialist understandings of identity. The constructionist approach enables her to highlight that ‘belongingness’ is more than an ingredient of ethnicity and culture, and is bound up in a changeable and conflicting web of discourses and performed identities (Prins, 2006).

The underpinnings of the two different approaches outlined by Prins (2006) also contribute to further tensions between structure and agency. A systemic approach articulates individuals as ‘passive bearers’ of their subjectivity which is shaped by systems that create locations of privilege and oppression. A constructionist perspective views the constitution of the human subject in more fluid terms. The individual is more active in this arrangement. Prins (2006: 280) expresses this as not just ‘being subjected to’ but also ‘becoming a subject’. In this sense, social divisions are unstable and productive. Thus, the systemic approach is defined by categorisation and the constructionist by narration – our identity and agency is played out in multi-layered and contradictory ways; often through performativity (Butler, 1990).

Although Crenshaw's use of intersectionality is at times referred to as unintentionally problematic, she provides what I consider to be useful categories of how intersectionality can operate differentially. Crenshaw divides intersectionality into three loose categories – structural, political and representational. Structural intersectionality alludes to the specific location of individual women at the intersection of their various social divisions. In addition, this approach details how the numerous intersecting patterns qualitatively affect experience in differential ways (1991: 1245). Political intersectionality outlines and recounts the way both the feminist movement and antiracist politics have, at times, facilitated the further marginalisation of ethnicised women and important social problems such as VAW (1991: 1245). Finally, representational intersectionality embodies the 'cultural construction' of ethnicised women and popular, hegemonic representations that ignore the grounds of multiple identity and social location (1991: 1245).

Furthermore, Yuval-Davis (2006) takes up these points through a different exploratory issue. Butler (1990), amongst others, has raised issue with the 'etc.' that often accompanies a list of social divisions, and that is increasingly associated with intersectional studies. Similarly, Weldon (2005) argues that the very essence of intersectionality, to provide a structural analysis of social divisions, is prohibited by the other fundamental intersectional aim to view each person individually, paying attention to the unique specificities of their own social location. This second aim, she claims, is too all-encompassing

for any analyst to attempt, and forces theorists to choose to concentrate on the interplay between usually two or three social divisions forgoing an intersectional analysis 'in its strong version' (2005: 5). Its 'strong version' would require the analysis of *every* intersection – race, class, gender, age, sexuality, disability, religion, ethnicity, nationality – the list goes on. Weldon states that '...intersectionality requires social structural analysis, but makes such analysis impossible to undertake' (2005: 6). Yuval-Davis (2006) disagrees that this is necessarily problematic, for a variety of reasons largely pertaining to the discourse of identity politics. However, of importance here is her answer to the question of whether there are an illimitable number of social divisions which construct the power relations in which human subjects are located. She offers two responses. First, across specific time periods, certain divisions may be more important, and there are certain divisions that usually shape most peoples lives. Equally, there are some divisions that tend to affect fewer people globally. Here, the social power axes involved need to be highlighted in order to necessitate a struggle which makes the divisions visible. The second answer relates to the idea that those categories deemed significant are a product of freedom and autonomy. Here, she is outlining the structure versus agency conflict. She warns against the reduction of different and multiple 'struggles for recognition' to the same ontological level (2006: 203), maintaining that social divisions are interactive and intermeshed with each other, but that they are not reducible to each other. As such, the interpretation of intersectionality as an additive or constitutive process remains highly critical to the articulation of a coherent analytical framework.

- **Differing levels of analysis**

According to McCall, ‘...there has been little discussion of *how* to study intersectionality, that is, of its methodology’ (2005: 1771). McCall states that intersectionality is potentially, ‘...the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far’ (2005: 1771). Her intention is to display how three methodological approaches manage the complexity of the intersectional approach in relation to social life and categorisation. The first approach is anticategorical complexity. This approach ‘deconstructs analytical categories’ and is based on the notion that social life is too complex to make fixed categories (2005: 1773). Fixed categories will only produce inequalities whilst trying to define differences. Of the three approaches offered, McCall suggests that anticategorical complexity has ‘...been the most successful [approach] in satisfying the demand for complexity’ (2005: 1773). Intracategorical complexity ‘...interrogates the boundary-making and boundary-defining process itself’ in a similar way to the first approach but concentrates on ‘...particular social groups at neglected points of the intersection...to reveal the complexity of lived experience within such groups’ (2005: 1774). This approach falls, conceptually, in between the first and third approach. The third approach, for that reason, is intercategory complexity. This methodology uses existing categories to explain that analytical categories are socially constructed, ever changing and continually enhancing inequality. She argues that the third approach is the least utilised of all the methodological

approaches within intersectionality, yet this approach echoes throughout her own work more competently than any other.

Yuval-Davis (2006: 195) argues that the crux of the additive and constitutive process debate is the ‘...conflation or separation of the different analytic levels in which intersectionality is located’. She contends that methodologies need to examine separately the different levels in which social divisions operate. At a macro or structural level, social divisions are expressed through state agencies and through organisational systems. Yet, social divisions also exist at the micro level and are mediated through the subjectivity of experience and the construction of identity. Finally, they exist at a discursive level, at the level of representation, articulated through texts and ideologies (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 198). Hence, we must look at social divisions separately, as they have a different ontological basis and are framed differently, *and together*, to highlight intersections of particular women in particular historicised and contextual frames. As each division is autonomous, relating to and prioritising different spheres of social relations, they are irreducible, and it is therefore, their concrete interaction which enables the theorisation of how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identity (Verloo, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006). The adherence to multi-level analysis can move research beyond the experiential and onto the interconnected interface between structural inequality regimes and the operation of symbolic and ideological constructions (Winker and Degele, 2011).

Further to these increasing distinctions between approaches to intersectionality, Nash suggests that it is unclear whether ‘...intersectionality is a theory of marginalized subjectivity or a generalized theory of identity’ (2008: 10). The additive approach concentrates on developing largely experiential accounts of marginalised women, whereas the constitutive approach negates positions of power and marginality, in the sense that it can be applied to any group. Thus it can account for the aforementioned locations of advantage and disadvantage. ‘This expands the arena of intersectionality to a major analytical tool that challenges hegemonic approaches to the study of stratification as well as reified forms of identity politics’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 201). The essence of the constitutive approach, then, is to engage with dynamic, shifting and multiple constructions of social divisions and constructions of identity. This necessarily dictates significant engagement with both privilege and power – the relationship between dominance and subordination is a power relationship. ‘At the same time that structures of race, class, and gender create disadvantages for women of color, they provide unacknowledged benefits for those who are at the top of these hierarchies – Whites, members of upper classes, and males’ (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1996: 327). These structures, or orders, are not stationary or mutually exclusive. They are fluid, operating simultaneously, at times compounding or exacerbating each other.

Analyzing race, class, sexuality and gender as they shape different group experiences also involves issues of power, privilege and equity. This means more than just knowing the cultures array of human groups. It means recognizing and analyzing the hierarchies and systems of domination that

permeate society and that systematically exploit and control people.

(Anderson and Collins, 2001: 5-6)

Intersectionality could easily become yet another privilege or vantage point from which to speak for others, if critique and analysis is not rigorous and purposeful. Equally, the power that different identities hold and how this power operates and circulates through social structures, social institutions and social relations is pivotal for a far reaching and significant intersectional approach. 'Power is the cornerstone of women's differences' (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1996: 327).

The centrality of power and ordering systems that an intersectional lens must adopt calls out for a consistent model of power relations. For Foucault the exercise of power enables the inclusion and exclusion of various discourses and of various subjects. Indeed the visibility of multiple identity facets is entirely at the discretion of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977). A hierarchy of institutions operate within and amongst the VAW field and these largely dictate the knowledge that is produced about men's violence and what is to be done about it. Foucault's ideas on the inseparability of power and knowledge (1997a) can be integrated into an intersectional approach that seeks to interrogate how power is dispersed throughout society and how it serves to structure systems of oppressions, and how it can be used in resistant ways.



## LIMITATIONS TO AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

What constitutes intersectionality, or how to 'do' intersectionality, remains a discussion point within critical social theory and feminist politics. The complex difficulties in using intersectionality as an analytical tool, outlined earlier, have contributed to these lively debates. Nash also takes issue with the 'assumptions' that underpin intersectionality and states that '...a number of paradoxes embedded in its literature remain uninterrogated by feminist and anti-racist scholarship' (2008: 3). Her critique is intended to improve, not dismantle, the intersectional project, and it is timely in its challenge as we witness its ever burgeoning status. Nash outlines four specific areas for contestation. They are '...the lack of a clearly defined intersectional methodology, the use of black women as prototypical intersectional subjects, the ambiguity inherent to the definition of intersectionality, and the coherence between intersectionality and lived experiences of multiple identities' (2008: 4). This chapter has already addressed some of these points, and this thesis will most certainly address others. The use of intersectionality as a methodological framework from which to analyse government policy, and whether intersectionality is practiced through service delivery are the two main research questions driving this thesis, and should go some way to addressing Nash's concerns.

Mason (2002) suggests that intersectionality may not go far enough in conceptualising the links between violence and identity. Mason (2002) draws

upon examples of territorial violence<sup>12</sup> in order to demonstrate what she sees as intersectionality's largest failings. That is, the framework's reliance on social constructionism and its inability to effectively engage with the question of embodiment. Using the experiences of homophobic-related violence (her preferred terminology), Mason stresses the embodied nature of the relationship between difference and violence, stating that physical appearance signifies difference and 'warrants' an aggressive and hostile reaction (2002: 59).

Mason echoes previous sentiments by arguing that different categories of identity come together in both the enactment and the experience of interpersonal violence. Indeed, she does not think, for example, that violence against lesbian women should be understood as a problem of homophobic violence *or* a problem of gender violence but rather an interface between the two (2002: 59; my emphasis). Mason explains this using the idea of 'hierarchal constructions of difference' that underpin certain forms of violence. However, Mason is unsure whether these hierarchal constructions of difference are best articulated through the use of intersectionality. She questions how effective intersectionality is as an 'anti-essentialist tool' – how well it can represent multiplicity as opposed to singularity. Mason advocates that intersection be replaced with a term, or terminology, that pays more attention to the way that identities work *for* each other as opposed to *with* each other. Hence identities encode each other rather than traverse each other (2002: 70). The conceptualisation of 'mutual constitution' is used by Grosz to articulate the process of constructions of difference implicating each other continually (1994:

20). Mason supports this expression and suggests we think about *interaction* instead of *intersection* (2002: 70). I use both intersection and interaction throughout this thesis but I do not think that they can be used interchangeably – intersection denotes the point of, or practice of, convergence *and* is used to describe how identity facets relate to each other. In line with the arguments put forward by Yuval-Davis (2006) and others, the critical consideration is how differently framed social divisions are concretely intermeshed with each other, meaning that they both intersect and interact.

Despite a variety of difficulties and disagreements that make up intersectional discourse and its operation in and across different disciplines, it represents a conceptual and theoretical framework that has much to offer the VAW field, particularly when the focus is directed at the numerous complexities and multi-layered experiences of ethnicised women. The chapter now moves on to discuss the operation of an intersectional approach in the context of VAW, concentrating on the advantages that have been established in existing academic sources and further labouring the emphasis for a critical framework based on intersectionality.

## **INTERSECTIONALITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Several of the earlier arguments about the inefficiency and discriminatory nature of predominantly Western constructs of ethnicity, culture and multiplicative subjectivities have failed, generally, to inform VAW discourse

(Thiara and Gill, 2010). Similarly, an intersectional approach to VAW is only just beginning to emerge in the UK as efforts have been, understandably, directed at gaining greater recognition for victims and survivors of VAW from ethnicised communities and drawing attention to cultures in transition, including the acknowledgement that all VAW is culturally constructed and contested. Recently, we have begun to witness a more critical and constituted intersectional approach to VAW (Burman and Chantler, 2004; Gill, 2004). These projects are more developed in the US and Canada (Bograd, 2005; Dasgupta, 2005; Horsburgh, 2005; Kanuha, 2005; Sokoloff and Pratt, 2005), meaning that a discussion of the application of intersectionality to VAW can be further substantiated.

Indeed Crenshaw, the bearer of the term 'intersectionality, applied the conceptual framework to VAW herself. In *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color* (1991), Crenshaw concentrates on two specific components of VAW, namely 'battering' and rape, and how these acts relate to the structural and political categories of intersectionality. She considers the intersecting patterns of sexism and racism and the asymmetrical identities of ethnicised women. Furthermore, she observes how '...race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color' (1991: 1244). To review, Crenshaw, when examining 'battery' from a structural perspective, points out that physical violence may be the first in a long line of violent acts perpetrated against a woman when various forms of oppression converge in

her life. When these social divisions do congregate, interventions based solely on the experiences of a generic woman, or ‘...women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds’ (1991: 1246), will do little to help battered ethnicised women. The range of obstacles faced by ethnicised women when seeking refuge or solace will be shaped and instigated by her intersecting subordination. This subordination, according to Crenshaw, is not necessarily intentional; ‘...in fact, it is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with pre-existing vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment’ (1991: 1249).

Political intersectionality is used, in a general sense, to demonstrate the conflicting political agendas of the feminist and anti-racist movements and the distinctive position of ethnicised women in that incongruity. ‘The need to split *one’s* political energies between two sometimes opposing groups is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment that men of color and white women seldom confront’ (Crenshaw, 1991: 1252; her emphasis). Moreover, these disparities have, at times, worked to sustain or extend the marginalisation of ethnicised women. A political consequence of this is that ‘...one analysis often implicitly denies the validity of the other’ (Crenshaw, 1991: 1252). Crenshaw contends that there are various ways in which race and culture contribute to the suppression of ‘domestic’ violence. Political intersectionality can be used effectively to interrogate the commonsense ideology that VAW, universally, is a gender problem and that violence against ethnicised women, specifically, is a manifestation of racialised violence.

Intersectionality provides a basis for the amalgamation of social divisions to be successfully articulated so that VAW can be analysed in the specific context in which it is perpetrated.

Whilst it is widely accepted that VAW knows no boundaries in terms of race, ethnicity, class, age and sexuality (Hanmer and Itzin, 2000; Pharr, 1993), intersectional subjectivities and identities profoundly affect the experience of violence, and access to help and provision. Sokoloff and Dupont (2005a) argue that a two-tiered examination of the intersections of race, class and gender, and a social structural perspective, uncover not only violence perpetrated within the confines of hegemonic masculinity or personal relationships, but also violence directed at specific communities. The specificities of this suggest that minority ethnicised women face greater problems with sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, economic exploitation, police discrimination and brutality, public condemnation and policy exclusion (2005a: 52). Received wisdom suggests that there are considerable commonalities amongst victims and survivors of VAW, not least that the overwhelming majority of violent acts are underpinned by power and control, and that we must resist dissolving these similarities with artificial boundaries. However, it is well established that minority ethnicised women face significant 'additional difficulties' that are often predicated on ethnicity, race, culture and religion, and can manifest themselves through issues with language, poverty, immigration status and community dynamics<sup>13</sup> (Anitha, 2008; 2010; Burman et al., 2004; Thiara and Gill, 2010: 44). The specific intersections on structural, subjective and

representational levels that produce these effects need to be analysed and understood in all their complexity, without succumbing to explanations of cultural relativism. Furthermore, particular social locations can determine levels of sympathy, support and justice (Burman et al., 2004; Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Gill, 2004). For example, Richie (1996) found that women with additional problems failed to be constructed as 'appropriate' or 'credible' victims.

These constructions often feed into a lack of readily available statistics or qualitative material on some populations, and this absence can give the misleading impression that violence does not occur in these communities or, more frequently, that help and refuge are not required on a national scale. Bograd argues that the dearth of information on ethnicised communities reflects '...their social importance in the eyes of the dominant culture' (2005: 29). Intersectionality can be used to combat this by focusing on specific identities, and producing research that pinpoints the needs of ethnicised women by moving beyond the acknowledgement of difference and concentrating on the plethora of structural powers which shape and sustain VAW. Moreover, intersectionality '...[also] asks us to integrate into theory and practice the simple recognition that, for many families, domestic violence is not the only or primary violence shaping family life' (Bograd, 2005: 33). State disruptions and sanctioned violence can also be unveiled by intersectionality. For many women situated on the margins of society, personal violence and state violence are intimately linked and are racialised, ethnicised and gendered (Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005a: 44). For ethnicised women, these disruptions

largely take the form of homogenised practices and policies, and immigration constrictions, alongside the perpetual anxiety of confronting racist and ethnocentric treatment from state services.

This approach questions the universality and essentialising nature of VAW yet intersectionality can provide universality in terms of who is included by this method. Everyone is situated on an intersection, which means that all our lives are consistently influenced by the interplay between the differing facets of our identity. 'Although many claim that black women are at the intersection of class, race, and gender, that statement is misleading. Black women are *marked* at the intersection as being on the subordinate side of these three relations, but all social groups (including middle-class white men) are at the intersection' (Daly & Stephens, 1995:205; their emphasis). All social relations are sexed and ethnicised, and hierarchal intersectional structures create both disadvantages and privileges. Those who benefit from their social position, benefit from the mutual constitution of their sexed and ethnicised identities. Similarly those who suffer as a direct result of their social divisions, and the interchange between them, may be viewed and responded to differently despite experiencing similar acts of violence. 'While all women are vulnerable to battering, a battered woman may judge herself and be judged by others differently if she is white or black, poor or wealthy, a prostitute or a housewife, a citizen or an undocumented immigrant' (Bograd, 2005: 27).



Therefore, culturally specific forms of analysis are essential, and they are integral to an intersectional approach, yet they must be taken with caution. There is often tension between the use of both culture and structure in academic analysis and, as Collins argues, we need to be careful that the way we treat cultural differences does not ‘...erase [the need to look at] structural power’ (1998: 149). There has been a tendency for academics and practitioners from all ethnicities to over-emphasise the role of culture in the explanation of violence against ethnicised women, often at the expense of the operation of other structural regimes of inequality. This reduction of violence to culture is highly problematic and can lead to underdeveloped and dangerous understandings as well as substandard and homogenised services (Burman et al., 2004; Dustin and Phillips, 2008). Yuval-Davis (2006) warns against the creation of a binary opposition between culture and structure since both are constructed as relational processes and neither is privileged over the other. The impact of culture on violence needs to be treated in terms of how experiences are mediated through hierarchical, structural forms of oppression.

By making such an inextricable link between culture and violence, particularly VAW, these discourses generate several problematic ideologies that cement the hegemonic idea that only ethnicised women’s violence should be viewed through a cultural lens. With reference to earlier discussions about the invisibility and subsequent neutrality of whiteness, the reification of culture and ethnicised women enables discourse to read certain acts of violence as cultural ‘practices’ or ‘traditions’. Dustin and Phillips (2008: 408) suggest that acts of

forced marriage are now constructed by multicultural discourse, for example, as a '...cherished cultural tradition 'practised' by all committed members of the group'. This reductive assessment represents a position from which culture is seen to be static, homogenous and overly determining of behaviour and agency, not to mention that it frames these acts as expressions of culture rather than part of, albeit a specific part of, the continuation of hegemonic masculinity. Again, this cultural essentialism creates a series of complex repercussions. Dasgupta argues that this stance of relativity allows for the reinforcement of progressive/regressive binaries:

Many White Americans presume that "other" cultures, especially minority ones, are far more accepting of woman abuse than the U.S. culture...American mainstream society still likes to believe that woman abuse is limited to minority ethnic communities, lower socio-economic stratification, and individuals with dark skin colors. The impact of this public violence of imperialism, classism, and racism on battering in the private sphere of home and intimate relationships has, unfortunately, received little research.

(1998: 212)

This viewpoint of moral relativism (Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005a) is one of several steps that initiate the interpretation that violence against ethnicised women is a different and separate concern, leading to a disconnection from other acts of VAW. It is critical that culturally specific forms of harm are rooted in their complexity and specificity, moving beyond sensitivity and difference, and toward racial and ethnic equality, without being dislocated from the central

organising themes of power, control and domination. In particular, community dynamics may create culturalised barriers to access for certain ethnicised women, but that is not to say that these constructs do not affect women from a variety of social locations. Gill (2004) details the significance of honour and shame amongst South Asian communities and the debilitating effect they can have on the disclosure of abuse. These specificities absolutely warrant attention and can be viewed as key resources upon which to predicate appropriate service and policy responses. However, they must not be used to strengthen discourse which perpetuates racist and ethnocentric 'othering' practices.

The other repercussion caused by creating an irrefutable link between culture and violence is that violence against ethnicised women rarely gets articulated as part of the continuation and reinforcement of worldwide male domination and hegemonic masculinity. Instead this violence is explained and justified via cultural explanations and excuses.

Wife battering is not culture; dowries, wife burning, and female infanticide are not culture; the forced use of purdah or veiling for women are not culture; foot binding and the practice of concubines among the Chinese are not culture. These are traditional patriarchal customs that men have practiced, and women have accepted, for generations.

(Almedia and Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999: 667)

The use of culture in these contexts can be profoundly ethnocentric and lead to misunderstanding at theoretical, political and practical levels and to a

tremendous amount of injustice. Although often well intended, cultural sensitivity can lead to inaction, or a prioritisation of certain regimes of inequality over others. These tensions have been well documented in a variety of debates on the relationship between feminism and multiculturalism (Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Phillips, 2003; Volpp, 1996). What is required is the ability to act when women are being abused, without abusing perceptions of culture (Dustin and Phillips, 2008). Therefore, as argued throughout, the experiences of ethnicised women cannot be reduced to a singular, monolithic vision of gender or ethnicity, but must be analysed as they intersect with each other, and with other social divisions, on structural, individual and discursive levels, in order to capture the complexity and multiplicity of experience and response, and how these are compounded by broader social contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter opened by exposing the inherent problems and shortcomings of previous attempts to politically organise women and to express numerous forms of identity. Particular critique was levelled at the women's liberation movement and the anti-racist movement whose politics and priorities often left ethnicised women suspended in the gap that existed between the two. The inefficiency of gender essentialism and additive approaches to holding multiple group memberships were also illuminated for their significant failings. The process of articulating multiplicity led to the conceptualisation of intersectionality. Intersectionality is an approach that acknowledges cross-

cutting and interactive modes of identity and inequality, and places the analysis of these intersections in the context of structural systems of power that dictate one's own social location and how one is responded to by others. Although intersectionality is a somewhat ambiguous term, open to confusion, misconception and inconsistency, I have argued that an intersectional approach offers a richer and more diverse way of tackling the problem of VAW.

Intersectionality's main aims are to push the articulation of difference past universal and essentialising explanations, to account for the interactive and mutually constituted relationship between different social categories, and how these operate at a variety of analytical levels, and to communicate how this mutual constitution works in conjunction with other forces such as power, inequality, and violence. As such, this thesis adopts a constitutive approach to intersectionality, one that moves beyond additive descriptions, and views social divisions as unstable and fluid, allowing for the operation of agency amongst an analysis of transitory power and structural regimes. This approach is to be located in the context of VAW. Although the following chapters are designed to 'test' the effectiveness of intersectionality as a methodological tool and a practical approach to service provision, it is argued that the inclusion of dimensions other than gender, and therefore the adoption of an intersectional approach, undeniably strengthens theorising on VAW. 'Intersectionalities color the meaning and nature of domestic violence, how it is experienced by self and responded to by others, how personal and social consequences are

represented, and how and whether escape and safety can be obtained' (Bograd, 2005: 26).

This chapter has outlined and justified the theoretical and conceptual approach that will be used throughout this thesis. Chapter 3 will address the methodological approach, detailing the various methods that are utilised to enable separate research aims to be considered. The chapter will consolidate and build upon the themes of power, multi-level analysis and social locations that were introduced here.

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<sup>1</sup> Audre Lorde (1984: 20).

<sup>2</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw (in Thomas, 2004)

<sup>3</sup> This approach, the analysis of multiple, interlocking social divisions, can be known by many different names including ‘...integrative feminism, the women of color or multiracial perspectives, and multicultural feminism’ (Mann, 2000: 477). I will use intersectionality as the umbrella term with which to describe the approach as a whole, and I will use a variety of words to articulate the relationship between facets of identity. Intersectionality is frequently informed by critical race feminism, but the two should not be confused. Intersectionality is a theoretical framework or approach that is rooted in the broader perspective of critical race feminism.

<sup>4</sup> The central themes of this chapter and the integral argument that intersectionality is crucial for theoretical analysis in the VAW field formed the basis of a paper that I presented at the Social and Legal Studies Association (SLSA) conference at Stirling University on March 30th 2006 to the Gender and Inequality stream. The paper was entitled ‘Intersectionality and Violence Against Women’. See Monk (2006a).

<sup>5</sup> A significant criminological example of wider society enforcing gender roles and expected behaviours is the recent case of missing child Madeleine McCann and how her mother, Kate McCann, has been constructed in the mass media. Kate’s reluctance to cry and weep in public, to allow her appearance to slip, or to shun media attention, has been widely articulated as her betraying or denying some sort of ‘natural’ gender reaction. Kate McCann was quoted as saying ‘If I weighed another two stone, had a bigger bosom and looked more maternal, people would be more sympathetic?’ (Brown, 2007) indicating that her physical appearance was as off-putting to the general public as her apparent lack of motherly/womanly attributes. Driscoll responded by stating that ‘...it is her coolness that repels, not her skinniness’ (2007). The media frenzy surrounding the McCanns is littered with references to Kate’s ‘coolness’ and other traits that fail to raise sympathy. This is not to say that, overall, the intersecting forces (white, middle class, heterosexual couple) of Kate, and her husband Gerry’s, identities did not propel Madeleine’s case into the limelight.

<sup>6</sup> A full discussion of the constraints of Hegemonic Masculinity can be found in chapter 3 of this thesis.

<sup>7</sup> There is, of course, a third interconnecting pull for ethnicised lesbian women to work towards a theory and politics that similarly privileges sexuality and gay liberation. For a further discussion see Smith (1992).

<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless she does include an examination of class exploitation although the reading can be taken to indicate that economic disadvantage is a symptom of racism rather than an ‘...autonomous source of persecution’ (King, 1988: 46). Beale, therefore, does not include class subjugation in her theory of jeopardy as a third jeopardy.

<sup>9</sup> I am choosing to concentrate on ethnicised and sexed discrimination, and the interconnection of these facets of identity, as they are themes that are addressed at the theoretical, political and practical level, however ineffectively, and they are the two themes that came up most consistently in the case study I conducted. There is a more concentrated section on justification in the introduction of this thesis. Intersectionality can be used to build a choice of identity categories into analysis.

<sup>10</sup> See Hacker (1951)

<sup>11</sup> See de Beauvoir (1974) and Millett (1969).

<sup>12</sup> Territory is used in two ways by Mason in that it has both material and discursive facets. Firstly territory relates to locations that people feel some sense of proprietor ownership over or membership of, and secondly, to the conceptual categories that afford people such ownership. So, for example, how some white people feel that ‘their’ country is being invaded by foreigners. It is the way in which this understanding of territory selects and shapes violence that Mason is concerned with, and how this affects the way in which individuals negotiate safety (2002: 60). Territorial violence is just as pertinent when thinking about violence against

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ethnicised women and for understanding and contextualising some of the examples of violence that pepper this thesis.

<sup>13</sup> These problems are not limited to ethnicised women or experienced by all ethnicised women



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## CHAPTER 3

### **The Research Process: Methodological Considerations**

There is a strong case for taking people's accounts of their experiences as a necessary element of knowledge of gendered lives and actual power relations.<sup>1</sup>

Discourse is the power to be seized.<sup>2</sup>

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Whilst the previous chapter posited intersectionality as the consistent theoretical framework, this chapter outlines a variety of methods used to facilitate the different strands of research that constitute the thesis as a whole. Feminist research methods overarch the entire research process and are, therefore, identified first. The chapter is then split into sections; each clarifying the methodology for that specific portion of the research. Michel Foucault is methodologically useful for using a plethora of material and narrative as research. His notion of discourse and discourse analysis as methodological tools for interrogating modes of power and knowledge production are covered in the first section and used throughout the thesis. This approach to discourse leads our attention to who produces dominant ideologies on VAW, and how far the

voices of activists and survivors are reflected in theory and policy. The chapter will then explicate the specificities of an intersectional content analysis process that is used to analyse government initiatives. This policy review covers the period 2003 – 2009. Finally, the process undertaken to locate and carry out two separate rounds of interviews is outlined. This includes the methods of data collection, namely unstructured and semi-structured interviews, and the methods of data analysis, most significantly an appropriated version of grounded theory. This section raises particular ethical questions that are not highlighted elsewhere and reflexively discusses some of the adjustments and decisions made throughout the empirical journey.

There are a series of important connections between the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted by this thesis. Indeed, the qualitative methods chosen can be considered as part of the theory (Wilkinson, 2004) and embody theoretical and epistemological choices. Each method is adapted to ‘test’ if we can use intersectionality as a lens through which to examine social phenomena. As intersectionality means not privileging one aspect of identity at the expense of all others, it makes sense to adopt content analysis and an interview structure that pay attention to the presence of multifarious identities and narrative. Similarly, feminist research methods and grounded theory are both attentive to the concerns and experiences of subjects, rather than negating these at the expense of an established hypothesis.

## **FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODS**

As there is no solitary definition of feminism or methodology, a specific feminist methodology does not exist<sup>3</sup>. Since we do not talk of feminism as a singular entity or essentialised corpus of academic research, then we cannot talk about *a* feminist methodology. Rather, we need to talk in terms of feminist methodologies. This does not mean that existing or 'male' centred methods and methodologies are simply modified or adapted to suit feminist research or research on women. There are, as Skinner et al. note '...commonly held characteristics of feminist research' (2005: 10). 'Feminist methodology is distinctive to the extent that it is shaped by feminist theory, politics and ethics and grounded in women's experience' (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 16). The choice of method and analysis chosen is driven by the researcher's own epistemological, theoretical and ontological position, therefore feminist methodologies differ, but various theorists have offered several mutual features embodied by many feminist research projects, including mine. For most feminist theorists, including Gelsthorpe (1990) and Oakley (2000), the first characteristic is that the research topic will be relevant to women and, in some capacity, be based around gender inequality. Whilst this thesis takes the gendered status of all those involved in VAW as central to its analysis and theoretical framework, it does not privilege this social division over race and ethnicity. However, the common thread still proffered is that the research is based on women's subjective experience, and how dominant discourses deal with women's identity and experiences.

The second characteristic addresses the potential power imbalance between the researcher and the researched. There are many prospective pitfalls involved in this hazardous relationship. These include disagreement, misrepresentation, inconsistencies and the amount of active participation (Skinner et al., 2005: 11). The most significant of which, for this thesis, is the thorny subject of misrepresentation. Increasingly, research that is carried out with as much equality as possible in terms of power relations is preferred. In some instances, the researcher can even be in a less powerful position than the researched. Although, ultimately, this subjugated position can always be redressed through the capacity to interpret responses and choose questions and settings. As a PhD candidate I was in the position of interviewing experienced and authoritative service providers. The implication of this situation is discussed further on in the chapter when the focus turns to the politics of difference.

Another theme closely associated with feminist research is its ability to project voices or to provide a platform for unrecognised voices to be heard. Skinner et al. point out three imperative issues around this third commonly held characteristic – '(i) how to effectively provide spaces where these voices can be articulated and listened to; (ii) encouraging marginalised groups to become involved in research; and (iii) the role that experience should play in research' (2005: 12). Gradually more researchers are attempting to include their participants at every stage of the process, from initial conception to write up. Whilst my research was not all inclusive, I did take the necessary steps to try

and fulfil the above three aims – combined with the mindful consideration of the danger of speaking for others. The process of obtaining relevant participants is detailed further on. Of notable value is the offer of a donation; the careful selection of language and setting; appropriate introductions; valid explanations of the research process and the commitment to using the collected narrative as effectively as possible. A singular, and potentially more significant, issue is that of ‘...valuing marginalised experiences’ (Skinner et al., 2005: 14). The value of a specific experience, or the continuum of several, carries an enormous amount of weight in feminist research circles. This point is validated by Ramazanoglu with Holland through the example of rape – ‘rape illustrate(s) both the necessity of grounding knowledge in experience, and the impossibility of treating experiential knowledge as simply true’ (2002: 127). With a direct link to the Foucauldian slant of much of the thesis’ methodology, a singular, universal ‘truth’ or set of ‘truths’ regarding violence against ethnicised women is fictional. I knew that I wouldn’t find it, or them, and didn’t attempt to at any point. Providing a platform for ethnicised women’s voices also opens up space in criminological discourse that has remained elusive.

Many disciplines and academics have come under fire in recent years for attempting to speak on the behalf of others. The main criticism arising from the argument is that, in many cases, when an oppressed or marginalized group or individual cannot speak for themselves it is more detrimental to have someone from a privileged position speak on their behalf than not to be heard at all. Alcoff (1991) framed the problem of speaking for others using a variety of

examples. In brief, the problem encompasses not only speaking for others but also, inevitably, speaking about others. Therefore, this discursive practice can be said to be a crisis of representation. According to Alcoff (1991), the problem can be attributed to two main sources – that the social location of the speaker has epistemological significance, and that ‘...privileged locations are discursively dangerous’ (Alcoff, 1991: 7). Therefore, Alcoff (1991) debates whether speaking for others is ever a valid practice and posits four sets of interrogatory practices that may help us overcome the aforementioned problems.

In the first instance, we must fight the urge to speak for others, especially if this is always our first urge (1991: 24). We must constantly interrogate the reasons behind why we may take the move to speak and realise that only from a privileged position would we be faced with such a decision. Secondly, as already established, it is of critical value to interrogate one’s own social location and make this interrogation explicit throughout any discursive practice (1991: 25). As Alcoff notes however, this does not mean writing an apologetic disclaimer but a rigorous critique of one’s own privileges. Thirdly, we must always be, and be willing to be, accountable and responsible for what we say and be open to actually “hearing” criticism which we would actively take on board (1991: 26). Lastly, and most importantly, we must identify the effects of our speech. It is not enough to have the right intentions or to study the content of a discourse. We must try to pre-empt the probable effects of our speech and ‘...look at where the speech goes and what it does there’ (1991: 26). In a return to Foucault we need to see the discursive practice of speaking or speaking for

others as an 'event' – an 'event' '...which includes speaker, words, hearers, location, language, and so on' (1991: 26). This thesis has attempted to follow these broad guidelines stringently. At the beginning of the project, I interrogated my own reasons for wishing to pursue particular issues around sexed, ethnicised and racialised violence and realised that my privileged position allows me, not only to make certain research decisions, but to have a choice at all.

### **THE RESEARCH CONTEXT: THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE**

It is important to uncover how reflexivity impacts upon the research process and this is especially imperative when adopting feminist methodologies (Skinner et al., 2005: 15). For this thesis, the idea of reflexivity also underpins the grounded theory process used to analyse the interview data. Reflexivity involves taking into consideration how power is exercised and controlled, how knowledge is produced and who is accountable for that knowledge, and what ethical judgements are made.

All approaches to interviews, regardless of their epistemological stance, expect the participant to reflect on their experiences, opinions and feelings in an open and honest manner. Qualitative feminist interviews '...require in addition that [the] researcher *reflect back to the participant* the researcher's understanding of the participant's thoughts' (Falconer Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002: 108; their emphasis) as part of the ongoing reflexive process. In fact this

may be the only part of the reflexive process that is shared with the participant. Reflexivity can also be articulated throughout a research project via a series of personal reflections and comments. This can be done in several ways, including the insertion of introspective comments from field notes or a journal, or an ongoing reflective narrative that is weaved into the account of data collection, transcription and analysis. Throughout the second round of interviews, and during both content and grounded theory analysis, I utilised the methods of field notes and memo writing. These reflections and the adoption of appropriate methods fostered a much greater sense of not only feeling part of the research, but acknowledging how this role underpinned the various directions that the project took. This is because a key precinct in the possibility of producing reflexive research is to relinquish control of an interview or schedule, to be open to new possibilities and transformations, and to give oneself to the process as much as possible. Indeed, putting reflexivity into practice during the data collection and analysis stage is often much more difficult than expected, and this reflection can often muster feelings of failure and uncertainty. Rather than attempting the impossible of presenting a 'transparent knowable self' (Valentine, 2002: 126), many feminist researchers suggest we should document the highs and lows of the process, detailing tensions, surprises and how we become decentred from the research (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008; Valentine, 2002). Above all, this process is facilitated by a consistent auto-critique.

## **POWER, DISCIPLINE AND VIOLENCE: METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS**



As discourse on VAW is made evermore readily accessible, the forms which it appears have expanded. The French philosopher Michel Foucault is used throughout this thesis as, primarily, a methodologist. Foucault's notion of discourse allows for different positions and different elements of discourse to be used whilst each retaining validity. Although how VAW is put into discourse is of central importance, equally significant is who can access this information, who listens to this information and from what position one listens. Therefore, written work, the spoken word or conversations, government policy, feminist theory and experience are all classified as discourse under Foucault's explanations. These different discourses can all be given credence, with the positionality of the discourses being integral to the central workings of power and knowledge.

The most utilised method courtesy of Foucault, is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis has many competing definitions. Simply put, one might assert that discourse analysis seeks to identify what is and is not sayable at particular times. Related to this is a constant examination of the meaning of ideas as a system of power and domination (Lees, 1986: 159). According to Foucault '...in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role it is to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality' (1984: 109). Moreover, discourse analysis '...is an approach that identifies and names language processes people use to constitute their own and

others' understanding of personal and social phenomena' (Gavey, 1989: 467). Using this method, I will argue that what we are presented with in representational terms of VAW and the normative attitude of racism and ethnocentrism apparent in hegemonic discourses, are the result of particular historical and cultural factors. Further, '...dominant discourses appear "natural", denying their own partiality and gaining their authority by appealing to commonsense' (Gavey, 1989: 464). It is the relationship between the discursive representations of ethnicised women, or, at times, lack of, and the violent lived experience of ethnicised women that is on the agenda here. In short, '...as history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power to be seized' (Foucault, 1984: 110).

So, discourse analysis is used to expose hidden meanings through an in-depth analysis of the context in which language is used. The way language structures meaning can be probed through questioning the systematic process of the creation and preservation of hegemonic ideology. This involves acknowledging the inextricable link between scientific 'truths' or 'legitimate knowledge' and everyday or commonsense thinking. Of particular importance is the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Thornton, 1989). Hegemonic masculinity refers to a specific social standard of 'real' manhood. It is culturally accepted, under the conditions of hegemonic masculinity, that men dominate and hold power over women (and some other men) through normative displays of masculine behaviour such as bravado, competitiveness, aggressiveness and

compulsory heterosexuality. This beneficial 'male' position coupled with assumed 'natural' gender roles afford dominant discourses the power and authority to, at times, justify, excuse, legitimate or encourage men's VAW. Cultural scripts provide a governing interpretive framework in which 'our' understandings and actions are regulated by boundaries in order to maintain the status quo. In addition to these precincts the powerful within society use discursive manoeuvres to deflect attention away from a specific problem.

Foucault's central aim when discussing human sexuality was to '...define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse' (1979: 11). With the emphasis on language he is principally concerned with how sex is 'put into discourse' in the first volume of *The History Of Sexuality* (1979: 11). He was interested in the simple fact that sex was spoken about, who did the speaking and from what position they spoke. Certainly, the way sex is put into discourse is of chief importance to understanding the attitudes and effects of sexed, ethnicised and racialised violence. Discourse analysis allows us to reveal what is possible to say and what is rendered impossible. It also allows us to identify who gets listened to and who does not. Furthermore, dominant discourses surrounding sex claim to tell the truth.

Therefore the problem is the power that these hegemonic discourses and truths have over societies and the way that this power operates that requires further analysis. For Foucault there is no universal truth. 'Each society has its regime of truth' (1997b: 131). This allows society to choose particular

discourses and pass them as 'truths' and also gives authority to those who are in a position to do so. Truth is an object of endless diffusion and consumption and is produced and transmitted under the control of political and economic apparatus (Foucault, 1997b: 131). Consequently, the truth that society and dominant discourses choose to promote is a controlled truth. It is linked with systems of power, which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power, which it induces, and which extend it (Foucault, 1997b: 133).

Foucault also argues that the concept of subjugated knowledges allows us to identify what knowledge was blocked in history and whose knowledge was allowed to flourish. Subjugated knowledge takes on precisely these two meanings, '...blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory' and low ranking, naïve knowledges that have been disqualified (as inadequate) (Foucault, 1997a: 82). This concept allows us to rediscover the past effects of conflict and struggle and to examine which groups in society are still struggling and still possess a knowledge which is disqualified. This links in with power and how power is dispersed. Knowledge and power are inseparable and should be examined right at the core, that is, when the intention of power is in direct influence with its target, where it aligns itself and where it '...produces its real effects' (Foucault, 1997a: 97). As Foucault states, power and the way it is distributed and articulated and, ultimately, the effect it has, is always exercised through discourse. The distribution of power and legitimate knowledge are always problematic from a non-hegemonic position. This thesis seeks to make a

contribution to the debates surrounding power production and the utility of power as an instrument to inflict or tolerate violence.

## **CONTENT ANALYSIS**

Under the Foucauldian understanding of discourse analysis as an overarching set of methodological approaches, comes the idea of content analysis<sup>4</sup>. Chapter 4 consists of a research based content analysis of government initiatives in the VAW field. The period encompassed by the policy review is 2003-2009. Content analysis allows specific questions to be asked of the policy documents produced under New Labour that relate heavily to the premise that the underpinnings of intersectionality may be an effective way to analytically engage with multiple identities and the issues they present, or that structural power systems create, for effective justice and provision for VAW victims and survivors. The matter here is not whether government policy itself uses an intersectional approach, but how useful intersectionality is as a lens of critique. Content analysis is adopted as a method that uses intersectionality as a frame through which these documents are analysed.

There are, as with many methodological approaches, different variations of content analysis and disagreements about the use of concepts, systematic categorisation and interpretation (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). In its most basic form, content analysis need not even employ a prescribed coding system; it must simply search for repetitive themes and, in some way, record their

importance (Wilkinson, 2004). Therefore, content analysis more accurately describes a whole range of analytical approaches, and the unresolved issues between them are often countered by a researcher choosing the specific type of content analysis most appropriate for their project and theoretical interests (Weber, 1990). I shall be using content analysis that is most consistent with its usage as both a social science and feminist method (Wykes, 2001). That is, a form of content analysis that is qualitative in nature, and seeks to raise questions primarily about how language and meaning can be interpreted.

‘Content analysis involves the systematic study of messages’ (Maxfield and Babbie, 2005: 244), attempting to interpret context and meaning from data. This approach will look for ‘...recurrent instances of some kind’ (Wilkinson, 2004: 183) that will be systematically recorded via a coding system. However rigorous this system is, these codes will be analysed for inferences of social meaning, relationships and illustrative themes. Content analysis is frequently referred to as an approach to the analysis of documents that is objective, systematic and quantitative (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004; Jupp, 2001). However, qualitative forms of this analytical approach have begun to flourish, and its increased application in the social sciences, amongst other disciplines, has cemented its place as a legitimate qualitative research technique (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). A qualitative approach to content analysis attempts to move beyond frequency and mapping by seeking out meanings, insights, and fluidity through interpretive understandings and discursive themes (Noaks and Wincup, 2004). Research will

concentrate on language and what certain statements communicate about the phenomenon under study (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). This is an interpretive approach to content analysis and one that would go beyond manifest content, becoming concerned with meanings that are attributed to the content in terms of both intentions and effects, that is, how the document is understood by the author/producer and by the reader/audience, and the consequences that these diverse perceptions may have (Jupp, 2001). This enables this more qualitative and critical practice to also address the production of knowledge and 'truth', and the exercise and disciplinary elements of power, in a similar vein to discourse analysis.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identify three distinct qualitative approaches to content analysis – conventional, directive and summative. A conventional content analysis follows similar initial stages as grounded theory, with the researcher immersing themselves in the data and allowing categories and ideas to be raised directly from the data. This approach would usually be selected if one wished to describe a phenomenon that is previously under-researched (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1279). In contrast, a directed approach may be adopted to fill a gap or omission in existing research by extending or endorsing, through the development of new or nuanced concepts, a theoretical framework (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1281). In this instance, this existing work will be used to formulate key themes and concepts that form a coding process and lead to analysis which may corroborate or challenge established ideas. Finally, a summative approach to content analysis usually involves attention to both

manifest and latent content, unlike the two aforementioned styles. Manifest content is addressed through the analysis of how words are contextualised or used, whilst latent content would be interpreted to uncover meaning (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1284).

The approach to content analysis adopted by this thesis is, therefore, qualitative, interpretive and directed. Content analysis needs a frame to work from and intersectionality has been used to develop the initial coding scheme prior to analysing the data. With the government policy documents prepared in this way, additional codes have been developed during the analytical process. These particular methods are useful to ‘...efficiently extend or refine existing theory’ (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1286). The key question here is how useful is intersectionality as a lens for critiquing government policy?

## **AN INTERSECTIONAL CONTENT ANALYSIS**

As Bell (2009) notes, it is not feasible to analyse everything that may fall within your research remit so a ‘controlled selection’ of the units of analysis may be necessary. New Labour were in power from 1997 to 2010, and VAW policy documents published during this time provide a backdrop against which three specific documents are subjected to content analysis. The three selected documents – *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003), *Domestic Violence: A National Report* (Home Office, 2005b) and *Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy* (Home Office, 2009b) – are selected based



on their composition as significant government documents across different points during the specified time period, and their levels of concentration on the social problem of VAW. Graneheim and Lundman (2004: 106) suggest that whole documents are most suitably considered as constituting a unit of analysis, although this is widely debated (Wilkinson, 2004), and, as such, the documents are analysed in their entirety.

In a similar manner to grounded theory, a process of coding, categorising and being guided by themes, prepares the data for analysis. As I have selected to use a directed approach to content analysis, this process begins with theory. This existing theoretical framework is used to identify key concepts and, in turn, establish an initial coding system. Intersectionality is principally concerned with addressing the existence of, and relationship between, multiple social divisions, the compounding space which they exist in, and how they are cut across by systems of power and domination. This means that the collection of data on gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class and age is necessary. These social divisions constitute search terms and function as 'operational definitions' that are taken directly from theory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1282). Along with these original codes came others which I am sensitised to through intersectionality and the current literature which surrounds its use in VAW discourse. For example, these include, 'immigration', 'minority', 'inequality' and 'equality'. Additionally, some codes became apparent during the analysis. This is a key aspect of directed content analysis; codes are defined before and during the analysis of data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1286). This dictates that the

source of coding can come from existing theory *and* be raised directly from the data. Codes are essentially ‘...tools to think with’ (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 32) and can be dissected, moulded and moved around in order to view the data in different ways. Furthermore, when codes have been established the decision of whether to quantify the data may be revisited. Morgan (1993) suggests that ‘descriptive counts’ of codes, that is, not an explicit statistical account but an effective way of providing supporting summary evidence of how frequently terms or themes may appear, is one way of overcoming the shortfalls of quantitative analysis whilst paying attention to this often illuminating corroboration. Although this is not done at the expense of qualitative analysis, frequency tables can be found in Appendix 1.

There are currently two principle forms of content used in most traditions of content analysis; manifest and latent. Both can be analysed by a qualitative approach although only manifest content could be examined via a quantitative practice. The two forms are qualified succinctly by Graneheim and Lundman (2004: 106; their emphasis) as follows:

Analysis of what the text says deals with the content aspect and describes the visible, obvious components, referred to as the *manifest content*...In contrast, analysis of what the text talks about deals with the relationship aspect and involves an interpretation of the underlying meaning of the text, referred to as the *latent content*.

The analysis of manifest content took place through a search of content terms (ethnicity and inequality, for example) in order to document their appearance,

and to explore when and how they were used. This provides the starting point for deeper, critical analysis. Latent content is then attended to in order to offer an interpretive understanding of meaning and impact; this content is subject to rigorous questioning (Is the policy grounded in similarity or difference? for example). For this thesis the following process took place.

Essentially, intersectionality prompts a content analysis to ask questions about various social divisions, the relationship in given historical and contextual frames of these social divisions, and how these social divisions operate on a variety of levels (structural, individual and representational). Initially, each document was examined for how frequently all of the search terms appeared and these were coded so that these large units of analysis could be condensed into accessible themes. So, for example, every time 'women', 'girls', 'men', 'boys' or 'gender' are mentioned they are coded, and condensed in to the category 'gender'. The preliminary count, then, firstly establishes how often the search terms appear in each document; this answers questions such as,

- Which social divisions appear in the policy documents?
- Which are viewed as primary and secondary concerns?

With the data prepared in this way, the context in which these social divisions, and the other associated search terms exist can be analysed, addressing ideas around,

- How central are they to the policies aims and objectives?
- Are social divisions viewed separately? Do they co-construct each other?

At this point, both the positioning and context of these search terms can be utilised to move away from frequency, and towards interpreting meaning and understanding from the discursive constructions of identity and oppressive systems within the document. To do this, I took the thematic categories and analysed them both separately and in relation to one another, in order to gain a greater interpretive picture of how each document represented social divisions, and attempted to deal with the complexities of VAW. I posed some questions to help me through this analytical stage, including:

- Are social divisions viewed as unstable or absolute?
- Are any social divisions over-emphasised in relation to different social groups?
- Do structural systems of inequality play a role in the understanding of VAW?

- Do the documents deal with generalities or specificities?
- What violent acts are seen as primary and secondary concerns?
- Are certain violent acts more readily associated with certain social groups?

In order to strengthen this analysis, I also compared the findings from each document with one another to see if the contextual nuances of each affected the nature or the relationship of the social divisions. Similarly, I was able to judge whether actual references to the search terms changed over the analytical period – for example, whether ‘culture’ moved from a secondary to an equal concept. Importantly, this type of content analysis enabled me to not only reveal interpretive understandings of government policy, but also to document changes in legal, social and representational measures.

## **TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness is seen as imperative in the ethical validity of content analysis. As I subscribe to a critical and subjective form of content analysis, it is my belief that a discourse contains multiple meanings that can be understood in multiple ways. Developing a good and rigorous coding scheme and adhering as much as possible to the analytical procedures that underpin the research will

help to increase trustworthiness (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Arguably, there are three components that can be used to assess how trustworthy a research study is; credibility, dependability and transferability (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004: 109). As with many stages of content analysis, particularly those predicated on interpretation, assessing trustworthiness is a subjective process, but one that is significantly aided by full transparency and consistent, honest reflection. Although it is often good practice to share the results of the coding process with fellow researchers for consultation (Granheim and Lundman, 2004), this is, obviously, not always possible and establishing trustworthiness remains a solo and tricky practice to resolve. Appendix 1 evidences the content terms which were used to search the document, and the approximate number of times they appeared. I have provided some of the questions which I used to decipher the contextual nature and meaning of the search terms, and to substantiate how intersectionality can be used to examine whether the prominence of identity and, if and how, these categories intermingle, changes over time. On reflection, there were several points at which I made adjustments to the frame of the content analysis, adding (cohesion, for example) and taking away (victim<sup>5</sup>, for example) terms, and there are ones which I wish I had added (community<sup>6</sup>, for example). However, on the whole, the founding principles and concerns of intersectionality provide an effective lens as a means of access to the language and statements in the policy documents and the messages and effects that lie behind them.

## **THE EMPIRICAL JOURNEY**

For policy intervention and service provision to be effective it is vital that those who deliver the services are culturally sensitive and aware of the needs of ethnicised women. The specific cultural and structural factors that can make ethnicised women more reluctant to report violence or seek help must be understood in the context of the history of institutional racism, the current multicultural climate and continued victimisation - ‘...women who’ve been most damaged by male violence are those for whom the least support and services exist. They and their lives are too complicated, too difficult, don’t fit into the way we’ve organised services’ (Kelly, 2000: 3). Whilst I am not presuming that Kelly is specifically referring to ethnicised women, it is clear that a standardised or universal service practice would fall short of meeting some of the identifiable requirements ethnicised women may possess. The empirical component of my research was to ascertain whether appropriate kinds of support were offered, or indeed in place for ethnicised women who have experienced male violence, before investigating whether an intersectional agenda was somehow practiced in the VAW field, and whether theory or policy helped to facilitate this. I was especially keen to discover whether service providers engaged with issues of ethnocentrism and sexism for example, and to what extent, if any, women were treated as a homogenous group – as seen so frequently in academia and government policy.

Initially, feminists were taken with the idea that women interviewing other women would produce balanced and ethically sound research, and that

all other differences would be overcome by their shared gender (Falcolner Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002). These ideas were soon transformed by ethnicised and post-structuralist feminists in particular, and the interview process became infused with many other methodological and conceptual dimensions. Sameness/difference and insider/outsider are dualisms that have populated feminist discussions on power, subjectivity and essentialism in the interview process (Valentine, 2002), with contemporary debates centring on the fluid and transitory nature of both identity and power dynamics during qualitative research (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). Binary oppositions will never fully convey the way these dynamics unfold during an interview, or the particular performances (Butler, 1990) that may be adopted when complex identities meet. This is vitally important from an intersectional stance. Firstly, if I were constrained by identity congruity then I could only interview young, white, British, heterosexual, working class women, and this would still be underscored by my position as researcher. Secondly, this thesis' interview questions wished to raise important points about the complexity of identity, and about the shifting saliency and impact of certain divisions in certain circumstances, as well as the nature of intersecting and mutually constituted levels of self. Whilst one would seek to find commonality amongst difference and sameness with their research participants, this may be predicated on a mutual understanding or agreement about the importance of certain concepts, or a shared feeling about official discourses, for example.



Indeed, another ongoing debate about interviews and feminist research methods is about how much personal information the researcher should invest in the interviews themselves (Valentine, 2002) in order to potentially build empathy, rapport and trustworthy relations. I did offer some of my own comments during the semi-structured interviews although this was done anecdotally. For example, in a field memo, I noted, that in a discussion with one interviewee we addressed levels of public and community awareness of VAW, and whether acts such as forced marriage would be included in hegemonic definitions. I told the respondent about a quiz that I carry out with my students at the beginning of a module to try and expand their criminological imagination, and how the answers around domestic violence had become much more astute and accurate in recent years.

The second round of interviews that took place in 2010 utilised a semi-structured interview schedule, in contrast to the first round of interviews that followed an unstructured, conversational path, and took place in 2005. These differences in style and method provide many interesting comparisons in terms of approach and preparation, interview technique and experience, transcription, data analysis and the overall methodological, epistemological and theoretical considerations that underpinned the research process. The route taken by both of these approaches is detailed below.

## **FORMULATING RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research never intended to be statistical. I was not concerned, in research data terms, with the prevalence of VAW. However, I still felt it important that the thesis had an element of experiential qualitative information in order to provide space for local women to voice their experiences and opinions. Further to this, these narratives could help to identify problems and gaps in service provision to assist in a theoretical critique of the findings vis-à-vis current criminological and government developments. This would only require accumulating a small number of participants instead of a large sized sample. Although small scale enquiries are often dismissed as theoretically and empirically redundant<sup>7</sup>, ‘...single cases can indeed do more than inspire new hypotheses and insights. They can serve the purpose of theory testing as well’ (Rueschemeyer, 2003: 310).

After carrying out an extensive literature review and thorough critique of existing government policy<sup>8</sup>, I began to frame a research context that could incorporate the accounts of service providers. Two separate rounds of interviews took place, both utilising different methods to address different focus points. The aim of the first research questions was to identify whether appropriate and effective services were offered to ethnicised women who had or were suffering violence, and if these services were considered necessary. Three focal, yet flexible, areas of investigation were identified as being central to this part of the research in the early stages of planning. 1) What concerns are specifically constructed and understood as ethnicised concerns and did these require specialised, and potentially separate, services? 2) How effective are

existing services and provision? and 3) And how could service provision be improved in the future to enhance and help women survivors of violence?

My choice to conduct qualitative research was bound up in the belief that this method provides the most appropriate approach for examining and exploring the thesis' research questions and facilitating the 'storytelling' aspect of the respondents' answers. What is important, in all research, is that the methods chosen should be fully appropriate for the researcher, the people involved in the research, the kind of questions that are posed and the wider social and cultural context. Qualitative methodologies differ to varying degrees but all research driven by this fluctuating approach seek to gain in-depth and contextualised understandings of social phenomenon and to base all subsequent analysis and explanation on the accounts given by the participants. I wanted to uncover women's experiences and provide them with an opportunity to narrate their own understandings and knowledge of VAW and service provision. Moreover, a qualitative approach can be particularly relevant to producing intersectional analysis that relays the complexity of identity and experience (Burgess-Proctor, 2006: 42).

Given that primary aim, my approach to conducting the first round of interviews was not highly structured in terms of pre-planned questions, controlled ordering and anticipated information. I wanted the discussions to be as 'open' as possible and for the narration to be fluid and uninterrupted. Although I had particular topics or themes that I wanted to examine, I chose to

formulate 'prompt'<sup>9</sup> words, such as 'definition' and 'separate', as oppose to structured questions. This meant that the technique I adopted was that of an unstructured or conversational interview, to allow the respondents to articulate their answers in their own words and with language that was familiar to them. 'Like other qualitative methods, non-standardised interviews are valuable as strategies for discovery' (Fielding, 1993: 136). This approach also provided the potential for the research to take new directions, and indeed, in some cases, the content of the discussion sparked an interest in a line of thought that I had not previously considered. However, the prompt words also acted as a non-standardised way of allowing comparison between the different narratives.

This type of interview is most effective when the focus is on the respondent's subjective experience – the methodology is based on the assumption that the respondents have had a particular experience. As the interviews are based on experience, there is no danger of losing meaning by having the questions or prompts randomly organised for each participant. It was also very important to me that the participants could describe in detail their situation, concerns and opinions as they were meaningful to them – their own narratives of violence, racism, culture, service provision etc. This is, of course, just as important for practitioners who feel their voice may be lost in the ethnocentrism, sexism and classism that are paramount and institutionalised within British society. Moreover, unstructured or non-standardised interviews are also well equipped to deal with sensitive research subjects such as VAW for many reasons<sup>10</sup>. Not only can the respondent answer in their own words, a

rapport can be established between interviewer and respondent and a commitment made that both parties will derive sufficient rewards from the process. A criticism often levelled at this type of methodology is that answers are difficult to analyse. Even though my questions were unstructured and prompt words were utilised heavily, the *form* of the research questions was overwhelmingly 'how' questions. This illuminates the idea that the appropriate method must be one which can house an explanation – in this instance perhaps an explanation of an opinion, a research need, a concern or an experience. Qualitative research of this type is driven towards uncovering and exploring the complexities of social life, and allowing participants discursive space to '...reveal diversity, variation and heterogeneity where quantitative researchers see singularity, sameness and homogeneity' (Ragin 2000 in McCall, 2005: 1782).

The issue of a lack of consistent analytical themes did prove challenging and, as a result, the second round of interviews adopted a semi-structured approach. Some of the reflexive nuances about this decision were recorded in field notes and they appear in Chapter 5. 'Semistructured interviews combine the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the survey instrument to produce focused, qualitative, textual data' (Schensual et al, 1999: 149). Semi-structured interviews are, therefore, still underpinned by interpretivism but they adopt a series of set, yet adaptable, open-ended questions. I wanted the participants to be able to talk freely about their practice, whilst retaining some order through the use of consistent questioning. Yet this method is still open to modification. 'Flexibility is a key

requirement of qualitative interviewing. The interviewer must be able to respond to issues that emerge in the course of the interview in order to explore the perspective of the participant' (King and Horrocks, 2010:35). In essence, it is the intention of the semi-structured interview to '...combine structure with flexibility' (Legard et al, 2003: 141).

Patten (1990) identifies six types of question which can be asked during semi-structured interviews; all of which were adopted by the schedule for this thesis. The initial questions were 'background/demographic' such as 'can you tell me a little bit about yourself and the work you do?' These types of questions have the added benefit of easing the respondents into the interview is asked first, thereby creating a comfortable and safe environment. Some of the questions I asked fit into the 'experience/behaviour' type. These questions centre on a particular experience the interviewee has had, and so asks them to retell a situation to the extent that you could have observed it if you were present. An example of this from the second round of interviews is 'what happens when you take a referral from a service user or their advocate?' The third type of question according to Patten (1990) is 'opinions/values'. This category is frequently used as the views of the participants is central to the understanding of whether intersectionality is implicitly practiced in service provision. 'Do you think gender, ethnicity and class impact upon the experience of violence?' is one example of a question utilised to gage opinion. The fourth type of question, 'feeling', was only used when it arose organically from particular discussions in some interviews. Here, the idea of addressing feelings

was dependent upon either the respondent articulating them without being prompted, hence no question was asked, or when information was offered that led to a question instantly being constructed to ascertain a level of feeling. An example of this occurring during these interviews is when service providers discussed limited places that are available for women without recourse to public funds. I then subsequently asked 'how did you feel when you had to turn women away?' Fact-based answers comprise the 'knowledge' category of questions. For my interview agenda these tended to be procedural or statistical queries, such as, 'what systems do you have in place to gain information on identity?' And lastly, Patten (1990) defines 'sensory' questions. These can be used to reveal sensory aspects of experience. Once again, this type of question appears in the second round of interviews as I am interested in how much we think we can detect about identity through visual cues. An example of this type of question evident here is 'do you judge identity on what is visually presented to you?' The semi-structured interview schedule used for the second round of interviews can be found in Appendix 2.

Moreover, these qualitative approaches have methodological relevance for an intersectional approach to questions surrounding identity, power and violence. To fully gauge intersectional diversity, qualitative and mixed method applications are more beneficial. The aim of much intersectional work, including this thesis, is to capture the complexities of mediating, interactive and contingent systems of inequality. To fulfil this aim, a combination of methods would usually appear most appropriate. A purely qualitative methodology

incorporating feminist research principles, discourse and content analysis and grounded theory is considered to best achieve an analysis of social power and privilege, intersectional identities and a variety of discourses that respond to VAW. Indeed for this reason, '[Q]ualitative researchers commonly favour a combination of analytic strategies' (Noaks and Wincup, 2004: 125).

### **ESTABLISHING CONTACT – First Interviews**

I decided, as a starting point, to contact all organisations and refuges in the local or surrounding area. I had already compiled a list of relevant organisations and some of the information they held as an MPhil requirement, so contacted the various refuges, women's groups and organisations on that list first, by either post or email. My main aim at this stage was to establish contact and provide a brief overview of my research project. I received one response from my initial letter. An email had been forwarded to a local Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, who contacted me and suggested that, providing I sought permission beforehand, I should attend the local VAW forum – the Lancashire Women & Violence Forum – held at the County Hall in Preston. I contacted the relevant people at the County Hall and was granted permission to attend the forum.

I actually attended more than one forum meeting spanning across 2003-2004 and spoke to a range of service providers including refuge workers, company directors, police representatives and local government officials. Over



time, I discussed various paths that my research could take. Gaining access and maintaining the central focus of the research was a fairly eventful process. Some practitioners had their own research needs or ideas that they wanted me to concentrate on<sup>11</sup>, some who initially showed interest or agreed to take part did not in the end<sup>12</sup>, whilst others, after lengthy discussions, decided that they had little to offer this particular piece of research. With written letters accompanied by a letter from my supervisor being distributed to all my contacts at the Lancashire Women & Violence Forum, I eventually negotiated the research participants and established the way my research would be conducted.

A second letter was then sent out to those who had tacitly or firmly agreed to participate, re-introducing the research, researcher and requesting a convenient date to have a further discussion or conduct the interview. I confirmed, through this second letter, that I would visit *The Refuge*. I liaised with the Manager of *The Refuge* and she indicated that several of her staff members were interested in taking part. Through consultation, I chose three service providers to interview from *The Refuge* and the agreed process of consent took place. All the consenting participants are British born, therefore, a bilingual translator was not necessary. Due to the high level of response from *The Refuge*, I decided, at this point, that this organisation would provide an interesting base for my preliminary interviews. From my attendance at the forum I had established that *The Refuge* dealt with many ethnicised women and had the most number of staff dedicated to ethnicised issues. I had also been impressed by the political awareness of the representatives that had offered

comments during the meeting. This, united with their enthusiastic response, made them ideal for this stage of the research.

Following the confirmation of *The Refuge* participation, I decided that I wished to converse with service providers outside of the organisation to contextualise the experiential narrative. I was also especially keen to talk to White practitioners to see if their views differed from that of their ethnicised contemporaries<sup>13</sup>. My original contact who directed me to the local forum had always been dedicated to participating. She was the co-ordinator for another area local to *The Refuge*, which was in the area I wished to investigate, was white, and had experience of ethnicised women's needs and support requirements. I arranged to interview her in the weeks following the visit to *The Refuge*.

I wanted to interview one more white service provider, preferably in another area of Lancashire. I had exhausted many of the contacts by the time my second letter was distributed and responded to<sup>14</sup>. I attended a local conference and met a Service Provider who covered the areas of Central Lancashire in her work. I told her of my research and she was interested in being involved. She made it explicit at this point that she had come into contact with Asian women's services and had counselled 'a few black women' but that her services were used much more frequently by white women. I wondered why. After this opening meeting, we spoke on the phone and I sent her a copy

of all the correspondence the other participants had received and we agreed a date and time for the interview to take place.

In total I spoke to five different women over a six month period in 2005. I spoke to three service providers from *The Refuge*. All the women were aged 25-45. They all identified as Pakistani British. The remaining two women were White British. Geographically, the women were all located in Lancashire. All the women were working class and there was a small variation in terms of status, responsibility and, presumably, pay between the service providers.

## **FIRST INTERVIEWS**

The interviews all took place over a six month period spanning the latter part of 2004 and the beginning of 2005. The interviews were all organised at times most convenient to the participants and all were aware that they could still pull out of the process at any time, including requesting that the information not be used after the interview had taken place. All of the participating women gave their names, but after discussion, it was agreed that capital letters (A-E) would be used for all the women to ensure safety and confidentiality for those who needed it. Despite some of the practitioners being quite keen for their names to be mentioned, it was decided, in the name of uniformity, to use the code for all the participants.

When I arrived at *The Refuge* I was shown around the impressive, purpose built refuge building and was introduced to several members of staff and residents. This, from the inception, created an informal and affable environment. Before all the interviews, I spent time talking to the women about their consent to participate and issues relating to confidentiality and anonymity. We also discussed their feelings about being tape recorded and the potential for this to be an invasive practice. I showed them the small Dictaphone that I intended to record with and, after lengthy conversation, the women agreed to be tape recorded and interviewed individually. The women were also informed during this preliminary chat that they or *The Refuge* would be offered a copy of the final thesis and that a donation would be made to *The Refuge* for every woman that participated from the association. Finally, I asked all the women if they had any questions or wished to discuss any issue further. I reintroduced the project and took time to check that the participants understood the aims of the research at this stage, what themes we were likely to discuss, the conversational nature of the interview format, and the agreement that the interview may take new directions based on their responses, and that this was absolutely fine. I reminded them that, at any point, they could refuse to offer an answer to a particular theme or question or change their mind about participating entirely. Throughout the meeting, the confidential and anonymous nature of the research was identified. None of the women from *The Refuge* requested that I use the 'dummy' questionnaire<sup>15</sup> should the interview be interrupted; however, I still kept a copy of this bogus research in the interview room with me.

I went to conduct my first interview away from *The Refuge* shortly after. At the request of the contributor, we moved from her hectic and crowded office space to a local café. This change of environment was called for despite the obvious effect it would have on confidentiality and anonymity. Again, I explained that I could use an alternative set of questions should someone enter the café that she did not feel happy with hearing her responses or, then again, seeing as we were in a café, we could simply disguise the interview with 'chat'. The participant had no reservations about protecting her anonymity or diverting attention away from the interview process. This particular interview was quite extensive, and the line of responses provided information outside of the scope of my research project<sup>16</sup>.

The final interview was conducted around six weeks later. I met the fifth woman who wished to participate at her place of work and, as it was under construction, we found a quiet and separate room in which to conduct the interview. We talked at length before the questions began about all matters relating to confidentiality, tape recording, anonymity and participation as well as my research and the importance of work on VAW. Interestingly, she pointed out how she was keen to take part in the research so as to derive sufficient rewards from the participation herself.

### **ESTABLISHING CONTACT– Second Interviews**

When it was decided that a second round of interviews was methodologically and theoretically necessary, in order to increase the amount of data for analysis, a process of contacting and selecting participants began again. By this time I had established more contacts in the field through continued activism and volunteering, and a more consistent academic profile<sup>17</sup>. Despite this, I was keen to survey who may be interested in taking part from the local area, and I wished to locate another five respondents. I devised an information sheet that included details about myself as researcher, what the research is about, and what commitment would be required of any interested party (See Appendix 3). As this was not an advertising campaign as such, I included quite a lot of detail. For example, I discussed in lay language the idea of intersectionality and, further explicated this through the use of illustrative questions. I then sent this document to a contact list I compiled of all relevant service provision in the local area. This strategy proved fruitful. Amongst several positive responses were three serious expressions of interest. Two were in direct response to my email; the third had received the email from a colleague. I initiated a follow up dialogue with all three.

The first curious participant was somebody that I had met before, although always in informal circumstances, through mutual friends involved in the local voluntary sector. We arranged to meet to discuss her interest in the project in a little more detail. This meeting took place fairly soon after opening communication about the research and we quickly established that she would like to take part. I informed her that once the other participants were in place

we could carry out the interview. I was also familiar with the second interested party although only through name. We conversed over email regarding the project and the format of the interview schedule. She works and resides just outside of Lancashire, and so we also debated the geographical scope of the research. I considered the work she does, and the women she works with to very much fit the 'local' context of this project and supported her participation. We did negotiate that I would need to travel to visit her to conduct the interview, and again we arranged to make firm arrangements at a later date. The third initial respondent had received the email from a colleague who thought she may be better suited to the project, and wanted their organisation to be involved. We shared a significant amount of emails, discussing the research themes and how the research may be disseminated. It transpired that the organisation were interested in becoming research active themselves, and that they also had some quite specific ideas about knowledge transfer and income generation. After much debate, it was decided that her priorities, in the time frame I had to conduct the second round of interviews, lay with the ventures she needed to conduct as part of her job role, and that any involvement with the University to which I am affiliated would need to be in line with their specific premise. However, she did recommend another co-worker whom she thought may be suitable.

With this information I made contact and was heartened to find that this Service Provider knew many of the details about the project and what would be expected of her participation. She was happy to participate, and this also

fulfilled the eagerness of her organisation to be part of the field work (although they would never be named). A fourth lead was also established, sometime later, through the recommendation of the first confirmed participant in this round of interviews. I contacted the member of staff directly and we talked through the benefits of the research and whether she would be interested in taking part. Her only stipulation was timing; she needed to have completed her interview by a certain date before she started a short secondment. At this stage I had secured the firm commitment of four contributors, but I found the fifth increasingly hard to find. Due to various time constraints the first three interviews took place and shortly before the fourth, the fifth interviewee was finally secured. A colleague of mine had been associated with a local working group activity on wider social justice issues and had met someone involved in interpersonal violence. Their business card was passed on to me and my colleague had helpfully briefed them about the principal ideas of my thesis. She too agreed to take part.

## **SECOND INTERVIEWS**

The interviews all took place between June and September 2010. They were all conducted at times most convenient to the participants and, as already indicated, this changed the order of the interviews on more than one occasion. All the interviewees were briefed about the levels of anonymity and confidentiality that would be in place, including that their consent was necessary at all stages of the process and they were; therefore, free to



withdraw at any time. In line with the first round of interviews but in order to distinguish the two, all the participants would be identified through numbers (1-5) on transcripts and through the analysis stage. I also took time at the beginning of each interview to discuss the nature and format of the questions that would be asked, outlining the validity of the dialogue taking new and unforeseen turns. Although each participant had previously read the written information sheet that accompanied the call for interested parties, I took time to check that all the women understood what the project was about, and the basic principles and workability of intersectionality. This was vital – not to police or direct responses but to effectively gauge how service providers work with multiple and interactive identities. The last element we discussed was the use of a dictaphone which I hoped to use to record the interviews. I explained the purpose and benefits of this for the analysis stage, and although most seemed a little apprehensive about the sound of their voice on tape, all agreed to be recorded (as long as they didn't have to listen to it again!).

The first interview I carried out during 2010 was conducted at the respondent's place of work. This interview was relatively long and we deviated away from the questions frequently. I was pleased with how it went and the feedback from the interviewee suggested that she had also enjoyed the process. For me, the 'success' of this first interview was important; it had been sometime since I conducted an academic interview and my confidence was boosted after this initial meeting. I hoped to take this experience with me into the subsequent interviews. The second and third interviews were conducted at

my place of work; at the request of both participants. I travelled to the outskirts of Lancashire for the fourth interview and was met by the next respondent. As with all the previous interviews, the fifth one proved interesting. We also met at my place of work, although we made use of an empty classroom. We chatted for quite some time before the interview began as she had met a colleague of mine through a joint membership of a working group, and seemed keen to discuss some of the ideas raised further. When we did begin the interview it lasted for much longer than any of the prior sessions although I saw this as neither particularly advantageous nor problematic.

#### **NEGOTIATING A RESEARCH ROLE**

As might be expected, I developed, over the course of several months contact, within each round of interviews, different relationships with the participants. Some commenced and continued in an 'official' capacity and all or most correspondence has now ceased. Others became much more familiar and friendly over time, whilst a couple began as informal relationships and continued in that vein. These were all conducted within the boundaries of what was deemed both acceptable and necessary by the participants.

#### **GROUNDED THEORY**

The second rounds of interviews were conducted under the guidance of the principles of grounded theory, and their content was analysed using the

methods of grounded theory. Grounded theory refers to a set of methods that allows data to be thoroughly analysed, and to be synthesized with theoretical categories in order to identify and establish a relationship between the data (Olesen, 2007). These approaches produce theory that is grounded directly in research and data obtained through social interrogations and investigations. Grounded theory constantly asks questions of the data, raising inquiries and acknowledging emerging concepts that can be used to develop or validate theory. The qualitative nature of this approach underpins research that wishes to focus upon meaning, understanding and experience (Charmaz, 2007). The overall process involves coding; with narrative being grouped into distinct units of meaning which then generate concepts. These concepts are re-evaluated and analysed until a series of higher order concepts or one overall concept is established. Either of these outcomes should generate or validate an emergent theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The overall aim is to ‘...create theoretical categories that are directly ‘grounded’ in your data. A grounded theorist starts with gathering focused data and stays close to the data, while developing concepts that synthesize and explain collected data’ (Charmaz, 2007: 82).

‘Given its emphasis on new discoveries, the method is usually used to generate theory in areas where little is already known, or to provide a fresh slant on existing knowledge about a particular social phenomenon’ (Goulding, 1999: 6). This does not mean that the researcher need enter the field of inquiry free from any theoretical persuasions or knowledge-based agenda; in fact

existing levels of understandings are usefully used to foster an openness and sensitivity to emerging categories and patterns (Glaser, 1978). Furthermore, these understandings can also guide points of departure, as well as being directive in terms of selecting participants and approaching and asking questions of the data. What is important is that there is no preconceived hypothesis (Charmaz, 2007). I took ideas about intersectionality and the problems surrounding articulating and responding to difference and commonalities into the interviews with me, and structured questions around these ideas, but I remained open to new possibilities and ready to build ideas and theory up from the content offered. The first set of interviews also sensitised me to certain lines of thought.

Grounded theory appears to be most compatible with topics which have been marginalised within their discipline or those which may need an altered or nuanced theory to be built around it. Intersectionality is a burgeoning area of interest yet there has been little written on how useful intersectionality may be in dealing with the practicalities of identity and experience in the context of VAW (Thiara and Gill, 2010). This thesis attempts to address this query and, as such, adopts grounded theory as an appropriate method.

## **DOING GROUNDED THEORY**

The key to grounded theory is carefully studying the emerging data (Glaser, 1978; 1992). This can be done early on in the process by transcribing

your own work, listening to the interview recordings several times, picking up on nuances in language, construction, articulation and moments of silence, and allowing the impact of their words to really seep through. This will allow their meanings and understandings to be central – research questions and analytical directions can be guided somewhat by their experiences rather than the other way round (Charmaz, 2007: 92).

Once the data has been collected, the interpretation and analysis begins; processes of coding and categorisation continue throughout – from initial analysis to conclusions. For this piece of research this coding process begins with the transcription of the second round of interviews and a thorough textual analysis in order to identify key themes or words which connect the narrative to the research topic. This initial process is often termed open coding (Charmaz, 2007). ‘Open coding is the process of breaking down the data into distinct units of meaning’ (Goulding, 1999: 9). This enables one to gather sets of data that discuss similar themes or allude to connected ideas, whilst keeping close to your data. Codes can also be directive in terms of identifying processes, and processes are seen as an important element of determining categories. ‘Open coding opens up the enquiry, asks questions of the data and searches for answers’ (Noaks and Wincup, 2004: 131).

This close textual analysis is often done line by line until what is happening in the data becomes apparent. What is being articulated? What seems familiar? What seems important? What codes are emerging? Charmaz

(2007: 95) advises that codes should be 'active...short, [and] specific' in order to fully convey understanding or significance from the respondents point of view, and to allow the researcher to make analytic sense of the data. I undertook this laborious process of line by line coding, and this revealed a variety of topics, opinions, similarities and differences, amongst and within the interview transcripts. This initial coding ranged from documenting practical elements, for example – 'process of acquiring identity info' and 'supporting service user needs' – through to the expression of opinion – 'preference for mixed ethnic and faith-based services' and 'identity as central to experience' – and the assertion of research/policy needs – 'greater access to funding' and 'consideration of violent motivations'. Although this task was time-consuming, it proved invaluable. Not only did it facilitate a deep engagement with the data, it also allowed the respondents understandings of their practice and related opinions to be brought to life through the early analysis phase. I returned to the data collected during the first round of interviews and applied the same process, although it must be noted that these transcripts had already been grouped together thematically, and so were coded from collective, as opposed to individual, texts.

Categorising data in this manner enables you to ask critical questions of the narrative and to begin to see emerging patterns or points of departure – 'you *act* upon rather than passively read your data' (Charmaz, 2007: 97; her emphasis). These questions and the active process of engaging with open coding, facilitates the move to more focused coding. Focused coding establishes

more definitely what is significant within the content of the data and provides the basis for your nascent analysis (Charmaz, 2007). In this instance, focused coding was used in two separate stages to reduce the number of initial codes, and to use the most significant codes to revisit the data. This focused coding produced seemingly broader categories but ones which encapsulated the range of recurrent ideas associated with a dominant theme. For example, some of the open codes were collapsed into 'barriers to access', 'relating identity to experience' and 'policy stipulations'.

Once focused codes have been established, the process of raising them to conceptual categories begins. I revised the data several times to do this. The active codes are used to direct and best assess which material is most effective at capturing what is actually happening in the data and what should be considered conceptually in order to form a category (Charmaz, 2007: 99). A category encompasses significant ideas or themes from several codes, raising the most interesting or important issues that are housed within that particular group of thoughts or theories. Each category will have certain conditions which underpin it and which attempt to explain or delineate properties of the category (Goulding, 1999). This process is ongoing with constant examination of data to refine and clarify categories and with constant comparisons being made between and within interviews, codes and contexts. Categories often articulate themselves in two forms (Charmaz, 2007: 100); verbatim, so a concept or statement made directly from a respondents discourse ('all singing, all dancing service', for example), or a theoretical definition ('community cohesion', for

example). Again, categories were generated throughout the whole process of moving from codes to categories. Eventually, three categories, or more accurately articulated, three core themes, were established – ‘perceptions of identity’, ‘needs-based provision’ and ‘official discourse’. In sum, these categories are analytically comprised through a strong relationship with what is emerging through the data. They represent the culmination of important, recurring codes and ideas. An example of the coding process can be found in Appendix 4.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

During the process of developing analytical categories, I found comparative techniques particularly helpful. The rigorous comparative element of grounded theory is often heralded as the one kernel of the approach that is universally accepted as useful (Thomas, 2009). There are several comparisons to be made – different statements from the same interview can be compared, different responses that are grouped within the same category can be compared, as well as comparing narratives across category boundaries. With this study, major concepts or themes can also be compared to those identified as important in the first round of interviews. For example, there had been a discernable shift in terms of how the two sets of interviewees dealt with gender. A helpful aid when making comparisons is the use of memos.

## **MEMOS**



Early open coding and the formulation of conceptual categories will regularly be informed by the use of memos. The qualitative nature of memo writing allows one to generate and articulate their ideas in narrative form. Memos can assist early on in the analytical process by helping to establish which codes should become categories. In this instance memos may consist of a discourse about which codes seem particularly significant or detailed, which seem to overlap or highlight distinct differences or omissions, which provide rich empirical verification for the development of conceptual or theoretical ideas, and so on. Crucially, memos can also be used to breathe life into categories once they have been defined. This method of free-writing (Elbow, 1981) allows the researcher to really interrogate their own ideas about the data and to make sense of the many new discoveries and insights that have been generated. This narrative accompaniment to categories helps to more fully explain not only the analytical properties of the concept being developed, but also the processes that took place to form a category, and the particular nuances of the respondent's discourse. Indeed, '...in grounded theory, memos serve analytic purposes' (Charmaz, 2007: 102); they are a fundamental part of this process and are an instrumental element in the unpicking of implicit or commonsense material, or dense and complex phrasing.

I used memos throughout the analytical process in broadly two ways. Firstly, I used memos to more fully explain specific codes and categories, and this narrative was often accompanied by supporting verbatim quotes to further

illustrate the point. Secondly, I used memos to document and explain the process of raising a code to a category, and then into a theme. Looking at the memos now reveals that many of them are indeed free-writing; they represent the thought processes I was going through at the time, and how these ideas often changed. I would write anything and everything I could about a code before taking this narrative back to the data and re-working the ideas until defining patterns emerged. For example, the use of memos enabled me to distinguish between 'identity characteristics' and 'social location' as they were understood throughout several interviews. Working through the context in which both were used enabled me to create a detailed explanation of how they were often viewed as essentially different but always compounding. Memos are also highly useful at highlighting and making comparisons, and for, quite simply, documenting the research process. I did use a form of memo, or field note, to record feelings about the interview practice itself, and how the second interviews compared to the first.

## **FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODS AND GROUNDED THEORY**

As a set of perspectives and as an analytical approach, the precepts of feminist research methods and grounded theory already identified have many qualitative similarities. However, grounded theory has been heavily criticised, most notably for its once positivistic outlook (Mruck and Mey, 2007), and if taken in its early formations actually poses many problems for a researcher using feminist methodologies (Clarke, 2006). Olesen (2007: 422) more

specifically suggests that there are three main feminist criticisms of grounded theory; positivism, reflexivity and ethics.

All the methods adopted throughout this thesis refute the idea of a positivistic and deterministic approach to VAW. Some versions of grounded theory may perpetuate positivism by presenting levels of value free objectivity, placing the researcher outside of the social phenomenon they are investigating. This level of objectivity denies the indisputable role that the researcher plays in data collection, interpretation and analysis, as well as the unavoidable (and useful) influences already inherent at the onset of a project. Moreover, as Olesen (2007) contends, a grounded theory approach that includes positivistic undertones may serve to displace rather than encourage diverging perspectives, something that any feminist research should be seeking to avoid.

An essential criteria missing from the above positivistic guise is the idea of reflexivity. As already discussed, reflexivity is the process of acknowledging why, how and to what consequence the researcher is an active, embedded part of compiling and analysing research discourse. Importantly for grounded theory, reflexivity needs to be constantly highlighted alongside the move from description to theory. As Mauthner and Doucet (2003: 419; their emphasis) suggest ‘...the interplay between our multiple social locations and how these intersect with the particularities of our personal biographies needs to be considered, as far as possible, *at the time* of analysing data’. This is also of particular value for research that has at its core an intersectional agenda.

Furthermore, particularly through the use of memos, I have detailed my thoughts and feelings throughout the process including when, how and why particular decisions were made. This is a difficult task to execute fully (Olesen, 2007) but one that is vitally important to attempt when articulating how narrative becomes categorised. As with my understanding of discourse and content analysis, meaning is located in language and other mechanisms of emitting signs, and the lens through which I analyse data in grounded theory will be infused with my own interpretive frameworks. Although this point is much debated<sup>18</sup>, reflexivity is a crucial part of data collection and analysis, and is something that goes hand in hand with the cyclical process of grounded theory.

Connectedly, the discussion of ethical issues were largely absent in early formulations of grounded theory (Olesen, 2007). In some cases, as with other analytical approaches, a tacit ethical stance may have been assumed. A lack of reflexivity will inevitably lead to a sparse discourse on how a researcher moulds and shapes all aspects of the process, including the outcome(s). For example, a prominent ethical issue raised by the methods of grounded theory would be the careful consideration of selecting and protecting participants. In early incarnations, or more positivistically driven forms of grounded theory, initial sampling details and theoretical sampling may take precedence discursively over the specificities of important information about participants understanding, well-being, anonymity, confidentiality and privacy. However, all of the above problems have been countered by some far-reaching and

expansive feminist grounded theory research<sup>19</sup>. These issues have been overcome in a variety of ways through the rejection of positivism and the denial of the possibility of value-free knowledge, as well as the implementation of co-created narrative, reflexive dialogue and ethical considerations. Recording the complexities of conducting grounded theory in conjunction with qualitative feminist methods only adds to the strength of research reflections. Analytical techniques and comprehensive ethical guidelines, provide a critical stance from which to engage with multiple social, cultural and moral phenomena.

As the central focus of this thesis is to examine whether the theoretical framework of intersectionality is a useful tool for the analysis of government policy and whether its basic tenants are exercised in practice, the underpinning ethos and ideas of grounded theory make it a most suitable method to adopt. 'The grounded theorist's simultaneous involvement in data gathering and analysis is explicitly aimed toward developing theory' (Charmaz, 2007: 89). I may not strictly be following the entire grounded theory process but, as Charmaz (2007: 90) attests, by learning from the first set of responses, by really listening to what all the respondents say, by picking up on unstated intentions and unpicking commonsense understandings, and by shaping emerging research questions and points of departure in order to illuminate theoretical paradigms, I *am* 'doing' grounded theory.

## **ETHICAL QUESTIONS**

The objectives of this research are underlined by the aim of creating positive change and better outcomes for women. A great amount of consideration was given to the ethical and methodological challenges raised by such a sensitive research topic. The research was conducted in accordance with UCLan guidelines<sup>20</sup> and the World Health Organisation Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women<sup>21</sup>. Ethically, any poorly conceptualised study is unacceptable. It is also precarious. 'Bad data may be worse than no data, because low prevalence estimates could potentially be used to question the importance of violence as a legitimate area of concern' (World Health Organisation, 2001: 15). Despite the fact that I did not, nor wished to, carry out a statistical prevalence survey, the above quote highlights the need to build on research seeking to address the problem of under-reporting – to evaluate whether any barriers could be removed by agencies, service providers or communities themselves.

In addition to ethical and methodological challenges raised by any research, research on VAW, and specifically ethnicised women, provokes its own important issues. The sensitive nature and potential vulnerable position of both the respondents and researcher make issues of safety and confidentiality even more paramount. The first priority of research on VAW is the overall safety of the women in question. The research design must prioritise safety by building it into every stage of the methodology, for both service users and providers. Moreover, all stages of the research must be conducted in an appropriately sensitive manner.

The safety of both the participants and myself was paramount. The mere act of participating in research could place both in a potentially dangerous situation. The wider community should not be introduced to the research. For ethical reasons, I decided to have a 'dummy' title with mock questions should, in any of the locations, an interview be interrupted. For example, the International Research Network on Violence Against Women suggest that the research could be said to be framed on women's health issues and a set of alternative questions devised in the event of termination or diversion of the interview (World Health Organisation, 2001: 13). I choose to formulate a few questions on women's lifestyles should this event arise. This potential alteration was explained to the women before the research was carried out so they were fully informed of all the possible questions they could be asked.

Consent, as in any research, was a principal concern. Any women taking part in this the research were required to give their full and conversant consent prior to any interviews taking place. To begin with, all the women participants needed to be made aware of the aims of the research, the nature of the questions, the sensitivity of the questions and how their responses would be used. It was a stated pre requisite that all the women fully understood what the research constituted. Full consent was mandatory, nevertheless, the women were reassured from the outset that, at any time, they could decline to answer a question or withdraw from the research all together – even after the interview had taken place. Throughout the course of the interview including the

preliminary conversation before the interview began, the dialogue was peppered with a reiteration of the nature of the questions and that the interview could be terminated at any point.

As much of the information disclosed was of a highly personal, sometimes political and potentially dangerous nature, the second ethical point of fundamental importance was confidentiality. There are several steps which have been taken to ensure that all respondents are anonymised. As part of the consent process all confidentiality procedures were shared with the participants.

Instead of using elaborate, unique codes as is often promoted for sensitive research, I selected to use capital letters A-G, and numbers 1-5. This decision was fuelled by the small number of contributors used and the ease with which detailed, qualitative responses could be transcribed. No names were ever transcribed despite all the service providers giving their consent for their names to be used. All recordings made of the interviews were kept in a locked cabinet, known only to myself, with limited access and no legible record was visible on the front of the cassette cases. Following transcription and the first phase of analysis the tapes were erased.

All those individuals who have taken part will be offered a copy of the research. This will allow the critical findings of the research to reach some of the best positioned people to review, publicise, and use them. As the sole



researcher, I have a responsibility to ensure that the findings are used in a positive way. Logistically the study's budget should cover all these costs plus the donations that were made as receipt and thanks for participation. Ethically, I am aware, and was at the time of interviews, of the potential pitfalls of being a white researcher considering issues of race and ethnicity with ethnicised participants. As stated earlier, I am fully conversant with critiques of problematic feminist analytical practices that speak for others, subsuming a minority voice<sup>22</sup>. I also thoroughly interrogated my own location, uncovering the privileges of whiteness as a race, before I embarked on the research process and interviews.

## **CONCLUSION**

A number of diverse discourses manifest themselves throughout this thesis and the prominent strands of these are identified throughout this chapter; discourse analysis, content analysis and grounded theory as well as an explanation of the methodology used to carry out two sets of interviews. Discourse takes different forms and positions itself in different locations across various chapters, yet no one element is privileged over another. Each section is equally important. Feminist research methods underpin the triangulation of methods adopted. Discourse analysis is fundamental to the thesis as a whole, as well as to the justification of predominant theories throughout Chapter 2. Chapter 4 utilises content analysis to analyse existing government policy and this part of the research allows us to look at whether policy is taking any

direction from current VAW theory. Finally, there are several methodological and ethical considerations outlined here that were necessary to use as a guide in order to gain experiential insight into the opinions of women working in the VAW field to form the basis of Chapter 5. These interviews were analysed using the methods of grounded theory.

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- <sup>1</sup> Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002: 127).
- <sup>2</sup> Foucault (1984: 110).
- <sup>3</sup> See the debate between Hammersley and Gelsthorpe in the journal *Sociology*, Gelsthorpe (1992).
- <sup>4</sup> This is not to suggest that content analysis does not arise from other methodological approaches or epistemological principles.
- <sup>5</sup> Initially, the word 'victim' was included in the search terms prompted by intersectionality. I was interested to see if this term was used generically, foregoing any real consideration of the importance of social divisions to the experience of, or response to, VAW. However, after using the codes to analyse one document (Home Office, 2003) the frequency with which victim was used in both generic and specific contexts suggested that a count of this word would be relatively meaningless and would leave little room for cohesive interpretation.
- <sup>6</sup> It became apparent that the term 'community' was prolifically associated with minority groups, such as, ethnicised groups and LGBT groups.
- <sup>7</sup> See Rueschemeyer (2003).
- <sup>8</sup> Both *Living Without Fear* (Home Office, 1999) and *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) had been published.
- <sup>9</sup> These 'prompt' words were really just the themes that I wanted to examine, 'racism', for example, and should not be confused with 'prompting' as a method of encouraging certain responses from a participant; pushing for elaboration or 'putting words' in a respondents 'mouth'.
- <sup>10</sup> See Dobash and Dobash (1979). This book clearly accounts for the various reasons why methodology needs to be carefully considered for a sensitive research topic such as VAW.
- <sup>11</sup> For example, the representatives from Supporting People were commissioning a telephone survey to collate information on how effective local services were. They suggested that I be involved in that project in some capacity. These discussions took place at the Lancashire Women & Violence Forum, April-June 2003.
- <sup>12</sup> There were various reasons for this. One organisation felt that the timing was not right, for example.
- <sup>13</sup> All the women who agreed to participate from *The Refuge* were ethnicised women.
- <sup>14</sup> Again there were many reasons for this, including timing and the inability to make a firm commitment.
- <sup>15</sup> This is explained later in this chapter in the ethics section.
- <sup>16</sup> This interview covered topics as diverse as government policy, the depoliticisation of the VAW field, courses for perpetrators of violence and the relationship between alcohol and violence.
- <sup>17</sup> For example, many of my undergraduate students began volunteering locally after studying one of my modules
- <sup>18</sup> See Glaser (1992) and Charmaz (2007) for the differing viewpoints on how much researchers bring to bear on their research
- <sup>19</sup> For a wider discussion of some shining examples of feminist grounded theory research see Clarke (2006)
- <sup>20</sup> My research proposal and subsequent transfer report to move from MPhil to PhD both had to pass through the UCLan Ethics Committee. I also followed the University's guidelines on conducting ethical research. For more information visit:  
[www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/psychology/research/ethics.php](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/psychology/research/ethics.php)
- <sup>21</sup> See World Health Organisation (2001).
- <sup>22</sup> See Alcoff (1993); Alcoff and Gray (1993); Gunew (1991).

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## CHAPTER 4

### **From theory to Policy: New Labour Policy on VAW**

The Blair project, in its overall analysis and key assumptions, is still essentially framed and moving on the terrain defined by Thatcherism.<sup>1</sup>

Multi-cultural sensitivity is no excuse for moral blindness.<sup>2</sup>

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will use intersectionality as a frame through which to assess existing Government initiatives in the VAW sector<sup>3</sup>. This serves two purposes. Firstly, it enables a thorough assessment of policy documents commissioned under New Labour<sup>4</sup>, raising specific questions that pertain to some of the central themes of this thesis. Secondly, it can ‘test’ how useful intersectionality is as a lens of critique, moving the paradigm’s application beyond the conceptual and theoretical. Content analysis will be adopted as a methodology that is framed by guiding codes and questions derived from what I understand to be a constitutive intersectional approach. Essentially, this approach prompts the analytical framework to ask questions about the inclusion of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and age, the relationship in given historical and

contextual frames of these social divisions, and how these social divisions operate on a variety of levels. The specificities inherent within these broad queries will become apparent through the subsequent analysis and discussion of the findings. Particular documents are selected for in-depth analysis, and these are presented against a backdrop of the chronological overview of policy development under New Labour. As such, the specified period of content analysis is 2003-2009, although the use of supporting documents may fall outside of this period. The overall discussion looks to not only assess the effectiveness of intersectionality as an analytical lens, but also to consider what the outcomes of the content analysis mean for strategising around VAW.

## **CONTENT ANALYSIS AND INTERSECTIONALITY**

As identified in the previous chapter, intersectionality has been adopted to formulate key themes that are used to read the individual documents selected for in-depth analysis. Hence, the methodology adopted is a content analysis of selected government policy documents, one which is framed by intersectionality in order to interpret context and meaning. This approach enables the documents to be compared and contrasted in order to illuminate the possible changes in the engagement with social divisions across time and contextual periods, and to witness any significant structural shifts. Briefly, this process involves documenting the approximate number of times various search terms are mentioned throughout a document, and analysing what social and contextual understandings we can derive from their position and inclusion. In

essence, the content analysis seeks to address what inferences and meanings can be gathered, using intersectionality as a guiding lens, which may not be gained through the use of a unilateral or systematic focus.

The terms VAW, VAWG and domestic violence are used throughout this chapter as they all appear in the lexicon of government language. They are sometimes used distinctly to refer to different acts of violence or a marked conceptual approach, and they are sometimes used interchangeably. Whilst this is problematic, it is necessary from an intersectional point of view, to track their usage, and to contextualise any changes. I hope to be clear at different points as to why I am using different terminologies.

## **NEW LABOUR AND VAW**

When the Blair government was elected in 1997, it stated its commitment to ending the widespread problem of domestic violence. Rafts of new policies were promised. The *Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004* is the biggest piece of legislation published on domestic violence in over 30 years. Preceded by the Home Office consultation paper *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) and the policy document *Living Without Fear* (Home Office, 1999) the responsibility for initiatives concerning VAW now cuts across many government departments, including an Inter-Ministerial Group set up in 2003. The dedicated publication, *Domestic Violence: A National Report* (Home Office, 2005b) tracks the progress of this administration, and highlights new commitments or the

'next steps'. More recently *Saving lives. Reducing Harm. Protecting the Public* (Home Office, 2008b) gives an indication of the commitment of Gordon Brown's cabinet to VAW. In 2009, with the publication of *Together we can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy* (Home Office, 2009b), the significant activism and research calling for a co-ordinated response to this social problem appeared to have paid off as a nationwide consultation fed into a new cohesive and joined-up approach.

Relative attention has also been paid to issues, or concerns, more closely associated with ethnicised women. In 1999, the government implemented a 'working group' to investigate the growing problem of forced marriage, and this group went on to publish *A Choice by Right* (Home Office, 2000). This working group oversaw the development of the Forced Marriage Unit that was launched in January 2005, which produced the consultation document *A Wrong Not A Right* (Home Office, 2006). All this work culminated in the *Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act* 2007. Alongside these initiatives, we witnessed the publication of a good practice guide specifically targeted at ethnicised women, and various submissions from the UK Border agency. Furthermore, and significantly, these VAW policy documents exist alongside current immigration and asylum laws, and a drive towards community cohesion. This 'new' framework governs and manages race relations policy in the UK today, and is configured in numerous ways to support the shift from multiculturalism to integration (Worley, 2005). There has been little consideration of how this agenda impacts upon other regimes of inequality, including gender (Patel and Sen, 2010), and the

ideological and contextual elements of this community cohesion approach provide another cross-cutting backdrop within which intersectional analysis can take place.

### **NEW LABOUR: THINGS CAN ONLY GET BETTER?**

Starting with the achievements to date, the persistent lobbying and sufficiently vocal feminist movement appeared to have made an impact on the government when *'Living Without Fear: An integrated approach to tackling violence against women'* was published by the Home Office in 1999. The policy document promised an integrated approach committed to thinking in terms of connections. It was geared towards tackling the problem of men's violence under the rubric of VAW. The document states categorically, in its opening line that 'violence against women is a crime' and the fear it invokes has a disproportionate impact on the way women live their lives (1999: 1). However, the document vacillates between using the concepts VAW and domestic violence. This demonstrates the actual lack of understanding the policy makers have when attempting to use an integrated approach, and is the first indication that the naming of this social problem may have significant structural and representational effects. As Kelly recommends, we need to look at '...whether our responses have become more geared to bureaucratic categories than their lives' (2000: 9).



Elsewhere, *Living Without Fear* sets out a plethora of detailed commitments to both women survivors and field practitioners. One of the particular aims is to provide ‘...a concession in respect of the ‘One Year Rule’ for immigrants who come to join partners already settled in the UK but whose marriages break down within the first year as a result of domestic violence’ (Home Office, 1999: 7). The One Year Rule instructs any person who comes to this country on the basis of their marriage to a settled person, to stay within that marriage for at least one year or face deportation, despite any problems that may arise within the relationship, before they can apply for permanent residency. During this one year period, the marriage migrant has uncertain immigration status. The impact of this stipulation is clear. It overtly confines women to either a violent relationship, or a long trip back to their own country, where they may face a multitude of problems on their return, including gender persecution (Razack, 1995). The new concession would allow women to stay in the UK permanently if they could prove that they had been the victim of domestic violence before indefinite leave to remain had been granted, by obtaining a court conviction or court order that confirms the relationship broke down because of domestic violence. This concession was limited to those who entered or stayed in the UK on the basis of marriage to a person who was a British national or settled in this country. All those who did not fit these criteria could not make use of the concession.

In the same year, August 1999, the Home Office initiated a ‘Working Group’ to examine the issue of forced marriage. They invited all key service

delivery organisations and a broad range of community and voluntary organisations to engage in consultation, as well as survivors of forced marriage and their families. The commencement of the group indicated the government's intention to develop a broad strategy against VAW as suggested in *Living Without Fear* (Home Office, 1999). The Group published a report *A choice by Right* in June 2000. The first and main priority identified by the report is the development of a shared understanding about the motivations that surround forced marriage and the central issues paramount to victims. The document suggests that, whilst diversity must be celebrated and respected, it must not be done so at the expense of practices that endanger women, contravene criminal law and human rights. Thankfully, this ethos does underpin the majority of the report. Many critics have been concerned by the reluctance of statutory agencies to intervene in such cases for fear of being racist. Whilst in the UK forced marriage is not solely an ethnicised issue, as clearly identified in *A Choice by Right* (Home Office, 2000), to not intercede for fear of meddling with perceived cultural practices is racist in itself. It is a common misconception that drawing attention to forced marriage will *undoubtedly* stigmatise certain communities through reinforcing hegemonic ideologies. If this level of scrutiny is avoided, then many women are being denied the right of all women to be free from violence. We must interrogate the pervasiveness of this practice without ever supporting the idea that specific cultures or communities condone and defend such activities, or that these acts of violence can be explained solely via culture. The Southall Black Sisters have been particularly vocal about the dangerous level of disinclination to tackle issues that have close associations

with particular cultures (Gupta, 2003). This issue is compounded by the current conditions of the governments community cohesion agenda.

The Working Group's message on this issue appears to be clear. A process of knowledge and practice transfer should be fostered in order to culminate in a shared understanding that enables all services to effectively deal with cases, as well as issues that surround forced marriage. To do this most successfully, services would have to be geared towards responding to the different needs of different women who come from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds – how these systems of inequality cut across one another are integral to the specificities of each case. Their commitment to equipping all mainstream<sup>5</sup> services with the knowledge, resources and shared understanding to tackle forced marriage in any number of the diverse and complex ways that it may manifest itself, is an ambitious aim but one that is necessary if we are to move beyond the misguided notion that to be sensitive to multiculturalism, we must compromise women's safety and human rights (Dustin and Phillips, 2008). The group is also resolute in its assertion that no specific offence should be created for forcing a person to marry. The general message articulated by the report in terms of the criminal law is that perpetrators should be aware that, whilst there is no category of offence that directly defines the action of forcing someone into marriage, there are a variety of offences with which they could be charged (Home Office, 2000).

The Southall Black Sisters actually resigned from the working group following the publication of *A Choice by Right* (Home Office, 2000), and subsequently published their own report *Forced Marriage: An abuse of Human Rights* in July 2001. Amongst other issues, the resignation was fuelled by the insistence of the Working Group to offer mediation and reconciliation services to women and their existing, estranged or potential partners and family (Southall Black Sisters, 2001). Mediation is viewed as counterproductive to ensuring, above all else, women's safety, and acts to limit the operation of agency and choice. Moreover, problematically, the working group and their first publication sit outside of the central domain of VAW despite the internal intention to initiate a broad strategy. An overall strategic direction is hindered not by the existence of a *separate* group, but by a group that aims to assess what they believe to be a seemingly *separate* issue. The duplication of an inter-ministerial group on forced marriage and one on domestic violence and sexual offences is illustrative of the lack of coordination and connection fostered by a cohesive and integrated VAW approach. This act of violence, which is most commonly associated with ethnicised women, is treated as a distinct problem, one which sits outside of the focus on VAW stated in *Living Without Fear* (Home Office, 1999). This encourages policymakers to view this violence through a unilateral cultural lens (Thiara and Gill, 2010) rather than as a product of complex, intersecting categories and systems, and broader social and discursive contexts.

#### **'SAFETY & JUSTICE'**

In 2003 the Home Office consultation paper, *Safety & Justice: the Government's proposals on Domestic Violence*, was published, and this document is the first to be subjected to content analysis. The paper aims to detail 'the nature and prevalence of domestic violence' and to examine the impact of this violence on both victims and wider society through a three-fold strategy addressing prevention, protection and justice, and support (Home Office, 2003: 7). *Safety & Justice* opens with a familiar statement - 'Domestic violence occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth and geography' (Home Office, 2003: 7). This declaration somewhat sets the tone for the rather neutral approach that the paper takes in regard to social divisions. All six social divisions – gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and age – are addressed to varying degrees throughout although non-significantly outweigh the centrality of the others. Of notable exception is the fleeting inclusion of social class; two references to wealth appear within the 72 page document. *Safety & Justice* differs from previous published accounts as it recognises that there is an incidence of men suffering domestic violence, but the concept of gender and any related systematic operation of gender, are seldom addressed.

The operation and interaction of social divisions are detached from the documents strategic aims. Bar the inclusion of specifically addressing young people through education (Home Office, 2003: 17), a generic victim is used to contextualise the application of the aims. In fact, the vagueness in terms of

social categories and their impact upon experience extends to the problem itself – ‘working to prevent *it* happening in the first place’ (Home Office, 2003: 7; my emphasis). Terminology is an important consideration for an analytical tool which uses intersectionality as a frame, as inferences can be drawn from the types of violence that are included within definitions, and their discursive relationship with certain social locations. The immediate striking feature is obviously the government’s reversal in terminology. There is an apparent inconsistency in the government’s formulation of the problem of men’s VAW when the very ‘problem’ they are discussing suffers from conceptual confusion. Classifying the issue under the term domestic violence immediately omits other forms of violence experienced by women, thereby making an integrated approach impossible<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, reverting to domestic violence conceals the gender of the perpetrator. This discursive manoeuvre conceals men’s agency and allows the now well coined statistics of the 1996 British Crime survey to be included. That is: one in four women and one in six men will suffer domestic violence at some point in their lives. This gender-neutralising use of statistics suggests that the effects of domestic violence are comparable between men and women. Not until page nine, after a long list of very telling domestic murder statistics (that on average two women a week are killed by a male partner), is it finally acknowledged that domestic violence is ‘predominantly violence by men against women’ (2003: 9).

Similarly, the restrictive capabilities of domestic violence forego any specific strategies for ethnicised women. The intersectional nature of identities

is diluted by the use of domestic violence terminology which creates homogenous categories of victim. As Howe (2008b) suggests, the government's efforts to include diversely situated women are a token gesture. The issues surrounding the Two Year Rule for re-settlement will be discussed in the next pages. Nevertheless, it is important to note during this analysis of *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) that incidents of honour killings and forced marriages are not covered in the paper at all. Despite unrelenting pressure from feminist groups, ethnicised women are mentioned in a fleeting section on the reluctance to report crime due to the fear of bringing dishonour on their family and other issues around under-reporting (2003: 31). Whilst ethnicised women undoubtedly suffer domestic violence, and acts of coercion and violence which are underpinned by notions of honour are not isolated to ethnicised communities, there is a common understanding that acts of domestic violence are associated with white victims and perpetrators (Weis, 2001). The gender-neutral conceptualisation preferred throughout the document does more than conceal men's agency as the overwhelming abuser in cases of VAW; further, it omits the crucial links between different forms of violence, which operate at a variety of analytical levels, and effectively limits analysis by supporting both compartmentalisation and static, homogenous views of identity. As such, it foregoes any critical and substantial strategising for ethnicised women, or any other specific social location which is comprised of enmeshed and interactive components.

Thus, the primacy of any social division is unclear. Both men and women are constructed as victims of domestic violence, yet the 'drive' behind the majority of proposals can be read as being more meaningful to women, and contextually they are more frequently mentioned. Interestingly, in the discussion around factors which prevent victims from reporting violent crime, ethnicised victims are readily identified as 'women' yet gender is disguised behind neutral terms when situated anywhere other than ethnicised communities. Why the gender impartiality until violence against ethnicised women is considered? The discursive understanding of 'victim' is portrayed as different for different ethnic groups. In ethnicised communities the 'victim' of domestic violence is clearly going to be a woman according to the government, and rightly so, but this acknowledgment is not made for white women. This suggests that the government is succumbing to stereotypes about the nature and order of ethnicised communities, viewing this violence solely through a cultural lens in order to establish gender congruity. Both ethnicity and sexuality occur most regularly in sections regarding 'minority communities' (Home Office, 2003: 11; 19; 31; 43; 45), and they are often highlighted as particular groups in need of specialist support, including safe accommodation. Given this position, tangible support for specialist provision is interpreted as a secondary concern, as little more than lip service is paid to this reflection. Moreover, the term 'community' is consistently expressed as a concept which exists in the context of ethnicity and sexuality, indicating again, a rather absolute vision of social groups, as though the term 'community' only relates to those deemed outside of the majority constitution.



Social divisions are largely viewed as separate and non-interactive concepts. For example, ethnicity and sexuality are marked as minority communities but it is never postulated that these two 'communities' may intersect. Similarly, lesbian women cover two of the broad issues the document addresses – domestic violence and violence perpetrated against victims of minority groups – yet they are only readily identified in the former. Identities are not viewed as unstable or fluid, rather they are fixed and categorised, often within constructed groups that lack heterogeneity or mobility. There is little significant reference to identity or social categories throughout, or to systems of inequality which systemise and justify binary oppositions that support levels of provision. One considerable exception to this generality is the visibility of victims who are subject to immigration control. One of the internal commitments of *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) is to provide refuge and safe housing to victims of domestic violence and the focus of the document takes a detailed look at the existing barriers in place for women who have uncertain immigration status.

The One Year Rule, as mentioned earlier in *Living Without Fear* (Home Office, 1999) was actually extended to two years in 2003. The Two Year Rule is an immigration regulation that stipulates that all people coming to the UK to marry must stay in that marriage for at least two whole years before they can submit an application for permanent residency. The one year rule was one of a set of rules introduced under the Conservative Government in the early 1980s.

New Labour, nearly twenty years on, extended this rule to two years, correcting the popular assumption that New Labour take a more subjective and open view of immigration than their predecessors. Other requirements included the no recourse to public funds provision and the introduction of the primary purpose rule<sup>7</sup>. All of these conditions are geared towards the prevention of citizens entering the UK with a view to staying here permanently through marriage. Their existence, in some form, in contemporary legislation highlights the enduring view the Government takes on issues regarding the priority of violence, immigration and providing effective provision and services.

As stated, the newly implemented Two Year Rule requires the person coming to the UK to be married for at least two years before they can apply to stay here permanently. All those who do not apply at the end of this two year period but stay in the country are referred to as 'overstayers' (Gill and Sharma, 2007). These women are in danger of being removed from the UK regardless of whether their marriage is still intact. In an equally precarious position are women who have not obtained a settlement but have witnessed the breakdown of their marriage for whatever reason - including domestic violence. Put simply, women who have suffered abuse and violence from their spouse are in danger of being deported if they do not successfully acquire a permanent residency status. The woman is ultimately left with the choice of staying in an abusive relationship or being in a position where she may be potentially deported. Alternatively, she could become destitute. To add to the problems caused by the Two Year Rule, both parties, husband and wife, must support the

application for leave to remain, further trapping women into a situation of co-dependency.

Approximately 500 women every year who are in the UK as immigrants and asylum seekers suffer from violence at the hands of men (WAFE, 2004). The majority of these women are married to, or have relationships with, UK citizens or men who have indefinite leave to remain. Some have come to the UK as fiancées, workers, students or temporarily for other various reasons. Having uncertain immigration status means that one has no right to public funds; that is, benefits of any description and housing under the Housing Act 1996. The no recourse to public funds requirement dictates that persons coming to the UK must be financially supported by their spouses or must support themselves by working. They are not entitled to welfare benefits, council housing or to use publicly funded facilities. For women who experience abusive relationships, this stipulation makes leaving the site of violence difficult as most safe refuges require women to pay their own rent (often through housing benefit for those entitled) or find shelter at a refuge that has the funding and ability to house women/families whose rent will not be subsidised by benefits. These spaces are usually scarce. Addressing the issues created by the interface between immigration policy and domestic violence policy, *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) outlines the extension of the types of evidence that can be submitted to prove that a marriage has broken down because of domestic violence, and to, therefore, claim the domestic violence concession inherent within the two year rule.

Ideally, the proof submitted would be one or more forms of official documentation – either ‘an injunction, non-molestation order or other protection order; or a relevant court conviction; or full details of a relevant police caution’ (Home Office, 2003: 46). However, the quantifiable evidence was widened to include the following: a letter or statement from a GP or hospital doctor; an ‘undertaking’ issued by a court of law; a police report; a letter from social services; and a letter of support from a refuge (Home Office, 2003). Clearly, these expansions indicate a marked improvement. In reality, however, even those liable to remain in the UK under the ‘Domestic Violence Immigration Rule’ find it difficult to prove that they have been the victim of continual, sustained and serious violence. For example, Puri (2005) identified breaches of confidentiality in cases where GPs had been unable to deal with questions of culture effectively. Similarly, there are well documented tensions between ethnicised communities and the police, due to heavy-handed and discriminatory policing practices (Scruton, 1987). This can also be an expensive, £750.00 per application, and lengthy process – on average an application form takes a minimum of three months to prepare, usually with assistance from a representative and 47 days to process (Lewis, K., 2004: 12). Other evidence contrastingly suggests applications can take between seven and twelve months to process (Southall Black Sisters, 2004). Those who do utilise the rule to gain residency are still denied access to public funds, making it virtually impossible to leave the site of violence. The figures suggest that the strain on the state and public purse would not be insurmountable, should access to welfare benefits be

made compulsory for women successfully using the concession. Regrettably spaces at safe refuges are usually funded through housing benefit, with some refuges averaging one space for a woman with no recourse to public funds and most being able to offer no residential assistance at all. Imkaan (2003) found that out of 251 women who suffered a breakdown of their marriage due to domestic violence and had no recourse to public funds, only nine were housed in safe refuge space. The issue of 'overstayers' is also left unresolved. The concession under the immigration rules is, therefore, relatively ineffective.

Despite the revisions, there are still obvious problems with both the practical implications of collating this evidence, and the continued rhetoric surrounding immigration control and the protection of women subjected to violence, indicating that the way the document and its policies work with social divisions, produce effects that operate on structural, experiential and discursive levels. Under the new revisions of evidence, and the admittance that whilst the applications are being considered by the Immigration & Nationality Department (IND),<sup>8</sup> victims of domestic violence 'cannot have access to public funds for the period until the application has been decided' (2003: 46), the document provides a crucial statement.

In order to protect the *integrity* of the immigration and benefit rules, the Government is not persuaded that victims making applications under the immigration domestic violence rules should have access to social security benefits.

(2003: 46; my emphasis)

The prioritising of immigration status over the experience of violence is explained in terms of the government's desire to protect their 'integrity' rather than to protect women who have or who are experiencing violence. The inability of women with uncertain immigration status to claim public funds or adequately access refuge space or safe housing translates into the discriminatory prioritisation of immigration status above all other social categories, and the devalued experience of a section of women who suffer men's violence. Again, with no links being made between interacting and contingent identity spheres, women whose immigration status is more salient in these situations do not benefit from the policy stipulations or the domestic violence concessions. Applying a content analysis demonstrates that despite immigration status being meaningfully enmeshed with other social divisions, the compartmentalisation of this status highlights this group of women as one dimensional and other identity categories become divergent. This is experienced subjectively as exclusion and is rooted in an ever-increasing context of suspicion and difference, reinforced in a post-9/11 era, visibly marking certain victims of violence as non-conducive to the overall focus of community cohesion and integration.

It can be interpreted that *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) is marked by normalised similarities and notable differences. The scant mention of social divisions makes it difficult to ascertain who the document is addressing beyond the construction of a relatively generic victim. The three-pronged approach

operates around this notion – ‘work to help agencies and professionals to address risk factors and identify victims as early as possible’; ‘increasing the protection courts provide to victims’; and ‘the introduction of measures to support victims’ (Home Office, 2003: 7-8). This discursive approach suggests that policymakers do not see social divisions as central ordering concepts in the experience of, or necessary response to, domestic violence. However, some victims are marked as distinct social groups and here we see a tangible departure from the generic victim – ‘what is the unmet need for support services and accommodation options, including for victims from ethnic minority communities, LGBT (Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender), and male victims of domestic violence?’ (Home Office, 2003: 45). Arguably, these distinctions suggest that although experiences are not seen to be mediated through structural systems of inequality, the common use of victim throughout the document may pertain more significantly to heterosexual women who belong to majority ethnic communities. This amounts to reductive stereotyping in all cases, and the adoption of simplistic understandings of gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality, not to mention the derivative status of class and age. It also points to the splintering of social divisions, moving away from commonalities and towards divisive and singular visions of domestic violence which are disconnected from wider debates on VAW, and which serve to prioritise victims and state-funded services. This is not to say that certain intersectional locations do not necessitate a more defined and greater struggle for recognition, but that the intersection of multiple dominatory systems creates both privilege and oppression, and both similarity and difference.

To some extent, and in their own context, these policies dictate how social divisions are produced structurally and discursively which, by extension, influence how subjectivity and identity are constructed. There are some particularly striking examples of how the presentation of different identity groups work on various analytical levels in *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003), some of which are considered here. In general, the construction of social categories is relatively static and they are represented as monolithic and mutually exclusive. They are not explicitly associated with regimes and systems of inequality which foregoes any significant consideration of power differentials. For example, gender-neutral language conceals the operation of macro level gender orders and micro level gender regimes, despite the fact that the definition of domestic violence used within the document locates intimate relationships as the site of violence<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, ethnic differences are highlighted without attention to the operation of racism and ethnocentrism. More importantly, these regimes are never viewed as intersecting, neglecting to attend to both the reality and the complexity of VAW. As such, the document neither foregrounds a subjective nor structural approach. Experientially, much of the indistinct language results in separation and exclusion. Those 'communities' marked as distinct from the general operation of a generic victim are, at best, highlighted as tokenistic gestures which point to the need for specialist and sensitive consideration, and, at worst, are excluded from the mainstream and narrow focus adopted by the document. This exclusion manifests itself potently across all three analytical levels in the case of women



with uncertain immigration status; they are physically excluded from receiving the same level of provision as other victims, and discursively excluded from policy designed to tackle VAW through the contradictory application of immigration rules. This must surely influence, be it in resistant or oppressive ways, their construction of agency.

The constructions of difference in *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) depend on the social and historical context of the time. The document is underpinned by a move toward gender neutrality, denying the substantial importance of a gendered perspective that is rooted in the continued use of hegemonic masculinity as a natural ordering system in the UK. It is less connected to the broader social context than its predecessor *Living Without Fear* (Home Office, 1999), although it reinforces the same ideology that experiences are shaped by single identities and not cross-cutting, and compounding, multiple group memberships. This is further evidenced by the narrow definition of domestic violence used throughout, and its disassociation with other forms of VAW. Significantly, no social category is viewed as either consistently salient, or important, to the experience of domestic violence. The shifting terrain of immigration policy through the extension of the probationary period for immigrant women from one to two years, provides an important policy interface, and one which presents the most stark and exclusionary example of unilateral thinking at that time.

#### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CRIME AND VICTIMS ACT 2004**

The consultation paper did, however, form the basis of a new Domestic Violence Bill, culminating in the passing of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. The legislation included introducing new powers for the police and courts to deal with offenders, for example, extending the availability of non-molestation orders to couples who have never lived together or been married, establishing the use of specialist domestic violence courts and, importantly, the commencement of annual domestic violence delivery plans. These action plans chart the yearly progress the government makes in regards to domestic violence against a specific set of performance objectives, and have been published from 2006 onwards. All seemingly positive steps, yet still commissioned under the umbrella of domestic violence. However, shortly after these new and encouraging proposals, a 'good practice' guide aimed exclusively at ethnicised women addressed the specificities of domestic violence in a minority ethnic context (Parmer et al., 2005). The report offers the generic government definition of domestic violence as used in *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) although it does state that domestic violence can be inflicted '...by an intimate current or ex-partner and/or extended family e.g. mother-in-law' (Parmer et al., 2005: 2). The report also acknowledges that there is often a multitude of connecting issues surrounding the violence and by sub-dividing the 'increased number of barriers' faced by ethnicised women into 'culture', 'religion' and 'immigration', the report discusses many of the explicit experiences that can make surviving violence more difficult (Parmer et al., 2005: 4). The report concludes that the specific issues faced by ethnicised women

warrant a clearer understanding, and tighter policies, to facilitate more effective provision and support delivered by service providers.

### **'DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A NATIONAL REPORT'**

The progress of both the consultation paper *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) and the new *Domestic Violence Act 2004* are outlined in the account '*Domestic Violence: A National Report*' (2005b). The report identifies the Inter-Ministerial group as responsible for '...driving forward the Government's work on domestic violence within a strategic framework' (Home Office, 2005b: 4). As well as addressing the issues highlighted in '*Safety & Justice*' (Home Office, 2003), the report sets new objectives for '...tackling domestic violence through early identification, prevention and improved response'<sup>10</sup> (Home Office, 2005b: 2). Although the government is still committed, throughout the report, to tackling the problem of domestic violence there are signs of improvement in the introductory exploration of this problem. On the first page of the report it is acknowledged that women predominantly suffer 'sustained domestic violence', 89% of victims are recognised as 'female' in fact (Home Office, 2005b: 2). There is also early positioning of the admission that domestic violence can be '...perpetrated by family and extended family members, through forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and so-called 'honour crimes'' (Home Office, 2005b: 2). Furthermore, the report posits a 'core' definition of domestic violence, conceding that it is a wider definition than has been used before to incorporate family members and ex-partners<sup>11</sup>

(Home Office, 2005b: 7). This widening is in direct response to concerns levelled at *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) that prevalent ethnicised community concerns were not properly reflected.

Once again all the social divisions searched for were found within the document, although none were referred to frequently or particularly contextualised as underpinning factors in the act, or continuation, of domestic violence. This absence of meaningfully constructed identity components disassociates the centrality of these structuring forces on experiential and representational levels. For example, age (age; children; young; teenage; adult) is mentioned almost four times more than gender (gender; women; girls; men; boys). The majority of the references to age acknowledge the need for children's services and the necessity of raising awareness amongst teenagers. This gender neutrality is juxtaposed with the early admission that domestic violence is overwhelmingly a gendered problem, with women being named as the common victim and morbidity as a common outcome (Home Office, 2005b: 2). However, men are not named as the predominant perpetrators of this violence. This ambiguity continues throughout the report. Social class is mentioned once and in vague terms:

Despite being a volume of crime and a significant proportion of violent crime, much of domestic violence is invisible due to underreporting. This is particularly true in some socio-economic classes and ethnic communities

(Home Office, 2005b: 27)

As readers, we are left to interpret which social classes and ethnic communities the document makes reference to. Discursively, the process by which people use language to constitute social and personal meaning would suggest that dominant discourses produced by the State will appeal to people's commonsense and hegemonic understandings of domestic violence. Thus, there are actually strong messages contained in the above quote about who may be constrained when disclosing the experience of violence. This is presented in a way that suggests certain social groups are viewed through their homogeneity, and therefore, their 'collective victimhood' (Thiara, 2008). Furthermore, the invisibility of domestic violence amongst social groups is not coupled with cross-cutting power systems such as racism, poverty and privilege.

To elucidate, there are no real signifiers of which social divisions, if any, are constructed as primary and secondary concerns, beyond the importance of age in preventative measures. All categories of difference are sidelined in favour of a nonspecific victim/survivor and there are long passages of narrative with no reference to social groups. There are no inferences to the operation of regimes of inequality. This transparency is mirrored in the lack of connection between the document's objectives and social categories. At times, they form a small point of practical responses. For example, Commitment 12: Implementing the provisions in the Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004 has as one of its eight points 'giving cohabiting same-sex couples the same access to non-molestation and occupation orders as opposite-sex couples' (Home Office, 2005b: 19). The report is therefore detached from the way in which violence

manifests itself in complex ways for diversely situated women, and how integral differential identity positions are to the experience of violence and the response of others, including the government.

Equally as significant is that social divisions continue to be viewed separately. They are not considered to be interactive forces which co-create specific circumstances or positions. Ethnicised communities are not gendered; men and women, when mentioned, are not ethnicised, nor is the social class of these groups seen as relevant. It is encouraging that the core definition of domestic violence is expanded in the report to include the violent and coercive acts of forced marriage and 'honour crimes'. However, this milieu creates the context in which specific indication to ethnicised groups are made. Again, this can serve to fracture ethnicised women from the main thrust of the objectives that drive the paper and locates the issue firmly in what it believes to be cultural nuances rather than a multitude of intersecting structural contexts. The separation and posited distinctiveness of different acts of VAW invariably isolate gender and ethnicity to the point that we can infer that *women* suffer domestic violence and *ethnicised* women suffer honour-based violence. Whilst individual acts of violence often require strategic and diverse action, such divergent attention in an otherwise identity-neutral document, marks ethnicity as a division only associated with minority groups and thus one that is free from heterogeneity. Fixed categories are slotted into contexts which reflect cultural and moral relativism, and which over-emphasise the role of culture at the expense of other regimes of inequality, including gender. As mentioned earlier,

the term 'community' is frequently used in conjunction with ethnicity and reinforces the suggestion that sections of society are undifferentiated by a multitude of social locations.

Commitment 7 delineates the government's position on Immigration Services. Immigration status is understood to be a social division which affects fewer people globally but one which, nevertheless, is constructed and mediated by other regimes of inequality when viewed through a lens guided by constitutive intersectionality. Unfortunately, *Domestic Violence: A National Report* (2005b) continues to deal with the uncertain immigration status of women who suffer domestic violence as a matter of national security rather than personal safety, and fails to locate the issue within a gendered framework. Women subject to immigration control are still denied access to public funds although the report offers some alternative solutions, including the addition of a further £40,000 to the Last Resort Fund provided by Women's Aid<sup>12</sup> which supports these women by providing temporary financial help (Home Office, 2005b: 14). This money and provision is financially and time limited. This level of treatment, denying all women the right to safe accommodation, which is stated by the government as a prerequisite to exiting a violent situation, once more leads to a section of women being dislocated from the VAW agenda and the alignment of immigration with the 'othering' of minority groups substantiates a racialisation of the issue, as well as tangible discriminatory practices towards women migrants.

Hence, the document is again grounded in similarity, yet, paradoxically, with no explicit reference to commonality of experience or gendered power differentials. It is also punctured with marked differences as outlined above. In line with this inconsistency, the term 'specialist' appears in the document most frequently in reference to the provision of domestic violence courts and not to particularise the two-tiered system of specialist and non-specialist service provision that exists in practice. Bar the production of information for ethnicised women and LGBT, there is little support for services which can respond to the multifaceted nature of violence created by numerous dominatory systems. Specialist provision is largely confined to the operation of domestic violence courts which function in a very necessary, but universal way for victims of violence. These broad constructions of victim suggest that there have been little contextual shifts from *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003). The document is still largely generic, unspecified and safe, although this belies the composition of certain social divisions which are used to symbolically represent certain identities that deviate away from the norm, and who prompt the government to adopt a different lens through which to view the violence they experience. Whilst research and lived experience clearly suggests that cultural and social specificities need to be considered, this can not be done at the expense of a structural analysis of interactive regimes of inequality and inequitable access to power.

*Domestic Violence: A National Report* (2005b) misses the opportunity to send out a strong discursive message about the centrality of social divisions to



the experience of VAW. Instead, it is brimming with many enduring problems. Structurally, it expresses social divisions as static and unchanging, and detached from discriminatory systems that create inequalities which structure the relative positions of diversely situated women who experience violence. Importantly within the context of the definition of domestic violence used throughout the report, there is no reference to how ordering patterns manifest themselves within and amongst the structure of the family and the wider community. The similar and homogenising boundaries of social divisions as they are experienced by women in the reality of social life are not reflected in the approach the document takes to identity. Furthermore, through the simultaneous use of general and specific language in well placed contexts, the document reinforces hegemonic constructions of types of victims and the types of violence they are likely to experience as well as their justifiable access to provision. These political constructions of identity will impact upon subjective constructions of identity, and ideologically reinforce several of the government's agendas. Most pertinently, this can be evidenced by the continuation of draconian and discriminatory immigration rules, the exclusionary and separatist treatment of ethnicised communities, and the gender-neutral use of the term victim. This fragmented and contradictory approach fails to engage with the relationship not only between divisions, but their access to power. What we can garner is that from the representation in this report, the power relations between specific groups have not changed contextually from two years ago.

#### **'A WRONG NOT A RIGHT'**

The Forced Marriage Unit was launched shortly before *Domestic Violence: A National Report* (Home Office, 2005b) was published. The Unit is responsible for all of central government's dealing with forced marriage, including information and support for both individuals and professionals. They provide a confidential service offering advice to women who have already been forced into marriage, those who fear they are going to be, those who wish to prevent their spouses' visa application, or for anybody concerned about someone they know being forced into marriage<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, the Forced Marriage Unit develops policy on forced marriage and was directive in the culmination of the *Forced Marriage Civil Protection Act* (2007). This Act was preceded by the Unit's consultation document *A Wrong Not A Right* (Home Office, 2006).

*A Wrong Not A Right* (Home Office, 2006) predominantly discusses the arguments for and against creating a specific criminal offence relating to forced marriage, which the Working Group refuted in *A Choice By Right* (Home Office, 2000). Long standing arguments are provided against the creation of a forced marriage classification criminal offence. These include the potential to discourage victims of forced marriage to seek help, the risk that the problem will simply be displaced and parents/families will take their children abroad to marry to avoid prosecution, that ethnicised communities will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of specific legislation, and that non-legislative proposals instilled within communities may be more effective

(Home Office, 2006). The enduring line of offering reconciliation is still present in the document, despite the Southall Black Sisters' previous resignation and concerns raised by many other groups. The arguments in favour of creating a specific offence include the strong deterrent effect new legislative powers could carry as well as offering a tool which young people could use to negotiate with family as a form of resistance. The compelling message of intolerance could also be used to secure more convictions and educate wider society's views on forced marriage (Home Office, 2006). However, it is not sufficiently validated that a separate and specific criminal offence would necessarily protect victims (Home Office, 2006).

The above documents and the operation of the Working Group and the Forced Marriage Unit culminated in the first specific piece of legislation pertaining to forced marriage. The *Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007* was introduced to '...make provision for protecting individuals against being forced to enter into marriage without their free and full consent and for protecting individuals who have been forced to enter into marriage without such consent' (2007: 1). The Act permits that a court of law may issue a forced marriage protection order to guard such individuals against an array of coercive acts, including threats<sup>14</sup>. A power of arrest is attached to each order for further protection should the order be breached in any way. At the beginning of 2009, it was reported that the new powers had been used six times since their introduction in November 2008 (Pasternicki, 2009).

## **'SAVING LIVES. REDUCING HARM. PROTECTING THE PUBLIC'**

During 2008, the government published an Action Plan for tackling violence 2008-11 entitled *Saving Lives. Reducing Harm. Protecting the Public* (Home Office, 2008b). The document sets out a variety of internal strategies to reduce serious violence over the next three years, including tackling sexual and domestic violence. Whilst the government is clearly sticking with the use of pre-existing terminology and continues to compartmentalise specific violent acts/categories despite previous criticisms, the action plan discusses a range of acts that fall within the continuum of violence. The inclusion of street prostitution, human trafficking and all forms of sexual exploitation is promising and suggests that the government is finally widening its scope in terms of VAW. The specific aims of this policy document pertaining to domestic and sexual violence consist of doubling the number of specialist Domestic Violence courts, reducing the significant repeat victimisation element of these types of crimes, addressing the low conviction rates for rape, and building upon the effective work that has begun between and amongst local agencies (Home Office, 2008b: 5-6). The document also pinpoints 'new challenges' that are occurring in relation to violent crime. 'A changing population within the UK brings with it new challenges relating to violent crime which will need to be properly understood...' (Home Office, 2008b: 28). Honour-related murder, female genital mutilation and forced marriage are identified as falling within this remit, and the Home Office state that will necessarily liaise with the Migration Impacts Forum on these matters<sup>15</sup>.

## **THE DRAFT (PARTIAL) IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP BILL**

The UK Border Agency (UKBA) replaced the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA), which in turn replaced the Immigration and Nationality Department (IND), in April 2008. The UKBA is responsible for border control, migration, enforcing immigration, customs, visa checks and considering applications for permission to enter or stay in the UK and asylum. It is therefore the UKBA that would receive, process and consider an application for indefinite leave to remain in the UK as a victim of domestic violence. The draft (partial) Immigration and Citizenship Bill (Home Office, 2008a) published by UKBA indicates the changes that are to be made in relation to immigration laws and stipulations. Unfortunately there is no mention of making public funds available to women with uncertain immigration status who are within the two year probationary period. There are, however notable inclusions.

The draft Bill outlines the proposal that all migrants will now have to 'earn their right to stay' in the UK by learning to communicate in English and gaining and holding down a job (Home Office, 2008a). A woman who enters the UK as a spouse or partner and discovers that the relationship is violent and controlling will be severely impeded in meeting the criteria of citizenship. Her only attempt at 'earning the right to stay' may be by tolerating the relationship for two years so as to free herself from the probationary period outlined by current immigration law. The prerequisites of speaking English and being

employed are two practices that would help a woman who is faced with violent encounters, either in gaining independent citizenship or seeking advice from an array of organisations and services that, importantly, could assist in the collation of evidence in order to apply for indefinite leave to remain under the domestic violence concession. The likelihood of achieving citizenship will be significantly reduced by living a life controlled and dominated by someone else, and the likelihood of collecting proof to substantiate a claim of 'domestic' violence will be significantly reduced by the lack of opportunity to interact with service providers and the wider community. Immigration requirements and gaining citizenship are complicated processes in the cases of women in violent relationships, and often a cyclical pattern is created that prohibits safety.

The draft Bill receptively suggests that it will ensure '...that the system is properly sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups' (Home Office, 2008a: 4). However, the next proposed change is to reserve '...full access to benefits for citizens and permanent residents' (Home Office, 2008a: 4). One would assume that a woman trapped in a violent marriage with no recourse to public funds, who is subject to immigration control, would be classed as vulnerable. Similarly, a refugee woman who is destitute after fleeing a violent relationship would seem to be in an 'at risk' position. A system that denies women the very essence of what is necessary to keep her safe, honour international and immigration obligations, and to uphold her human rights, is a system that fails, not supports, vulnerable groups.

## **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DELIVERY PLAN: ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

### **2008-2009**

From 2006, the government began to track their progress annually via detailed delivery plans. In 2008-2009 the report specifically contained four key objectives circulating around the themes of intervention, support, criminal justice and risk (Home Office, 2009a: 2). The document provides evidence of a notable shift in the engagement with identity categories and a range of violent acts that push the boundaries of the once narrow concept of domestic violence. Importantly, there are many more explicit references to social divisions and the need to view these as central to the experience of violence. They are not yet viewed as co-constructing influences. However, significantly, the plan does detail the conflation of two other issues; forced marriage and immigration legislation. The age at which an overseas spouse can join his or her British spouse has been raised from 18 to 21 in order to try and tackle the problem of forced marriage (Home Office, 2009a: 20). Ostensibly, this legal measure is to be imposed as a safeguard against forced marriage providing ‘...young people with the opportunity to develop maturity and life skills which may allow them to resist any pressure to marry’ (Home Office, 2009a: 20). In practice, this also adds additional measures to manage migration to the UK and compromises the potential settlement rights of minority communities. This further highlights the contradictory nature of using tighter immigration controls to protect women at risk of violence. A solution to forced marriage should be located in VAW policies.

## **TOGETHER WE CAN END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: A STRATEGY**

In 2009 the government published what feminist activists and academics have been demanding for many years – ‘a co-ordinated approach to combating all forms of VAWG’ (Home Office, 2009b: 4). The last document to be commissioned under New Labour proposes an ‘integrated’ strategy for tackling the variety of coercive acts both women and girls are subjected to throughout their lifetime, seeking to redress the ‘artificial barriers’ created by previous State approaches, and to highlight the role that all government departments have to play in tackling the problem (Home Office, 2009b: 4). A nation-wide, public consultation produced this cross-government strategy, with over 300 victims and 700 frontline service providers given the opportunity to comment directly on the issue of VAWG. This information was further supported by more detailed reviews into the role of other sectors including the health service, education and housing. The culmination of this consultation resulted in the identification of three key areas – prevention, provision and protection (Home Office, 2009b).

In light of this, it is unsurprising but very progressive that the social division of gender is mentioned consistently throughout the document, much more so than in New Labour’s previous reports, and substantially more than any of the other category of difference. Indeed, the strategy takes a centralised and unequivocal gendered approach, maintaining the way in which sustained



inequalities between men and women create actual and discursive environments which restrict freedom and safety. Age is also given considerable space in the document, used once again to signpost the benefits of early intervention and education. Race, ethnicity, class and sexuality all receive a mention but these are inconsequential unless well contextualised; they are transitory in their inclusion. As an example, sexuality is referred to once amongst the document which discusses gender more than 180 times. Moreover, gender remains central to the aims of the document and the context in which it is set. It is the first document to be analysed which locates VAW in gender inequality, thereby arguing clearly that structural conditions and ordering processes function in a way which supports the use of violence as a tool of male dominance. Alongside this gendered focus, age is inextricably linked to the overarching theme of prevention. This idea predominantly operates through the education of young people and children. The manifestation and reinforcement of gender inequality through VAWG is to be added to the National School Curriculum. This is intended to reduce the incidence of violence by 'challenging attitudes through awareness-raising campaigns designed to debunk common myths about VAWG and change attitudes' (Home Office, 2009b: 20).

This more dedicated gender approach, which was compellingly called for through consultation, has been at the expense of other categories of difference, notably ethnicity, race and sexuality, which are referred to less in this strategy than in the previous domestic violence-focused documents. As such, divisions

are still viewed in isolation from each other and gender is seen to be free, in the most part, from the effects of other structuring forces. Similarly, there is consistent reference to gender inequality but this never co-evolves with other dominatory systems. This is an omission that could have been used to centralise how specific forms of gender inequality are shaped by other simultaneous, cross-cutting inequalities, which then produce specific effects which require specific responses. There is some acknowledgement that women are differentiated from one another by other categories of difference, although this is premised on the assessment of risk rather than the operation of hierarchical social structures. So, the document asserts that age will affect the propensity of victimisation, and that some 'sub-groups' such as 'black and ethnic minority and refugee women' are more likely to experience certain forms of violence such as forced marriage and so-called honour based violence (Home Office, 2009b: 15). The use of compounding and interactive social divisions to explain specific and co-constructed situations is a useful way of capturing the complexities of VAWG. Still, when these interacting positions continue to be articulated as stable and modalities of identity as invariable, the impact is diminished. There are signs, however, that the fluidity of gender and gendered locations, impact upon the transformative potential of women and girls to rebuild their lives and to exercise agency through choice and social interaction. Similarly, the compulsory education for young people suggests that girls and boys can re-evaluate their conceptualisation of what it means to be a woman or a man, and discover that characteristics associated with the two dominant genders are learnt rather than innate.

More so than its gender-blind predecessors, *Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy* (Home Office, 2009b), is predicated on similarity and the common dynamic of gender. This enables the strategy to legitimately make claims to an integrated approach, uncovering the relation of gender to power, and how this functions through social structure and social interaction. Indeed, acts of domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, stalking and female genital mutilation are all constructed as gendered problems, with women identified as the recipients of this violence (Home Office, 2009b: 14). Unusually, forced marriage, honour crimes and prostitution are acts which are left with no discernable victim (Home Office, 2009b: 14). Contradictorily, forced marriage and honour crimes were formerly bound up as the only acts of violence in which the state's response was explicitly gendered (and ethnicised). This discursive shift signals a distinct construction of difference and may be indicative of a change in political and social focus. Under a wider remit of VAWG, acts of violence prolifically associated with ethnic minority groups lose their gendered underpinnings yet retain their ethnic, cultural and religious focus, at specific points (Home Office, 2009b: 68). This, once again, and perhaps more potently within a gendered strategy, has a dislocating effect on the structural, representational and experiential construction of ethnicised women.

Within this wider remit, immigration status as a structuring social division, is a less visible issue. There are, despite the relative lack of attention, some encouraging provisions laid out for women without indefinite leave to

remain. During the consultation particular concern was raised about the desperate situation of women who are subject to immigration control and the government introduces a pilot scheme which will assist victims of domestic violence who are restricted from accessing provision by the two year probationary period. This scheme consists of providing up to 40 days accommodation and living support to women whilst they complete their Indefinite Leave to Remain application and await a response<sup>16</sup> (Home Office, 2009b: 52). Whilst the pitfalls with time pressures and bureaucratic delays are obvious, this is less a financially limited approach than previous alternatives. However, it is still reality that a marked section of women are denied equitable help from the state, notwithstanding the cumulative operation of multiple regimes of inequality.

Overall, we witness on the one hand a much more rigorous engagement with social divisions on a variety of analytical levels, whilst on the other, a diluted approach to the supposition that women are differentiated by manifold and intertwining divisions and power relations. Structurally, gender inequality is acknowledged as the primary factor behind high levels of VAWG, but real differences among individual women from diverse locations are not built into this structural analysis. Nevertheless, this move towards recognising the systemised and ordered way in which gender operates through prescribed power and hegemonic masculinity is a giant leap forward and is testament to the sustained campaign for an integrated approach from many quarters. Discursively, there are many strong and consistent messages highlighted

throughout the document – the need to educate young people about gendered violence, healthy relationships, the sexualisation of popular culture, imagery and women’s bodies – and the language and meaning derived from these will be inextricably linked to future experiences and the way a generation may construct their own subjectivity. The enormity of this step, if taken, cannot be underestimated; how it will deal with the complexities of lived experience which exist in a world of multiple, dynamic and contested identities is yet to be tackled.

## **DISCUSSION**

How government policy works with, and expresses, social categories that divide and unite individuals, is of critical importance in the context of VAW. These policy documents, and the legal measures within them, shape and define what is legitimately constructed as VAW, and who, via the operation of identity modalities, are constructed as legitimate victims in need of state assistance. Thus, these documents potentially set the parameters in which VAW discourse is located, and who the state has responsibility toward. The content analysis of three significant New Labour documents – *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003), *Domestic Violence: A National Report* (Home Office, 2005b) and *Together we can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy* (Home Office, 2009b) – has provided evidence of intersectionality’s relative effectiveness as a lens for analysis, revealing what can be gained from examining policy through a multifarious frame which seeks to understand difference and similarity in

structural, experiential and discursive contexts. Some of the main findings are presented here and will be expanded upon in Chapter 6.

Over the six year period which encompassed the policy review, a range of social divisions were acknowledged and attended to. Indeed, all six divisions that were searched for at the onset of the content analysis – gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age and social class – are mentioned in each document. These divisions are positioned differently though, in terms of their relationship with the experience of violence, consequentially, their importance to the strategies adopted to tackle this violence, and their impact upon the nature of service provision provided. These contexts are affected by several strategic factors which underpin the focus and ethos of the individual documents. For example, the definition with which a document works creates discursive boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and forces the document to work within a structured premise. We witness a series of shifts, across the documents chronologically, with reference to the focus of violent acts, violent perpetrators, and, by extension, incorporated victims. Analytically, it is important to acknowledge the move from addressing domestic violence in the first two papers, to the overarching and integrated approach to VAW adopted in 2009. Equally, it is significant that the definition of domestic violence expanded to include violence perpetrated by intimate partners to family members. This is a particularly pertinent move for ethnicised women. If we are to accept that social locations and social identities are comprised of multiple positions, it is critical that we utilise a definition of VAW which accounts for these various

standpoints, and the array of violent acts one can encounter, in part, because of these diverse locations (Kelly and Lovett, 2005).

Although the definition of VAW shifted across the term of New Labour, this did little to centralise the operation of *any* social division until 2009. As such, the documents were never predicated on structural systems of inequality (End Violence Against Women, 2007). The use of a generic victim worked to sideline the importance of identity, including the operation of gender-neutral language and a noticeable lack of attention to social class. Age appeared relevant as a necessary factor in the prevention of VAW, though not necessarily as a dynamic that would affect the experience of violence or how that violence need be responded to. Both ethnicity and sexuality had few references, but amongst the identity-neutral discourse, they were often very meaningful. Arguably, representations of victims gained an identity as they moved away from the central construction, which, through its invisibility and impartiality, can be read as heterosexual women from majority ethnic groups whose class and age seemed largely irrelevant. When the generic victim category is broken down it is done so to situate women in positions regarded as less powerful. In particular, ethnicised women are marked as both visible and marginal. At specific points they are singled out for consideration, but they are then lost again in the main thrust of the documents. There is clearly a need to address ethnicity and culture but, as this thesis contends, this needs to be done in a way that does not adhere to homogenous and stereotypical constructions of ethnicised women. The consequence of simultaneously using a generic victim

and a victim from a 'minority ethnic group', is that ethnicised women are viewed through an ethnic and cultural lens (and religious by 2009), and not necessarily through a gendered lens. In fact, ethnicised women come to represent 'ethnicity' and 'race' in the documents, whilst the LGBT community come to represent 'sexuality'. Being viewed through a prism that is not intermeshed with gender, serves to fracture ethnicised women, and acts of violence commonly associated with ethnicised communities, from the overall project of VAW. This can create a 'parallel universe' (Patel and Siddiqui, 2010: 109) in which violence against ethnicised women is treated as distinct and detached, encouraging less state responsibility, though not necessarily control. As evidenced, tightening immigration controls continue at the expense of the protection of vulnerable women subjected to both personal and state-sanctioned violence, and function to exclude these women from the aims and objectives of the government's VAW agenda.

Yet, by 2009, the demands placed upon the government by a sustained and vocal feminist campaign, were realised with the publication of *Together we can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy* (Home Office, 2009a), which has at its heart not only a definite gendered perspective, but one which is underpinned by arguments rooted in gender inequality, and measures to tackle prevailing attitudes about the social role of men and women, and the acceptability of violence. This is the first document which centralises an identity facet, and locates the operation of that facet in a structural context. It is a huge step forward, despite the fact that other social divisions are further



marginalised by genders centrality. Even those committed to an intersectional outlook maintain the importance of retaining the gendered nature of violence against women (Thiara and Gill, 2010). However, the needs of ethnicised women are not effectively served by a strategy which does not view gender as significantly overlapping and interacting with other social divisions and, significantly, with other regimes of inequality. Not only are categories of social identity viewed as singular entities, they are also viewed as stationary and absolute, unaffected by the workings of other divisions and other systems of power. Structural contexts are vitally important to addressing the problem of VAW, and these span further than gendered spheres. Through the adoption of a community cohesion approach, the government is clearly aware of the differing and multiple systems of domination individuals experience, yet they remain unwilling to effectively join them together in the context of VAW. This may suggest that different agendas are being conflated in order to feed into the overall aim of cohesion and integration, rather than addressing, structurally and individually, the needs of women who experience violence.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is not the issue here, then, to address whether the government use an intersectional approach, but to establish whether intersectionality is a useful lens through which to analyse government policy, and what questions, which are guided by intersectionality, can enable us to decipher about VAW policy that seeks to serve the needs of all victims. This chapter has shown that, up until

recently, by utilising a generic victim, the government sidesteps difficult questions surrounding identity and systems of inequality, which underline intolerable levels of VAW. This is unless these identity characteristics deviate significantly from the main thrust of the document and require what is posited as distinct and separate attention. This isolation can occur for a multitude of reasons, some well intentioned, others in line with co-existing stipulations such as immigration and the drive for community cohesion. A more definitive and co-ordinated approach towards the end of New Labours administration, saw the fundamental gendered element of VAW take centre stage. Although other social modalities remain on the periphery, the centralising of gender may act as a prompt, to fuel the mainstream incorporation of other divisions. Certainly, continuing to use an intersectional frame to address future policies will indicate whether other significant group memberships are considered integral to the effective provision of VAW strategies. Importantly, all social divisions occupy a compounding and interactive space, and this is the context in which policy needs to be grounded. Many of the documents are aimed specifically at workers in the field and the next chapter will address, amongst other things, what effect they have on service providers' practice.

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- <sup>1</sup> Hall (1998: 14).
- <sup>2</sup> O'Brien (1999).
- <sup>3</sup> I presented a conference paper entitled 'New Labour's Response to Violence Against Women' at a seminar series at UCLan. The paper turned into this more detailed chapter. See Monk (2006b).
- <sup>4</sup> During the completion of this thesis a new coalition government has been elected. They have committed themselves to using the invaluable data collected through the consultation process undertaken to inform *Together we can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy* (Home Office, 2009b). They published their 'vision' in a paper entitled *Call to End Violence against Women and Girls* (Home Office, 2010). This publication fell outside the scope of this research.
- <sup>5</sup> The services outlined by the document include health, welfare, community or elected representatives, education, civil authorities, the criminal justice system, the legal system and immigration (Home Office, 2000: 17).
- <sup>6</sup> Although the Westminster government decided to include forced marriage, FGM and honour based violence into their definition of 'domestic violence', *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) does not.
- <sup>7</sup> The primary purpose rule requires foreign nationals to prove that the primary purpose of their marriage to a UK citizen is not to obtain British residency. If they could not prove this, which in some cases were difficult, their entrance to the UK was denied (Gill and Sharma, 2007). Thankfully the primary purpose rule was abolished in 1997.
- <sup>8</sup> The Immigration & Nationality Department (IND) was changed to the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) and subsequently changed to the UK Border Agency (UKBA) on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2008. The UKBA are now responsible for migration and immigration issues, visa checks, and considering cases wishing to be granted indefinite leave to remain.
- <sup>9</sup> Domestic violence is defined by the Home Office in *Safety & Justice* as 'Any violence between current and former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever and whenever the violence occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse' (Home Office, 2003).
- <sup>10</sup> The objectives in *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) were prevention, protection and justice and support
- <sup>11</sup> The definition given in 'Domestic Violence: A National Report' is as follows: 'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality' (Home Office, 2005b: 7). An adult is defined as any person aged 18 or over. Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents, whether directly related, in laws or stepfamily.
- <sup>12</sup> Recently the Southall Black Sisters also obtained funding from London Councils and the charity Oxfam to set up the 'SBS No Recourse Fund' which will be used to provide emergency assistance to those with uncertain immigration status and no access to public funds. More information can be found at [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk). Further to this, The Sojourner Project, a pilot scheme which ran from November 2009 to September 2010, offered support, accommodation and subsistence for women with no recourse to public funds who were liable under the Domestic Violence Concession. For more information see [www.eaves4women.co.uk](http://www.eaves4women.co.uk)
- <sup>13</sup> This extends to a range of professionals who the Forced Marriage Unit believes have a crucial role to play in the prevention of forced marriage. A range of publications are available to assist those in educational, health, welfare and legal professions (Home Office, 2005a: 1). The Unit

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also leads on various projects that aim to raise awareness, understanding and community cohesion.

<sup>14</sup> A protection order contains tailored prohibitions, restrictions and/or requirements that can be placed on any individual(s) who forces, attempts to force or becomes involved in any way with attempting to force someone into marriage (Forced Marriage: Civil Protection Act, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> The Migration Impacts Forum (MIF) was set up in June 2007 to address how migration affects a range of issues including housing; education; health and social care; crime and disorder and community cohesion. The panel consists of a variety of experts from these fields. For more information visit [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk).

<sup>16</sup> This was to become the aforementioned Sojourner Project.

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## CHAPTER 5

### **From Theory to Practice: Service Providers accounts of an Intersectional vision**

The refuge stands at the heart of the battered women's movement and...represents a haven, a place of respite or a last chance to escape oppressive or dangerous circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

To tell is to voice and release the emotional victimisation; this is a violation of the social hierarchy, and entails putting self above the family. To do that in Asian cultural traditions, ancient or modern, is more immoral and shameful than rage itself.<sup>2</sup>

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents experiential accounts collected from interviews conducted with ten service providers within the Lancashire area. Five interviews were conducted in 2005, and a further five in 2010. The perspectives of these women are analysed using a grounded theory approach, and the insights generated from the interviews are presented thematically throughout. Memos are used to present the analytical process in narrative form. The interviews sought to pull out the effects of theory and policy on service providers' practice, and to establish whether a form of an intersectional approach is feasible in the reality of frontline work in the VAW field. More broadly, those conducted in 2005 addressed the nature of service provision for ethnicised women. First, this chapter begins by outlining the demographic context of Lancashire, as well as

the estimated prevalence of violence within this area. The individual women who comprised both rounds of interviews are then introduced before the analysis begins. It is worth remembering at this point that different methods were used to collect data from the two rounds of interviews, as outlined in Chapter 3. Thus the first five interviews are represented in the form of letters, A-E, and the second as numbers, 1-5.

### **LOCAL CONTEXT – DEMOGRAPHICS, PREVELANCE AND COSTS**

The Mid Year Estimate in 2009 indicated that the population of Lancashire stood at 1,445,700. There was a lower than national average representation of young and working age group, with a slightly higher than average proportion of people in the 45-64, and 65 plus, categories. Adult women accounted for 594, 495 of the county population. The overall ethnicity picture reflected that 93.4% of Lancashire residents identified as White or White British, 0.7% as mixed race, 4.1% as Asian or Asian British, 0.2% as Black or Black British, and 0.4% as Chinese or other ethnic group (Moulding, 2003). It is estimated that nearly 60,000 women experience domestic violence across Lancashire every year (Safer Lancashire, 2008). Lancashire Constabulary state that averages of 23,000 domestic violence incidents were reported over an annual period (June 2005-July 2006); translating roughly to 155 incidents a month across the 14 districts that comprise Lancashire (Safer Lancashire, 2008).

The Safer Lancashire Community Partnership translated Walby's financial cost of domestic violence figures (2004) and fashioned a local cost breakdown. Using the three loose categories outlined by Walby, Lancashire's services (Criminal Justice System, Health, Social Services, emergency housing, and civil legal services) total costs per year due to domestic violence are £84,565,924, with economic output totalling £72,647,714 and the human and emotional total reaching £464,462,277. In total, the resources in Lancashire are drained of £621,675,915 in order to try and deal effectively with the level of abuse in the county. These figures are no doubt an underestimation also. The Criminal Justice System in Lancashire already uses one quarter of its entire budget for violent crimes on domestic violence (£27,648,000). Lancashire's resources are drained by domestic violence, yet survivors and victims of this crime still bear the highest cost, losing £506 million through human and emotional costs, loss of earnings, relocating, health costs etc., not to mention their freedom, safety, sanity and, at times, lives.

#### **LOCAL CONTEXT – LOCAL STRATEGIES**

The most recent county wide publication is the *Lancashire Domestic Violence Strategy 2007-2012*. The Strategy, which is broken down into individual annual action plans, is implemented and overseen by the Lancashire Domestic Violence Partnership (LDVP). The Lancashire Domestic Abuse Forum, which I have attended, acts as a stakeholder group for the Partnership which allows concerned and relevant agencies and parties to contribute to the

priorities and directives of the overall strategy. The LDVP provides a collaborative and strategic direction for individual and specialist agencies across the county. There are some 60,000 women, on average, suffering from domestic violence in Lancashire every year. The strategy is intended to build upon the work already being carried out in the local area with a desire to foster effective partnership and/or inter-agency work. There appear to be calls from all quarters – political, academic, statutory and non-statutory agencies – to work along integrated lines and this strategy promotes a shared philosophy and co-ordinated county-wide approach. Lancashire’s vision for the next five years is

A shared belief in working towards a future Lancashire where ALL homes are safe homes. In the short term, there is a commitment to collaborative partnership working to reduce the impact of domestic violence on our communities. It is recommended that all interventions ensure, or uphold the principles of, survivor and child safety and perpetrator responsibility. It is acknowledged that the task ahead for all, both individually and collectively, is a huge one. The creation of a clear agenda for the prevention of domestic violence in Lancashire will take courage, determination and co-operation.

(Lancashire Domestic Violence Strategy 2007-2012: 4)

The strategy demarcates several principles by which all local services should be guided by, paying particular attention to barriers for ethnicised women, amongst other areas. These include: the ever present issues around recourse to public funds, legal immigration status and refuge space, lack of available



interpreters, little knowledge about existing help/services, lack of quick access to specific ethnicised counsellors and various associated problems such as community pressure, and the involvement of police and/or other official agencies (Lancashire Domestic Violence Strategy 2007-2012: 13).

## **THE WOMEN WHO TOOK PART IN THIS STUDY**

The participants in the first round of interviews were asked to offer information on what they wanted to be included in an 'introduction' to who they are and what they do, before they took part in an interview conducted with an unstructured and conversational schedule. For confidentiality and anonymity reasons they are referred to as letters A-E throughout.

### **Service Provider A**

**A** was born in Pakistan and moved to England in 1987 with her husband in order to start a family. She had four children. She started working at *The Refuge* as a night time support worker seven years ago and has now progressed onto floating support worker (part-time) and re-housing officer (part-time). She got her job originally at *The Refuge* on the basis of her experience of working in women's hostels in Pakistan. Although **A** had never experienced domestic violence herself she had always been drawn to this line of work. In Pakistan, she was active in the organising and establishing of several hostels and women's centres. Politically she has not been as active in the UK but is influential and

'very vocal' within her own community. She lived about four miles away from *The Refuge* and was pleased that she does not have to balance her own immediate community with the community in which she works. **A**'s role as a floating support worker involved providing her specified residents with both emotional and practical help. Her re-housing position started by establishing, with the client, when a service user is ready to leave the refuge, where she would like to be re-housed and then assessing properties. **A** assisted women with their interviews with local housing associations and, once a house is offered, she visits the property with them and agrees a tenancy. **A** keeps in contact with the women for as long as her services are required.

#### **Service Provider B**

**B** was a Pakistani Muslim who was born in the United Kingdom. She had been in her post of ethnic minority children's support worker for only two and a half months full time. The post assisted ethnicised children with their stay at *The Refuge* and the case loads can be shared depending on how many residents have children at any one time. As the post was new, **B** was receiving ongoing, specialised training. Before this post was installed within the association, the needs of the ethnic minority children staying at the refuge were dealt with on an ad-hoc basis. The recent demand for these specific posts gave rise to the full-time, permanent appointment of **B** and her colleagues. Before **B** took up this post she had previously worked as a volunteer at the refuge whilst completing her studies in childhood development at the local college. As part of her work

placement requirements for her studies she had worked in local community and youth groups. She felt that this had given her more insight into how some of the local South Asian community operates away from family life. She felt this knowledge would be invaluable in her new role and was committed to helping both children and mothers at *The Refuge*. She was currently looking for a 'husband' with the help of her family but was 'in no rush'. She lived at home with her parents and five siblings.

### **Service Provider C**

C had been employed in her current role for three years and had very recently gone full time. She was a British Pakistani Muslim and, originally, started volunteering at *The Refuge*. C enquired about volunteering after a close family friend confided in her about the violence she was suffering. C realised that there were many women in the same predicament and did not feel comfortable with the prevalence of violence amongst her community. She admitted that she probably always knew that violence occurred but that it took someone she really cared about to be suffering to prompt her into action. After she began volunteering she became like an 'independent councillor' for her community with many women confiding in her and many asking her to liaise with community leaders on their behalf. C was a Ethnic Minority Support Worker. This role involved a multitude of responsibilities and duties all geared towards the support of ethnicised women. As the numbers of ethnicised women rose in the refuge, C was needed in a full time capacity after working in

the same role for three years part-time. As a bi-lingual speaker, **C** dealt with any concern that an ethnicised resident may have including specific cultural, language and community problems. **C** had been happily married for twenty three years and had three grown up children.

### **Service Provider D**

**D** was White British and had been involved with domestic violence services and activism for over ten years. She lived in Lancashire with her partner and two dogs. Her connection to the VAW field began through political channels and had evolved over the years. She had predominantly worked within the local council infrastructure and is proud of the difference that she had made within this sector. Much of her activist work was carried out outside of her job remit and she remained politically active. She was currently a local Project Coordinator. She represented her district on various local and regional forums and had implemented several advisory and steering groups in her surrounding community. **D**'s role as a coordinator was diverse and, amongst other things, included the establishment and operation of various groups, specific projects and managing the liaison between local service providers, local government authorities and potential funders. She had recently completed several research and community engagement projects. She felt that it was vital in her role to be research active. **D** dealt with women survivors in a less direct manner than she used to as her job takes on an ever-increasing managerial role.

## **Service Provider E**

E held two posts covering a wide area in Lancashire. Her work involved outreach and counselling. E was White British. She recently divorced and was 'very happy' living with her two teenage sons. She had vast experience and a manifold of qualifications relating to service provision. E was in the care services for over 18 years before getting paid refuge work and training to become a counsellor. Her role as counselling service coordinator required her to see clients on a one to one basis for counselling sessions, or to refer a particular service user to an appropriate source of counselling. E's outreach work enabled her to support women who live in the community who are experiencing domestic violence. This support involved advocacy work, help with benefits, housing, legal applications, referral to other services or simply emotional care. She often ended up combining clients and was a strong advocate of a holistic approach to VAW. She dealt predominantly with white women.

All the participants in the second round of interviews<sup>3</sup> were asked to describe their current roles, and the organisations they worked for as well as how long they had been in the violence against women field. Names, geographical locations and specific details have been omitted, and they are referred to throughout by numbers, 1-5. They were also asked to comment on how they would articulate their identity; therefore the characteristics and social divisions they offered are detailed below as they each expressed them,

presumably based on words that were meaningful to them and on what they saw as being salient.

### **Service Provider 1**

Service Provider 1 has been campaigning for issues surrounding interpersonal violence for 14 years, with a specific dedication to what she called 'cultural concerns and honour-related incidents'. The local organisation she worked for aimed to raise awareness around forced marriage and honour-based violence amongst practitioners and service providers. The second thrust of the specialist service was to provide practical support to those at risk of honour-related abuse. Service provider 1 identified those whom most frequently utilise the practical help as young women between the ages of 13-40 and of Pakistani heritage. Demographically she stated that the 85% female, 15% male demand reflects the North-West regional trend and the UK wide statistics. Her organisation was comprised of an advisory board who all gave their time voluntarily. The board purposefully consisted of both men and women, young and old, from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds. This diversity and difference was seen as vitally important to the community ethos upon which the organisation was premised. Service provider 1 was Pakistani British herself. She was married with two children.

### **Service Provider 2**

Service Provider 2 has worked in the domestic violence field for six years, taking up many positions with different agencies across Lancashire, where she was born. Her specific strengths lie in counselling work and bi-lingual communication. She was of Pakistani heritage and currently worked for a local holistic domestic abuse service as a housing support officer. This role entailed supporting women and families in their own homes and maintaining tenancy agreements. In particular, Service Provider 2 offered practical living skills including money management, and advice around fostering confidence and self-worth, as well as accessing education and other resources. She works with survivors of domestic abuse who access the wider specialist organisation, usually when they resided in safe housing and then on to their own property. Her present employment meant that she could potentially work with men or women (and their children), from any class, ethnic and cultural background. Previously she has worked for services that operate along religious and ethnic denominational lines.

### **Service Provider 3**

Service Provider 3 had recently left higher education and had been working for a local domestic abuse service ever since. She previously volunteered at the same organisation after developing an interest in interpersonal violence as a student. She identified as white British, working class and able-bodied. Her particular role involved helping women who have or are suffering domestic violence, who do not have indefinite leave to remain, find

the right path and route to safety. She dealt with women from outside the EU most frequently; therefore her work was split between helping women return to their home nation or to stay in the UK and gain permanent residence. She was not OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) registered, and thus she dealt more with the administrative side of immigration applications, including meeting Home Office requirements and collecting evidence, as opposed to directly advising women in person. The services she offered, and the organisation she worked for are highly specialist and take referrals from a multitude of sources due to their specific expertise. She described herself as a feminist and believed the entire framework in which she worked is loosely feminist-inspired.

#### **Service Provider 4**

Service Provider 4 has been working for a regional domestic abuse service since its inception in 2007. She described her role as a high risk domestic abuse advocate, and the organisation in which she was based as generalist. Although the organisation was directly affiliated with the domestic violence unit of a regional police branch, they operated as an independent federation and dealt with approximately 500 cases a year. Service Provider 4 was White British and working class. She worked with both male and female victims, although she qualified this statement by asserting that less than ten men had completed the whole process in the past three years. Predominantly her service helped white British, working class, heterosexual women from a variety of age groups. These



women, in the main, had dependent children many of whom are already placed on child protection registers. The clients referred to Service Provider 4 were all classified as high risk. An assessment tool is adopted by those who make a referral and clients passed on to Service Provider 4 would need to score at least 13 out of a possible 20 to be deemed high risk by the assessment tool<sup>4</sup>. Once a referral has been accepted, support and safety work begin with the client. Standard practice would be to offer this support over the phone and to deal with emergency issues or those requiring specialist help, such as housing or legal advice.

### **Service Provider 5**

Service Provider 5 was White British, working class, heterosexual and educated. She had recently taken up a post at a local organisation geared towards specifically helping victims of domestic abuse with their health needs. She had previously volunteered in the field and completed numerous placements across Lancashire. She worked directly with individual clients who were housed in a specific location or who were undergoing outreach programmes. Overwhelmingly her clients were women from lower socio-economic backgrounds, they were white British and they varied in age. Service Provider 5 suggested that the main additional needs that she supported her clients with were a variety of mental health problems, learning difficulties and drug and alcohol dependency. Her work followed an 'Every Child Matters'<sup>5</sup> system allowing her support package to address ideas and strategies around

staying healthy. Her work was very much specialist as is, by her definition, the overall organisation in which she was based. Client referrals can come from an array of places often including local councils, local police services and directly via a dedicated helpline. Service Provider 5 was a registered social worker and believed this underpinned all her decisions in work.

The first round of interviews were framed by three focal areas, although the unstructured nature of the discussions raised some unexpected issues. The three central questions were: 1) What concerns are specifically constructed and understood as ethnicised concerns and did these require specialised, and potentially separate, services? 2) How effective are existing services and provision? 3) And how could service provision be improved in the future to enhance and help women survivors of violence? The second round of interviews<sup>6</sup> took sensitised ideas from the first, and built upon them by utilising a semi-structured interview schedule that sought to establish whether intersectionality, or a version of it, was engaged with and practiced through the provision of service, and how government policy or theory affected this practice. This decision enabled me to ask more specific questions around the themes that had been established at this point in the research. The findings are presented thematically below, and are ordered using the categories and codes that emerged from the data through the analysis techniques of grounded theory. Using this method enabled me to take a lead from the content of the interviews, despite utilising a more structured method of data collection. A

discussion of the key conceptual arguments concludes this chapter, and these will be expanded upon in Chapter 6.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF IDENTITY**

### **○ Acknowledging Identity**

According to the participants in this study, acquiring identity information from a service user was a crucial first step to unlocking their experience and recognising the specific service needs they may have. This information, broadly, appeared to be gained in two ways, although both are not necessarily adopted by every interviewee. Firstly, questions about identity were filtered through varying forms of assessment processes, and secondly, judgements were made through visual signifiers. The first procedure ranges from information passed on through referral systems, or insights gained directly from the service user via formal and informal methods. The second form of acknowledgment was articulated as an almost unconscious, or implicit, preliminary analysis of who the person was whom they were trying to help, and what service needs they may have presented. Often, this was recognised as a practice that may lead to stereotypical judgements being made before a unique story had been uncovered, but one that, nevertheless, had become standard practice for their services due to time constraints. The respondents largely related to race, ethnicity and gender as significant identity categories<sup>7</sup>, and to age, class and sexuality to a lesser extent. There are patterns to suggest, unsurprisingly, that

those identity facets most closely associated with the service providers' job role appeared in their responses as most salient. For example, Service Provider 5 worked with women on how to improve their overall health and she related to the facet of class much more significantly than any other respondent; Service Providers A, B and C stressed the importance of a multiple vision on ethnicity, race and gender, and they predominantly worked with ethnicised women with specific concerns. Service Provider 3 made the correlation between relatable identity characteristics and job role clear:

Well with immigration they do have multiple identities as they have this other...its like an additional need, if you will, because they've not got their indefinite leave and so money, interaction with social services, time frames etc. are daily, hourly, worries. 'Am I going to be able to stay in the refuge for another week?' 'Is there going to be any food for me to eat?' 'Am I going to be deported next week?' 'Will he divorce me?' That kind of thing. So you couldn't ignore the immigration status there and would have to look at it alongside gender and usually race, well, ethnicity...That has to be my primary concern. Has she got her [secure] immigration status? No, then she's with me and that's what I'll look at.

The other notable exception that made less 'obvious' identity facets more readily noticeable was when they appeared on the extremities of a bracket. For example, particularly young or older people were acknowledged during discussions about age, but those who fell somewhere between their twenties or fifties, remained unidentified by their age. Interestingly, all the participants in the second round of interviews discussed male victims of domestic violence, albeit in reference to their irregularity in accessing service provision, whilst those from the first round only ever discussed a clear gender divide in regards

to victims and perpetrators. Overwhelmingly, women were almost unconsciously identified as the victims of domestic violence, and gender was the overriding structural factor that the participants responded to. I noted this change in a memo:

There is clearly a shift in thinking around gender and domestic violence. Those in the first round unequivocally discussed women as victims, yet, by the second round, all the participants make a very definite point of mentioning that men can also suffer from domestic violence, and are reluctant to access services due to *their* gender constraints – embarrassed that their masculinity has been affected.

Many of the service providers also referred to other influential factors that were deemed outside of the scope of identity, by both the respondents and static theoretical categories, yet central to the *composition* of the service users identity, and a key component in their lived experience. The verbatim term from Service Provider 1 to describe these intersecting parts was ‘social location’:

We consider lots of different things. So we would consider ethnicity, we would consider gender, age, disability, things like that. We would also consider position within the family, where does that person fall amongst siblings? where do they fall amongst their extended family? we’ll take into consideration any medical needs they may have, education, erm, their peers, who is in their social circle, the work that they do. So, lots and lots of things that we would consider...things to do with their social location, as I like to say. Regardless of their race and faith, who are they? And more than, have they got children to attend to, but who are their friends? Who do they relate to? Do they rely on faith? You know, who *is* this person?

Essentially, the consideration of multiple factors was subject to significant engagement. The repetition of questions indicated a strong desire to connect with the person as a whole, and this was further evidenced by many respondents' claim to ascertain how the individual service users viewed themselves, and to take a lead from what they defined as important. The centrality of the understanding offered by victims and survivors of violence is well established in intersectional terms (Bograd, 2005; Crenshaw, 1989; Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005a; Thiara and Gill, 2010), but it is imperative to note that whilst service providers may not view all identity facets as actively intersecting, they certainly more than acknowledged the importance of a variety of influences on the construction of self, and how that is appropriately responded to.

- **Agency and the Construction of Self**

Alongside the non-avoidance of visible signifiers of some identity regimes, came the consistent idea that service providers waited to see what they were presented with in terms of important identity features. This came in the form of identity as articulated through the presentation of service needs, discussed later on. However, it also arose from the most significant and revealing perception of identity – what the service user themselves defined as fundamental. Placing these women (primarily) at the centre of action and analysis is clearly a long standing theme throughout practice (Kelly and Lovett, 2005; Skinner et al. 2005), as is the centrality of victims and survivors in the

construction of Self (Lempert, 1997). The participants in this study found these ideas pivotal. Service Provider A:

Some women arrive and they have lost perspective of things, you know, they're not sure what's right or wrong, what's normal...[but what they do know] is how they feel, what's happened to them, how it makes them feel because of who they are and how they've experienced it...I see it a lot with younger girls. They've got out to give themselves a chance. They're young, there's time...when women get to that stage when they turn anger or hurt into motivation for their future...when they start to think 'I'll show you what I can do with my life'...they get empowered with our help and that's just fantastic.

Despite their inability, at times, to define their own realities, service users experience violence through their own subjectivity, through their identity, and this enabled them to communicate to service providers which expressions of self are most salient, or how the relationship between elements of self are formed (Prins, 2006). The emphasis and importance of certain identity categories at different times, as well as the transient nature of the complexity of the interactive categories (Walby, 2009), evidenced the recreation of identity or self, often, in this context, through empowerment and a negotiation of both agency and structure.

- **Relating Identity to Experience**

Making a connection between identity and the experience of violence often started with highlighting 'violent motivations', for the respondents. Although many alluded to the constant structural themes of power and control,

these were often adapted, and they took on identity-led forms, and, in some instances, intersectional forms. In particular, the concepts of honour and shame were raised by the respondents in relation to ethnicised women, and specifically, those of South Asian origin. The widely held definition of honour relates to the upholding of moral principles, personal integrity and the quest to do one's best for their fellow citizen. This isn't dissimilar to the honour construct within South Asian communities, according to Gill (2004), despite what conventional understanding would have us believe. However, the active/passive dichotomies reinforced through hegemonic masculinity are symbolised via honour codes in acceptable behaviours. These include the ability to protect his family and precedence for men, and the avoidance of behaviours that threaten the family name through modest conduct for women (Gill, 2004: 475). Therefore, to disclose information that may bring shame or disrepute to the family is in direct conflict with the honour codes a woman ought to uphold. Yet herein lies the dilemma. Although women are passive in the binary created by honour, they are the most influential players in its stability. They have the 'power' to maintain a good family reputation, as well as the ability to ruin one. The assessment of a woman's agency and honour is therefore measured by her aptitude in tolerating or overcoming problems, or how effectively she can manage the emotional barometer within a relationship (Vandello and Cohen, 2003). These specific conditions were used directly by many of the respondents to correlate identity and experience.



For a lot of women the way her community will view her is as pressing as domestic violence...many [women] believe all people will blame them...so they find it hard to accept help as genuine...It's harder for them, talking about the experience...making it public knowledge, than anything else.

Here, Service Provider B has suggested that the embodiment of honour and shame can eclipse the violence that women experience, making the intersectional connection between identity and experience vital. The modification of ethnicity and gender appear particularly salient here, and they were presented as already established in their interactive relationship. What this also came to represent, is that honour and shame became very definite constructs within which ethnicised women were viewed.

Similarly, links were made between the type of violent abuse some women could experience and their identity. Again, ethnicised women were marked as particularly visible in this configuration. However, interestingly, social class also punctured many of the responses within this section, and this was one of the only times it appeared acutely important. Service Provider 4 elaborated:

The women we deal with are deemed high risk and the violence is serious and extreme. Not what I would class as normal domestic violence; these people aren't living normal lives. A lot of the perpetrators are Manchester based and a lot are gang members. There's a lot of guns, a lot of knives, machetes, and these weapons will be used during gang disputes and then on their girlfriends. A lot of these lads have horrendous criminal records already. Ranging from armed robberies, section 18s which are serious assaults and arson. Not sexual assaults so much, but proper violence...these lads are in and out of trouble and a spell in custody does not deter

them...their lives are about violence and they don't care...these cases have become much more frequent and I've got good at knowing which girls are the victims of this type of abuse...the initial risk assessment will flag up 'weapons' or high risk safety issues, but I can usually guess what the person who fits the [risk assessment] form will look like before I see her...young, really young sometimes, white, and poor, well not materially sometimes, she may have a few nice things that he's bought her [when he's] in a better mood, but from a very working class background. They've usually been around violence all their lives, and they don't know any better.

Here, there were inextricable links established between the type of violence someone is subjected to and their intersectional identity. With reference to the perpetual presence of violence in some young women's lives, Service Provider 4 highlighted both the discernible identity characteristics and, what was earlier termed, the social location of the women in question. There was evidence of a simultaneous evaluation taking place. The interlocking categories of gender, class, race and age were engaged with alongside lived experience as felt through the effects of structural power relations, not least the socio-economic relationship, and access to capital.

The respondents also evinced the idea that the combination of identity facets could work both for and against an individual. Nevertheless, the operation of hindrance and privilege were not unequivocally associated with identity per se. The practical elements of service provision provide a backdrop against which these levels of differential treatment are viewed in relation to need. For example, the necessity of a translator, and the problems this can create for some services, for women who cannot speak English, was very much viewed as a service need rather than a different level of service being available

to women as a direct result of their identity. The outstanding exception to this viewpoint was Service Provider D. She made explicit reference to the disparity in treatment between certain women based on their unique identity:

We have to have mechanisms in place to build a tolerant, trusting and open response from the system...rather than having separate refuges and ignoring the inherent problems [within the system]. But it isn't just with BME women that we see varying levels of assistance available. We are quick to assume that women are straight...and lesbian women may have needs which are best dealt with in different ways but people just carry on as though their sexuality is unimportant.

Ideas of heteronormativity were identified as pervading the perceptions of identity often made in service provision. There appeared to be two distinctions being made. Firstly, the relationship between identity and service needs was viewed as paramount, and secondly, those identity characteristics which were deemed to be visible were more frequently distinguished.

- **Relating Identity to Need**

There are many practical strands to the association between identity and need, and these were more specifically coded as needs based responses. Equally, however, there were some nuanced ideas offered around how the perception of identity by individual service providers could influence what specific needs were given credence. In an honest reflection, Service Provider 2 highlighted this point with an example:

One of the issues that I've had with the social interactions of the North West is the, you've got the Indian community, the Pakistan community, the English White community, and there is virtually no interaction between the three, and I struggle with that. And I've found that there is more prejudice amongst the different Asian cultures than between Black and White, for example. And that is a big problem in the North West. How do you overcome that almost internal discrimination? How do you get the communities to interact more whilst keeping what is theirs? So, I know that I concentrate on that and I push women into mixing...and I try to relate to other women [of different ethnicities] well so they may look at me and think 'oh, those Pakistani's are alright' [laughter] but that may be me seeing it as a problem, if you know what I mean, not them.

The motivation for this particular interaction comes from an external identification of what may be productive, as seen through the prism of the service providers' relationship with identity, and the identity presented by the women in question. As both formal and informal systems were adopted to decipher identity, there was a tendency for service needs to also be assessed through more fluctuating mechanisms.

Most interviewees suggested that, primarily, they responded to service user needs as opposed to service user identities, although the conflation of these two themes has been explored above. Identity or structural forms of inequality, were often articulated or acknowledged *through* the service needs that were presented. However, many of the participants discussed the idea of 'matching' a service user to a particular provider, and this match was usually based on a prominent identity category. This was never really overtly articulated as an expression of relating identity to need, but the practice

seemed like a clear sign of the implicit working affiliation between the two. In a memo, I noted:

Although identity is not always flagged up explicitly, at first, as being important to experience or a necessary response, it is often suggested that service users are 'paired' with a service provider that shares some of their identity characteristics – Service Provider 4 often deals with young women as she is young herself, ethnicised workers are mentioned by all of the interviewees in relation to helping ethnicised service users – and this is done early on in the process. And, Service Provider E was hesitant to work with women whom she did not share race and ethnic groups with for fear of letting them down. This process of 'matching' is practiced without an acknowledgement that it is relating prominent identity categories to the envisaged specific service needs of the service user, as well as to those who are best situated to help.

Indeed, Service Provider E viewed the relation of identity to need in terms of her ability to provide services to ethnicised women. Here, there could be an artificial offering of race and ethnicity as more important than other identity facets, and a supposition that a 'match' is necessary to foster empathy and understanding. Furthermore, Service Provider E discussed the tricky negotiation of situations where racist or ethnocentric sentiments may be expressed by others. She suggested that she would be reluctant to intervene for fear of being misconstrued as racist herself. This highlights a particularly strategic element of intersectionality - that various points at the intersection can signal less obvious similarities. This move is taken up by Narayan, who notes that '...scripts of Difference can be no less problematic...' than projecting ideas of sameness using essentialising techniques (2000: 1083). In essence, where we expect to find similarities we can often find differences, and affinities can be based upon

more than cultural contexts. Service Provider E was very aware of her own intersectional identity, and how her own ethnicised status was symbolic of differences between herself, and some of the women she supports. Her whiteness, distinctly from her other group memberships, also represented discomfort with engaging in what she perceived to be ethnicised cultural issues, and she separated survivors' ethnic status from their other social divisions. This negotiation through multicultural discourses and identities is a frequent theme in dealing with ethnicised women, and is illustrative of how constraining, and potentially dangerous, this discourse can be. Articulated by Burman et al. (2004) as 'cultural privacy', a lack of understanding around what constitutes 'respect' for culture, can result in a concentration on culture instead of violence.

#### **NEEDS-BASED PROVISION**

- **Responding to Risk**

Although identity became a central component upon which service providers would act, it was made clear that the most important consideration was responding to, and minimising, risk. Generally, the consideration of identity became more refined and explicit throughout the interviews, as the narrative took on a more fluid and exploratory character, but the element of risk was instinctively the first discernable factor in the assessment process. Although safety is undoubtedly associated with identity and social location, the reality of a situation that involved risk appeared to override a conscious acknowledgment of

identity at the time. Service Provider 4 discussed the power and control wheel<sup>8</sup> that her service used as a tool to aid women's understanding, recovery and empowerment. Through discussions around its utilisation I asked questions about whether the use of power and control would differ in situations where various identity characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator(s) changed. Her response signified the importance of risk:

Yes [the wheel would work in the same way regardless of identity], because it wouldn't change the fact that power and control had been used to perpetrate violence. In this sense, whether she is white or black, rich or poor, you know, doesn't really matter...what I can judge from it is how at risk this lady is, and what safety plans need to be in place. Responding to risk is what is important.

Many of the respondents reacted similarly; risk and safety were paramount. When presented with the immediacy of lived encounters, whether identity is then subsequently filtered through the situation that presented risk, was constructed as a different matter, and a secondary matter. However, risk was constructed in specific ways for ethnicised women. Service Provider 3 expanded:

Well, with BME women there are additional risks aren't there? Because when they are in violent relationships, there can be violence from in-laws as well, which clearly increases risk...we work harder to keep BME, well Asian, women, erm, hidden, if you like. Again, there's greater risk from community...In my work with [women with uncertain immigration status] it's rare that they'll only be bothered about him [husband].

There were clear constructions made about the greater risks posed by conditions which the respondents associate with ethnicity, and this social division was highlighted as central to how risk was understood in this context. Again, there were strong inferences about collective conditions in which ethnicised women may experience violence.

- **Responding to Needs**

As already stated, the most frequent conceptual issue that the interviewees felt they responded to was need - service user needs. These needs manifested themselves in different ways. These concerns formulated much of the day to day operation of service provision and, therefore understandably, occupied many of the first thoughts the respondents had about their practice and drawing out the effects of theory and policy on their routine. When applying a critical lens to the needs-led model advocated by the majority of respondents, some particular points of departure become apparent. Those needs which are rendered difficult or challenging for services were also constructed as 'barriers to access'. This is where, once again, the relationship between needs and identity became more intertwined. This appeared to be two-fold; firstly, specific intersectional points will most likely illuminate certain barriers to access. The major examples of this appeared to be articulated by the respondents, throughout both rounds of interviews, as those more closely aligned with non-negotiable or strictly defined issues such as immigration stipulations, mothers with sons over the age of 16 in need of refuge supervision,



the interaction of religious denominations, and an array of financial conditions. Secondly, some barriers to access were established quite quickly as identifiable service needs, and were negotiable. This again is where we witness the idea that identity was articulated through the needs that were presented. This is a complex relationship. A cyclical process was evidenced by many of the respondents. An issue is highlighted, for example, forced marriage, and at that point, for example, ethnicity, race and faith, became important identity considerations. Service Provider A emphasised this point:

I'm not sure whether I make that many decisions based on gender and race and things. Well, I do, obviously, but only because what they need help with demonstrates those things. Do you know what I mean? If there's an issue with re-housing 'cos they don't want to be placed amongst a certain community for culture or religion reasons, then I would think of *their* culture and religion as important, but because they highlighted it for me...it's down to their needs again really, and what they make me take notice of.

The centrality of service needs united responses from the two rounds of interviews. This may then lead to a certain service provider being selected, most notably those whom share some significant identity characteristics, although this is still conveyed as being based on needs. Service Provider 5 attested to this when discussing the juncture between ethnicity and mental health:

I think really because we have [name omitted] as an interpreter for the BME women, it's much more difficult for me to engage with them because there's that language barrier. You know, do they understand what I am getting at? Words that are usually used within mental health discussions may not translate or be relatable. So, it's difficult to get across and, it's not racist, but they may not receive the same level of service. The BME women, or South Asian women

predominantly, that I've worked with display general health needs rather than mental health needs, but that might be because they don't disclose it or are better at hiding it. I think mental health amongst South Asian women is an issue that needs to be tackled, so it's a category that's important. If a white woman displayed some of the same behaviour then we'd be like why are you doing that? What do you mean? We'd address it.

Not only was there a judgement about who was potentially best placed to respond to needs based on identity, but there was awareness that certain needs were overlooked when coupled with distinct intersectional identities. This again evidenced the implicit practice or consideration of intersectionality – both the clients' and the providers' identity was taken into account, and the level of social acceptability afforded to certain identities to disclose specific service needs was also qualified with a sentiment signalling that the same behaviour enacted by someone with a different identity, would necessitate a different response.

There was, additionally, a strategic element to addressing need, and describing this response as needs-led. Service providers were aware of existing stereotypes about the multifaceted relationship between social divisions, the types of violence that certain social groups may experience, levels and forms of social inequality, and the service needs that all the aforementioned can create. Whilst the boundaries of these often essentialised ideas, were operated within on some practical level, the use of identifying and responding to needs, enabled the avoidance of homogenising practices on another. Although needs were frequently described as 'typical', 'additional' and 'normal' they were applied

contextually to a variety of service users with diverse identities and social locations; they were not used to describe the kind of people who display them, but to the needs that are displayed. As Service Provider B related:

I very much feel that different ethnic minority groups are lumped together sometimes...we don't assume that all white women would definitely have issues with, say housing, so why do we assume that all minority women will have language difficulties or be fleeing a forced marriage?...I would respond to concerns that a woman experienced, to what she needed my help with.

- **Predicating Need on Identity**

There were several complexities involved in the transitory association of identity and needs. These often exemplified how intersectional identities can constitute both oppression and privilege, and how these processes can operate simultaneously. However, there are services which are predicated on specific needs and they run along specified identity lines. Examples of these services highlighted in the interviews include women-only services and faith-based organisations (Muslim). Services are also often differentiated by political motivations or mobility, comprising feminist inspired specialist and generalist services, and non- or even anti-feminist ones. These latter categories now comprise many services that have recently expanded to include male victims. What service provision in England and Wales is therefore punctured with is two layers of specialist and non-specialist services, which operate along very different denominational lines, and with very different foundational practices.

This can significantly complicate an intersectional approach if one social division is given credence at the expense of all others.

The move towards a comprehensive social cohesion agenda by local authorities, which is underpinned by the State's political and social focus, has substantially problematised the existence of some specific identity-led services operating in the domestic violence field. National examples of this have witnessed Women's Aid England fighting to remain an independent specialist federation that addresses the impact of domestic violence on women and children only; whilst the Southall Black Sisters became embroiled in a battle for funding, with arguments circulating around the specialist nature of their provision, and how the money might be better spent on non-specialist, generic services<sup>9</sup>. This is not surprising given the government's use of gender-neutral policies and multicultural motivations. It is worth noting that all those interviewed in 2005 provided women-only services of both a specialist and generalist nature, whilst all those respondents in the second round in 2010 had either seen their services recently expanded to include the provision of help for male victims, or worked for non-specialist services, whose only pre-requisite was that their users were victims of domestic violence. Significant questions arose from these changes. A community cohesion approach, which arguably has a version of intersectionality at its heart, would advocate generalist, co-ordinated services, but where does this leave womens-only, or faith-based, organisations, for example? And can services which are predicated on one or two forms of identity, still practice intersectionality?

The complexities envisaged for those services operating in specialised ways centred on one fundamental problem; there were now too many victims seeking help. This level of pragmatism frequently penetrated the views of those who saw their services stretched to the limits of their resources. As Service Provider 4 testified:

I think many services start off specific but because of the amount of domestic abuse that goes on, and how frequently that phone rings, you just can't tie yourself down to things like that. Safety work has to take priority, whoever needs it. There was an organisation who worked with women at risk of offending themselves but they've had to merge into predominantly DV work because it's just too rife. Support services have to be spread more widely, so they have to be general just to catch everybody who needs help...I disagree that that leads to a lesser service.

The sheer volume of demand for services can, in some instances, remove the space and time staff can dedicate to decisions about specialisms. However, this was underpinned by the idea that all service providers must, therefore, become proficient in as many of the specificities that may be presented by those accessing their services as possible. This point, again, unites many of the responses from the first and second round of interviews. The need to view both commonality and difference, and to foster cohesion and good practice, were offered as lessons from the frontline. The overriding construction deemed relevant was that of 'victim'; this was only ever altered in terms of the preference for womens-only services for those responding in 2005. This undifferentiated victim-led model is captured by Service Provider 3 in her

response to whether a community cohesion agenda can complicate specialist services:

I think in a funding sense definitely because you are restricting yourself. It'd be awful though, I think, to say to someone, even a man, look we can't help you because that's not who we cater for. That's horrible. I don't think it's fair to the victims which is why they are there in the first place. So the main concern should be victims, not a type of victim. You'd be supporting your majority and ignoring the others. And that may affect people coming forward and disclosing information. So I think victim in general should be the priority. If you've got diverse staff who can recognise specific needs, like we've all had forced marriage training, then we should be able to cater to anyone and take any type of victim.

Here we see, arguably, some of the more forthright effects of both theory and policy on service providers' practice. The sensitisation to ideas of integration was apparent, as were the potential effects for funding and resources should these not be adhered to. The acknowledgement that domestic violence knows no boundaries in terms of race, ethnicity, class and age has clearly been expanded to gender, and to sexuality to a lesser extent. These concessions were populated by references to widely known statistics, and customary, hegemonic understandings of particularly gendered barriers to access for male victims<sup>10</sup>. However, these inclusive or generalist approaches need not necessarily obscure an intersectional approach. Similarly, it was not envisaged that a specialist focus would have either, as Service Provider 1 illuminated:

I don't think it would be complex because even if you are a women's only organisation, the women you will have coming to you will have lots of different facets to their identity, lots of different sides to their character, and so on. So you would still be able to use an approach

that looked at them all. If you were a faith organisation the fact that you are a Christian, Muslim, Jew or a Hindu, it's not the end of your identity, there is more to you than that – you could be a woman, you could be disabled, you could have an addiction to drugs or alcohol, so there's lots of different things that would fall into place there as well. I think the complexity would probably arise with the understanding of it within the organisation itself. So people working within that organisation, providing that service, would need to understand what it is [Intersectionality] before they were able to deliver it, and that's where the difficulties or the challenges may arise.

Intersectionality embodies a consideration of the multiplicity of identity, and how the specificity of self is formulated through the interaction of social divisions that operate on several levels, and are underscored by structural operations of power and equity. The decision to provide a specialist service, conducted frequently along denominational lines, does not detract from the hypothesis that interlocking characteristics produce specific experiences; nor does it erase shared understandings. Intersectionality is designed to capture the very complexities of identity; identities that are in transition can present salient features. As Mason (2002) argues, violence can be 'felt' through various identity categories to differing degrees. The responsibility of service providers is to react to these complexities as effectively as possible, ideally, based on the broad responses, through the continuation of the two-tiered system of generalised and specialised services.

Conversely, many who had experience of working in faith-based provision, highlighted unequivocally, their preference for mixed, more generalist services. In the experience of the respondents, it was feared that

these organisations foster separatism and can heighten racist and ethnocentric sentiments. The isolation of faith as an identity characteristic, upon which provision is based, was also seen to impede development and empowerment. This relates to the underpinnings of community cohesion agenda – that the chance to learn from different cultures is lost by all. Moreover, themes of co-dependency and the reinforcement of cultural constraints loom large. Service Provider C verified these ideas:

In my experience they [faith-based organisations] can work against women. We sometimes have problems with community leaders and elders but nowhere near the same interference that they [faith-based organisations] have. Well, let's be honest, they are often run by them...I think they stick with old traditions. They don't break the cycle...they leave women with very few options...I know BME women will feel different in mixed refuges but the sense of empowerment they'll get compared, the first time they have a choice, you know, that's exactly what they need.

This is not to say that some women do not want to stick with old traditions, or that faith cannot be integral support for some women. However, there were fears that some faith-based organisations will enforce their own agenda on individual women, and collectively on communities. Inam notes that, in some cases, '...the emphasis is on providing women with a breathing space rather than a clean break in order to maintain the status quo' (2003: 55). Received wisdom would suggest that faith-based services are not isolated in acting paternally to vulnerable subjects. The role of the wider community takes on particular gendered, ethnicised and classed nuances in the support of activism in the VAW field in general, and the localised support of specific services. Some



of these community inflections can be perceived as problematic for women survivors, leading to the preference of inter-cultural services for many women (Burman and Chantler, 2004). Other research, of course, suggests that when services for ethnicised women are available, they are accessed to capacity (Rai and Thiara, 1997).

## **OFFICIAL DISCOURSE**

### **○ Policy Stipulations**

Service provision in England and Wales ought to be synchronized with the operation of government policy. This relationship was predominantly understood by the respondents in terms of stipulations, constraints and priorities. The practical side of policy implementation was experienced as slow and laborious; documents were often filled with 'jargon' and were difficult to understand without support. Engagement seemed fleeting - there was an awareness of what constrained their everyday activity to some extent, or particular 'highlights' such as the introduction of specialist Domestic Violence Courts or the MARAC<sup>11</sup> framework, but, beyond that, the respondents evidenced a much more localised vision of policy initiatives. I noted this in a memo:

Government policy is often understood as local rules and regulations - for example, local housing policies. The workings of local authorities, relationships with City or Town Councils, and the

efficiency of the local multi-agency set up, figured much more consistently throughout the responses. These were highlighted as the decisions and operations that had a tangible effect on practice, bar a few notable exceptions. I had to specifically identify a government policy document, in order to garner a 'national' or 'state-related' response, and whether a particular consequence had arisen from it.

One exception that relates to ethnicised women in particular is the current immigration rules, and the repercussions these have for victims of domestic violence. These stipulations were articulated as women experiencing violence but being denied help because of their identity; their identity as an immigrant, or their identity as 'Other'. This was firmly articulated as a social division expressed at a structural level. This does not escape those women who do not have definite leave to remain as, amongst all the more discernable repercussions, was the acknowledgement that they feel the pains of service provision differently. Service Provider C relayed a poignant experience:

We did have one woman and her small son who were immigrants and couldn't contribute money for their stay...you knew that she understood that we were paying for her to be here and she felt like a burden...she just wasn't the same as other users, she didn't feel like she had the right to be helped.

Furthermore, those service providers who have to turn women away because of their immigration status felt deeply implicated in what most of them deemed a highly problematic and discriminatory policy. The structural gulf between those who develop policies and those who must administer them is plain to see. Difficulties also arose when there was a lack of evidence in cases where the

service provider instinctively believed the declarations of violence, Service Provider 3 argued:

And I know it may sound a bit silly but you can sort of tell straightaway whether someone is telling the truth, evidence or not. You can tell a woman who is absolutely desperate and has no evidence because she's terrified and hasn't told anyone or got anything. Or she's been told not to ring the police, that they won't help her or that they are friends of her abuser - and you would believe somebody is they constantly told you that. If I was in a foreign country and didn't know how things worked then you would believe them because you wouldn't know any better. Additional things as well, like they have to pass the language test but they are prevented from doing anything, but we have to state on the form that she hasn't passed, and we have to try and make it clear that that's because she wasn't allowed out to learn. And hope that they accept it.

Again, the intersectional category of immigrant appeared to be visible and associated with specific perceptions and needs. Immigration is a political issue that fluctuates in prominence across time-periods and government terms. Recently it has witnessed great discursive awareness. This social division is segregated in service provision as being the only one that formally prohibits victims from accessing services by the State<sup>12</sup>. It was important to acknowledge the unease of service providers when having to decline access to provision due to identity. This is a direct effect of government policy and, once again, raises issues around protection and state-sanctioned vulnerability.

Conceptualisation, the naming and locating of violence, is an important facet in the formation and delivery of policies and service provision. 'The terminology used in conceptualizing violence is very important – empirically,

theoretically, politically' (Hearn, 1998: 28). The definition of VAW was seen to be important to service providers for several reasons. Most importantly, the definition needed to sufficiently name the range of violent acts women endure so as to both confirm that what they are experiencing is wrong, and that help exists. Service Provider 2 contextualised this point when discussing community perceptions of forced marriage:

If it doesn't have a name, does it not exist? And when you look back that could be applied to any type of abuse but in FM when you look at people who are in their forties now, because it didn't have a name when they were getting married or being forced into marriage, it didn't exist. And it makes me wonder how many people I know or who are my generation have actually had a forced rather than an arranged marriage. Within many of the communities that I work with, particularly Pakistani heritage community, so we are talking first generation and early second generation, people whose children are old enough to be married now, will say quite strongly, 'this wasn't around before, this didn't happen before, there's no such thing as forced marriage, it's just something people have fabricated. You've developed this because it's an excuse or a reason', but it's not.

The effects of political fluctuation on government definitions were accepted. Realising that as certain acts become more visible on public and political agendas, their inclusion becomes more politically viable, and this currency can be utilised to educate and apply pressure on funding bodies, was a concession made by many of the respondents, particularly when discussing the inclusion of forced marriage and honour-based violence in wider definitions of domestic violence. This issue transgresses the boundaries of both structure and agency. Those social divisions deemed significant by the state are housed within official definitions of the problem. This can then lead to the experience of inclusion and

exclusion at the level of subjectivity. Moreover, these discourses express ideas about specific identities at a representational level (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

- **Funding and Resources**

The heart of any discussion about service provision, regardless of the economic climate of the day, is funding. Resources are scarce, and the disparity between the funding opportunities available between the two rounds of interviews suggested that things are to get worse; such is the scale of VAW in Lancashire. For example, the specific targeting of grants aimed at ethnicised women was one way in which respondents from the first round of interviews diversified their funding pool. These opportunities are complicated by the drive behind community cohesion, and would raise further questions around the layered service provision that cuts across the VAW sector.

The idea of support from the State and other official bodies, peppered most of the interview scripts, and seemed appropriately relevant in the validity of practicing and naming a version of intersectionality. Although there was evidence to suggest that a form of intersectionality was implicitly practiced, significant championing from formal processes was deemed necessary to define and implement these ideas as a definite approach. Some benefits were envisaged, and during the narratives, ideas developed around the popularity this may have for securing funding. It was also suggested that resources could be channelled into naming the multi-layered approach explicitly so as to

highlight the very essence of intersectionality to those accessing services. This may counteract the frequent problem of having to search for related policies or documentation that 'speaks' to diversely-situated women. However, juxtaposed to these arguments was the overwhelming idea that funding would be the main limitation when trying to practice a form of intersectionality formally, and that funding targets regularly become priority.

- **Disjuncture between policy and practice**

The relationship between policy and practice appeared to be fractured. Although constraints, procedures and boundaries were highlighted by the respondents, the actual *effect* of policy on the everyday operation of service provision seemed minimal, or it was articulated in terms of what policy restrictions did not allow the practitioners to do as quickly, effectively or as ethically as they would like. This union also implicated the respondents in several ways, some of which have already been outlined. In addition to this, many felt that they often acted as a distributor of knowledge or information; that they discursively tried to fill the gap between policy and practice. Service Provider 1 suggested that there was a breakdown in communication at the point of implementing policy decisions, and that this can have serious effects:

Yes, we've got policies now, we've got the FM Civil Protection Act, we've got the FM multi-agency guidelines which are on a statutory footing, but the shocking thing is that people don't know. Just to give you an example, we did some training in February with a housing department. And we were talking about the FM Protection

Order and how the only relevant third party at the moment is the local authority, and they weren't aware of it. And that was decided in November of 2009 and we were in February of 2010 and they weren't aware that they were registered now as *the only* relevant third party who can apply for an order without having to get leave from the judge, and that was quite shocking. So again we've got these policies but where is the linkup between policy and the practitioner, and then the delivery. And it's the same with the protection order. Yes, we have the protection order but how many people in organisations know what it is, what it entails, and what they can do with it. So, I think there has to be more time, not necessarily more money, but more time, and more innovative use of that time, making people aware of policies.

Here, the responsibility is placed back, firmly with those who construct the policies, and those charged with disseminating them. Furthermore, the distribution of wider, more explicit messages about the existence, prevalence, nature and impact of interpersonal violence was called for. Government policy and other forms of official discourse were seen as the only effective vehicles to carry counter messages and ideologies about the character of VAW through education. A significant part of this should begin with policy decisions and documents that people can understand and engage with.

The lack of fit between paper and practice is also shaped by the structural inequalities and socio-cultural power systems that serve to order and operationalise many aspects of social life. The distinction between differences and inequalities was located in several responses. The differences between women from varying identity standpoints can be indicative of specific challenges, but the structural inequalities at work within our society have an enormous impact on the way women, not only experience violence, but on

issues of access, advocacy and support. It was recognised that aspects of 'who we are' impact upon the experiences we have, and how these should be responded to. Equally, experiences impact upon our identity and who we identify as. There was an acknowledgment that women's specific point at the intersection raises unique and difficult issues, but that systems of power, oppression and injustice work routinely to subjugate groups of women and individual women, and to reinforce and maintain inequality. Power functions in and through discourses that create positions of inclusion and exclusion. This changeable nature enables the deconstruction of dominant ideologies and it is the State's responsibility to broach the structural inequalities that underpin and reinforce VAW.

## **DISCUSSION**

This chapter has attempted to establish whether identity categories, and their interactive status, operate meaningfully in the social world. Service provision for those who have suffered, or are suffering domestic violence, exists alongside both theory and policy that examine, and attend to, the same social problem. The previous chapter analysed and discussed whether the theoretical framework of intersectionality is a useful lens for analysing government policy, whilst this chapter, utilising the method of grounded theory, has tried to establish a link between empiricism and theory through the analysis of the effects of theory and policy on service providers' practice. These effects are



tangible, pragmatic, negotiated and often complex. The next section will discuss the main conceptual ideas that arose from the coded themes identified thus far.

The identity categories of race, ethnicity and gender were offered most frequently by the respondents. The structural context of gender, or the gender order (Connell, 2009), and within that an implicit understanding of heteronormativity, defined the most definite parameter for the understanding and operation of identity within domestic violence. Gender performativity (Butler, 1990) seemed a fleeting consideration in this context<sup>13</sup>; what was important is that visible, symbolic representations of gender were seen as pivotal. The structural regime of gender, filtered through theory and policy, as well as discursively through experience and meaning, appeared to have shaped engagement with identity in a number of conflicting ways. The prevailing and interactive gender order in Western societies produces many expectations (Connell, 2009). The respondents expected victims of domestic violence to be women. This marks women as both highly visible and invisible in the discussion on identity. The expectation of women as victims transpired into an implicit location of gender as the central tenant of self, yet, paradoxically, this centrality led to a neutrality of gender as an identifiable category of difference. Women were so central that they were invisible in answers to explicit questions on social divisions. This somehow detracted from the discernable fight against hegemonic masculinity which was so passionately articulated at points throughout the dialogues, particularly those from 2005. This was also diluted by

the very obvious effects of gender-neutral dominant ideologies on the increased inclusion of men within service provision locally.

What these contradictions embody is the instability of gender as a structural force in the social world. Gender was evidently produced discursively; it is highly important at times, and then, at others, forgotten. In terms of domestic violence, the category of woman has become so synonymous that it was almost invisible. Yet herein lies the dilemma. The respondents utilised the gender-neutral terms domestic violence and/or domestic abuse, but they do so in almost sole reference to women. Yet women are so central in the discursive formation of the problem that gender is not always consciously analysed. There appeared to be an acknowledgment that to fully understand how gender dynamics contributed to the problem of domestic violence, we must outline the other categories of difference at work in producing unequal levels of propensity to violence, social responses and access to provision.

The emergence of race and ethnicity as significant identity characteristics could, arguably, be attributable to a variety of factors. Current and historical regimes of inequality delineate equity and inclusion along the moveable terrain of race and ethnicity, and these prescriptions filter through into dominant discourses of not only what is constructive in terms of identification, but what is ideologically relevant. Ethnicity and race are seen as key signifiers of difference and the construction of this difference has particular contemporary nuances. Although women of Pakistani heritage were

consistently identified, reflecting the local population and demand for services, the multiplicity of ethnic regimes, as opposed to the primary division of gender, and class, suggested that in these instances the service providers engaged with complexity more unambiguously; they were more acutely aware of multiple identities and the range of inequalities that may emanate from these particular regimes of ordering. However, discussions of white women were clearly perceived as non-raced. This marked ethnicised women at a particular intersectional point, where gender and ethnicity collided in both a specific and modifiable way. This demonstrated a consideration of intersectional identities as the facets of gender, ethnicity and race were viewed as working multifariously. Problematically, the same characteristics were not identified as particularly interactive when the race and ethnicity components are comprised of white and British. This, once more, marked a particular point at the intersection as somewhat neutral and invisible (Frankenberg, 1993). This also led to ethnicised women being referred to in collective terms, and frequently, as though, as a social group, they had collective needs.

Structural contexts also substantially affected the overriding lack of acknowledgement around social class. Levels of self-evidency and normativity have rendered some gender and ethnic conceptions as neutral, yet they were still firmly acknowledged as discernable characteristics. Class is less palpable. It appears buried in the articulation of identity through the service needs that were presented. It is here that I would argue the notion of performativity is more salient. The transcripts relayed ideas about how class was performed

through various interactions or behaviours, and how it was deduced through inequalities in lifestyle, living conditions and access to wealth. Winker and Degele (2011) discussed the varying levels of legitimization afforded to power relations and dimensions of inequality. They confirmed the contemporary ability of class performance through the transient nature of social mobility. Again, class was more readily associated with a particular intersectional point. When it was made noteworthy in this study it was in relation to those women who were identified as lower working class.

The identity categories of age and sexuality were both engaged with to a lesser extent than gender, race and ethnicity too. Several structural contexts affected this engagement. With the gender expectation that the majority of service users they would help would be women, came the expectation that they would be heterosexual. This was not to suggest that the respondents evinced domestic violence as a problem isolated to heterosexual relationships, but that they overwhelmingly attended to the needs of women who had experienced violence in such relationships. This heteronormativity was underscored by the understanding that information about sexuality needs to be offered by the service user; it was not actively pursued. The consequence of age again related to those who were either defined as particularly young or old, and were tightly married to the idea and nature of agency in relation to structural conditions and implications.

The respondents related to a number of identity categories, and a variety of structural contexts affected this relationship. The observations made by the participants in relation to the constructions of identity are marked by difference. Gender was seen as a central ordering concept in the context of domestic violence and, therefore, unlike the operation of gender in other regimes of the social world, particularly those which relate to the ownership of power and capital, men and masculinity are marked as different and Other. Women were so central to the discourses of domestic violence that the way the respondents relate to their inclusion was implicitly rooted in actions and observations. All other complex forms of identity, or significant ordering concepts, were marked by difference, by their non-alignment with the benchmark of neutrality or equality. When locating experience in the regimes of race and ethnicity, whiteness and Britishness did not seem important – they were not viewed as creating specific barriers to access or inequalities. Therefore, the service providers, undifferentiated by their own identity, responded to difference, and this is underpinned by inequality. This formed an inextricable link between the perception of identity in practice and the operation of structural contexts of identity, and regimes of inequality (Walby, 2009). The repercussions of these structures and regimes were felt through cross-cutting systems of power that operate in productive ways. Although power need not always be repressive, it can have particular regulatory and disciplinary effects (Foucault, 1977). Arguably, the most extreme fundamental marker of inequality is exclusion. Levels of exclusion were evidenced in the narratives of service providers, for example, through the use of immigration

stipulations to prevent women accessing service provision, and, again, this goes a long way in explaining the effects of policy on practice. In this context it was necessary to highlight structural regulation in order to facilitate a political struggle on a macro scale.

Equally, there was frequent evidence of the exercising of human agency. The autonomous construction of self was seen as central to the understanding and experience of VAW. This crucial information can unlock the very unique and specific service needs of an individual as well as, importantly, paving the way for empowerment and freedom. The ability for identities to, therefore, be reconstructed alludes to the operation of agency in certain frames of time and space (Ludvig, 2006). A reliance on the ability of human subjects to shape and define their own worlds were also viewed strategically, and was adopted by the respondents in order to avoid standardised and homogenous responses. Here the intersection of difference and identity was worked with in order to respond to how individuals choose to identify. This evidences the expression of social divisions on a variety of levels. For example, the exclusion enacted on a macro level illustrated above, also operates on a micro level through the constitution of the subjectivity of experience and the formulation of specific identities. This too is expressed in representational terms through dominant ideologies of the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

Service providers approached systems of inequality such as gender, race, and ethnicity separately, although they do go on to investigate the extent of

their alignment based on experience. This disentanglement is often done for pragmatic reasons but, nevertheless, it demonstrated that the relationship between regimes of inequality can take on various, mutually constituting forms. The effects of class and age were seen to significantly condition each other; faith, ethnicity and gender were seen to compound each other in very specific ways, and the interactive capabilities of scripts of difference, as well as commonalities, were central to the operation of identity through human agency and social structure. These insights show if, and how, people are affected by categories of identity. Whether these elements were always interactive, or whether their interaction is asymmetrical or even, depended on the specificity of experience and the lens through which the respondents perceived and constructed difference. Competing definitions of identity underpin what effects could be drawn from the discourses of government policy and theory. The respondents had to negotiate their way through a variety of mechanisms when deciphering how they defined and responded to identity, and how central these constructions were to their practice. The often conflicting modes of interpretation around identity pointed to its fluidity and instability. The service providers had to compete with their own elucidation of what characteristics were important, the crucial understanding of the service user themselves, those which are prioritised by government policy, and the rigidity of theoretical conceptions, as well as prevailing ideas around shared and dominant norms and ideologies. As all experiences are located in discourse, the formulation of identity in social practice is not free from any of the above. This created an almost continual tension between theoretical categories and lived experience,

and between structure and agency. The imposition of theoretical categories of identity on empirical complexity had been extensively problematised (Prins, 2006; Skeggs, 2004). The heterogeneity of women's experiences is constantly highlighted via both normative and performative frames, and the static categories that the respondents believe exist in theory and policy, do not adequately capture these complexities. It is in the case of ethnicised women where we witnessed the most stativity in terms of identity and service needs. There are a prescribed set of conditions which were seen by some of the respondents as constraining and homogenous. Again, these perceptions shifted across individual interviews and time frames. Their perceptions of identity conflated with structural contexts to provide ideologically infused understandings that are intertwined with meanings directly selected from lived experience. At the centre of the constructions made by the respondents is the orientation that identity is often articulated through the presentation of needs, and the relationship to agency.

## **CONCLUSION**

The narratives in this chapter display messages of the complexity of identity, needs rooted in lived experience, and the composition and impact of official discourses. There are emergent themes around community cohesion and inclusion, sameness and difference, and human agency and social structures. There was also clear evidence to support the shift in theoretical thinking from 'race' to culture, and it was promising to see that theory and



practice appear to be in sync on this issue. However, this shift brings with it some simplistic understandings of the operation of culture in ethnicised communities. Ultimately, it is argued, that the workable ramifications of responding to violent situations manifests itself as inequality and how that inequality translates into service needs. The fluidity of both identity and need in this context, suggested that both are seen as highly reconstructable, and that whilst a version of intersectionality is undoubtedly practiced, the respondents would object to a name that signals sections and inflexibility. This chapter has established that there are some substantial differences in the way that social practice engages with and operationalises the basic underpinnings of an intersectional approach, in comparison with theory and policy. It has, however, also revealed that the three spheres share many goals. The next chapter will discuss this disjuncture and the potential for reformulation under the guise of intersectionality.

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<sup>1</sup> Dobash & Dobash (1992: 60).

<sup>2</sup> Gill, A. (2004: 474).

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that during the second round of interviews the government in administration changed from a Labour government to a Coalition government consisting of the Conservative party and The Liberal Democrats.

<sup>4</sup> Service Provider 4 describes the tool adopted by those agencies who her service would accept referral cases from. 'The risk assessment is basically a series of linked questions. Does your partner have a criminal record for violence or drugs? Is the victim pregnant? Has he ever threatened arson? Has he ever strangled you? Any sexual violence? The more they answer yes to, the higher the risk'.

<sup>5</sup> See Every Child Matters (2003) Department of Children, Schools and Families, Norwich: The Stationary Office

<sup>6</sup> Domestic abuse/violence are used throughout this chapter as a) that is the terminology used by the respondents themselves, and b) as men are referred to, VAW is inappropriate.

<sup>7</sup> In the first set of interviews the responses were predicated on the theme of ethnicised women so this may explain their dominant interpretive framework. However, the second round were asked questions about what identity factors they saw as important, and were then prompted on those that they didn't identify as salient, and asked why this was the case.

<sup>8</sup> After discussions it transpired that this wheel was the frequently utilised Duluth model, although Service Provider 4 did not name it as such. Further details can be found at [www.duluthmodel.org](http://www.duluthmodel.org)

<sup>9</sup> These are identified in Endnote 8 of the Introduction, and Endnote 5 in Chapter 6, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> These barriers were framed within the concept of masculinity, and how levels of embarrassment and shame contribute to low reporting amongst male victims.

<sup>11</sup> MARAC stands for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference. These conferences, chaired by the Police, produce victim based outcomes that are fed through to relevant service providers in order to facilitate a working multi-agency approach.

<sup>12</sup> Many other women cannot stay in refuge accommodation but this is often due to specific needs (medical, for example), or behaviour (substance misuse, for example).

<sup>13</sup> Butler's (1990) idea of gender performativity is highly relevant to the construction of gender and how it operates through and within discourses, it is just not relevant at the level of analysis based on how the respondents understand gender as a relatable identity category.

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## CHAPTER 6

### **Intersectionality: Advances for Theory, Policy and Practice**

Who Speaks for Whom about What?<sup>1</sup>

Intersectionality encourages complexity, stimulates creativity, and avoids premature closure, tantalizing feminist scholars to raise new questions and explore uncharted territory.<sup>2</sup>

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

The incidents of violence that ethnicised women face do not fit neatly into the traditional categories of 'gender violence' or 'racial violence'. Rather this thesis argues that they are more sufficiently conceptualised as intermingling with one another to produce specific effects which belie rigid categorisations. Intersectionality has been presented as a way of framing the violence that blights women's lives, through its adoption of a multi-axis analysis and simultaneous interrogation of functioning systems of power and oppression. To fully understand the multiple meanings of VAW, we must approach it from an analytical standpoint which considers the numerous intersecting forces of discrimination, exclusion and inequality, on a variety of analytical levels. How we attend to the increasingly intricate picture of violence against ethnicised women is of utmost importance from this thesis' standpoint,

and it is imperative to make sound and strategic links between policy, practice and theory. In this vein, theoretical developments which take account of the complexity and diversity of women's experiences can go a long way in framing or steering effective policy developments and service provision advancements. This chapter will evaluate intersectionality's usefulness as a theoretical construct and as a tool for developing policy and practice. The chapter will, then, be framed by two questions – what do we learn about policy and practice via intersectionality? And what do we learn about intersectionality via theory, policy and practice? One question summarises the main findings from the research – a content analysis of New Labour policy documents (2003-2009), and a grounded theory analysis of ten interviews with service providers from the VAW field. These discussions support some conclusions about the degree of match between the three spheres of theory, policy and practice. The second question assesses the validity and effectiveness of intersectionality as a framework which can respond to inequality, methodologically and practically, as well as theoretically. The chapter ends with a series of recommendations and limitations of this study.

## **INTERSECTIONALITY**

As discussed and advocated throughout this thesis, '[I]ntersectionality refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power'

(Davis, 2008: 68). The major problem with adapting gender concepts to the analysis of race and ethnicity is that these constructs are reduced to a side effect of gender. The insight of critical race feminists and those committed to anti-racist theories is that racial and ethnic divisions, as well as gender divisions, are rooted in every aspect of social life including the family, community and the relationship between individuals and state institutions. A convincing account of gender relations and an appropriate and useful analysis of VAW have to be much broader based and comprehensive than existing challenges. The contemporary feminist project must involve a re-examination of all aspects of social relations to make sure that all approaches and strategies address the mutually constituted facets of identity including giving equal weight to questions of gender, ethnicity and race. Intersectionality is presented as a way of broadening the questions we can raise around VAW and opening up discursive spaces of resistance and strategy which attend to the complexities of lived experience and the necessary nuances of responding theoretically, politically and practically.

#### **MAIN FINDINGS: POLICY**

In chapter 4, the advance of policy across New Labour's administration was traced chronologically, with three documents selected for cross-cutting, in-depth content analysis. This chapter raised several issues regarding the effectiveness of legislation and policy designed to help victims of domestic violence and/or VAW, and drew attention to the UK government's *partial*

commitment to assist women in vulnerable positions, and by extension, their often discriminatory stance on ethnicised women and immigrant women. Importantly, policy documents pertaining to the issue of VAW exist alongside other social and legal measures, most notably, immigration stipulations and the framing of race relations through a community cohesion paradigm. Therefore, is VAW policy just concerned with acts of violence committed in interpersonal contexts, with victims, offenders and practitioners, with safety and justice? Or is it part of a broader political agenda, underpinned by ideology that is not necessarily rooted in the protection of vulnerable women?

Accounts of identity in the three policy documents analysed demonstrates that policymakers predominantly work with singular and static conceptualisations of social divisions, but that the depth of this engagement changed over the course of the period of analysis. The prescription of a generic victim in *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) and *Domestic Violence: A National Report* (Home Office, 2005a) indicates the government's view that identity is only central to the experience of those victims who are marked as 'different' in some way by one or more of their identity signifiers. The idea that specific locations create unique experiences which are integral to the understanding of VAW is not represented by these documents. What is is that individual's experiences are viewed as being shaped by single identities which require specific responses *only* when these identities move one away from the dominant construction of victim; up until that point, a generic victim can be responded to in a way that is captured by mainstream policies and provisions.

From the inferences of this in New Labour documents those identity categories visibly indicated are gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality. Further breaking those single categories down reveals that male, ethnicised and LGBT victims are marked as 'Other', having moved away from the central construction of victim. This process of intersectional analysis allows single categories to be broken down so as to demonstrate how individuals, within the same category, can be positioned in powerful/less ways to one another.

Moreover, although ethnicised women deviate from the construction of a generic victim, they are the only group within this sub-group to be categorised by ethnicity. References to 'BME' women are not matched by references to white women, and the 'BME' category is not broken down to specify the variety of ethnicities within that category. As such, chapter 4 argues that ethnicised women come to represent ethnicity in VAW policy. This identity modal is not seen to affect any other ethnic groups' experience of violence, or how any other ethnic group need be responded to. It is also never articulated as having an intersecting relationship with other divisions' experience of violence, which could reflect the multiplicative nature of cross-cutting oppressions. The repercussions of this policy standpoint are four-fold: ethnicised women are identified when other groups are left neutral, but only in certain contexts; they are, therefore, treated as a homogenous group; they are simultaneously visible and marginal; and the predominant focus on, and their symbolisation of, ethnicity, dislocates them from the mainstream, and wider, VAW agenda.

*Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy*

(2009a) departs from the previous documents by centralising the identity facet of gender and contextualising VAW in the structuring forces of gender inequality. This significant move rightly places VAW in a gendered framework and articulates throughout that the variety of violent acts men and extended family members enact upon women are a poignant and tangible expression of gender inequality. This document works with the social division of gender on a variety of analytical levels, illuminating how structural systems of domination create and perpetuate socially constructed roles and gendered expectations, as well as how these constrictions meaningfully operate in lived experience and contribute to the construction of subjectivity. Furthermore, discursively, the document represents the issue of VAW more effectively than before, moving away from gender-neutral language, naming violence as a gendered concern, and locating its manifestation in the inequitable relationship between men and women. This is a crucial move, and despite the relative subordination of other social divisions within the paper, alongside the continuing stativity of identities, the acknowledgment of gender as the most consistent social factor which underpins VAW is vital.

The other identity modal which is ring fenced for specific attention is immigration status. The two year rule is illustrative of the tightening of immigration regulations, and the preoccupation with controlling migrants and asylum seekers. Further to this, women without indefinite leave to remain can not access any public funds or publically funded provision. The immigrant



spouse is expected to be self-sufficient or supported by her husband. The two year rule and the no recourse to public funds rule reinforce existing gender roles in marriage, creating a significant power imbalance and economic dependency. The government remain 'unconvinced' that granting access to public funds would be the right course of action, and continue to prioritise tough immigration policies over the humanitarian interest of protecting abused women. This draconian and conservative approach towards a certain category of woman dilutes the progressive step taken to gender the issue of VAW.

The inability to deal with difference across, and within groups, suggests that social divisions are understood to be stationary, distinct and constant. This account of difference also detracts from the project to highlight all individuals as raced and ethnicised, and to correct the hegemonic view that only minority communities have culture. Violence is, as a result, never articulated as the product of intersecting identities and this represents a failure to comprehend the conditions in which VAW is enacted and experienced. Consequently, there is no rigorous analysis of inequality. A focus on ethnic and other differences evades the structural and systemic context of VAW and regimes of inequality which both support and maintain it. There is, actually, little point in attending to differences, especially when they are viewed as homogenous entities, without a rigorous consideration of the differential power relations and the operation of racism and ethnocentrism (Gill and Thiara, 2010). The government's approach, up until 2009, then, neither takes an individual nor a structural approach to

VAW but, paradoxically, expresses strong messages about the relationship between social divisions and violence through its selective use of identity.

This kind of systematic approach to language-use has had several implications – identity is fixed and stable; groups are divided through social categories, and they lack heterogeneity; implicit and taken-for-granted categories remain at the centre, whilst others are placed at the periphery; whole groups, such as ethnicised women, come to represent social categories, and the policy's understanding of that social category; 'others' are left unidentified, feeding into wider understandings of neutrality and normality that serve to include and exclude people, both metaphorically and in reality. The net effect is to both under-estimate the role of identity in VAW per se, and to over-emphasise the role of particular divisions at the expense of others. The failure to view social divisions as interactive regimes creates a series of differences between women, and between their experiences, whilst simultaneously using vague and generic victims to highlight potential similarities. Arguably, this move is intentional. The complexities of violence against ethnicised women can, therefore, be articulated as distinct enough to warrant specific attention and visibility as victims, and yet, similar enough to be attended to through generalist services, under the conditions of community cohesion. They are marked, problematically, only by their ethnic status, but as this is never viewed as a central concern, any specific needs they may have are peripheral in terms of provision. This point highlights a critical juncture between theory, policy and practice and so will be expanded upon later in the chapter.

## **MAIN FINDINGS: PRACTICE**

Chapter 5 presented selected narrative from ten service providers who work in the VAW field. The organisations they work for, and the specific job roles they carry out, span across the specialist and generalist system adopted currently in the UK, and the service users that they work with also predominantly cover different spectrums of VAW practice. In addition to these specificities, the first rounds of interviews were conducted using an unstructured approach, and the second using a semi-structured interview schedule. The data collected from both were subject to analysis through grounded theory. Therefore, at times, there was harmony across the responses and, at others, there were distinct and dissimilar opinions offered. As such, the responses were coded and come to represent, conceptually, three main categories: perceptions of identity; needs-based provision and official discourse. The effects of theory and policy on service providers' practice are drawn out more extensively throughout this chapter, as are the effects of dominant norms and hegemonic ideas.

The practical and personal nature of service provision provided an ideological backdrop against which many of the responses were contextualised. The immediacy of lived encounters and the pace at which the service providers often have to operate, accounts for, in part, the necessity to respond to the needs of service users – support needs are presented as the most important

issue upon which to base reaction and response. Many of the respondents alluded to the 'reality' of a situation; that risk and safety prompted them to make judgements, rather than identity or the workings of social divisions, and that the often shifting terrain of women's experience of violence demanded that their responses are flexible and adaptable. Who the person is, so to speak, is often filtered through the service needs which they present and it is these more tangible constructions upon which the service providers act. Basic information, which does include the identification of some social divisions, is acquired early on in the process of establishing context and relations, but the only pre-requisite many of the participants have is that the person they are dealing with is a victim, and that they will have specific support needs which require addressing.

Nevertheless, the respondents engage with identity in a variety of ways. Through the adoption of a variety of techniques, they establish discursive or conceptual frames to assess the relative saliency of social divisions, alluding to the idea that different facets of identity may be more relevant in certain situations or contexts. These frames range from associating certain 'types' of victims to certain 'types' of violence, to matching service provider and service user together on the basis of a shared identity in some form. This latter strategy seems particularly well used in the case of ethnicised women and service providers. Their perceptions of identity are also filtered through different barriers to access which could be identified, and this tended to foreground class and ethnicity. These diverse mechanisms enable the service providers to

address social divisions separately as they are shaped by differing social spheres. Gender, race and ethnicity are seen to be the most obvious as well as the most significant social divisions. Gender was so central that it was often overlooked in answers pertaining to specific questions about identity, which was resolutely internalised as difference. It would have been easy to accept the 'victim', 'service user' and 'client' language used had the narrative not consistently slipped into 'she', 'her', 'women' and so on. However, the taken-for-granted status of woman did not override the complexities of intersecting identities. There are significant points of engagement with ethnicity, age and class, and, importantly, how they cut across one another. This enables the service providers to also view social divisions as interactive, acknowledging how they compound and modify one another to varying degrees depending on context and time. Hence, identities are multiple and interlocking; they are in flux and subject to change.

Incorporated into this is a conscious recognition of the structural systems which underpin intersecting social divisions. For example, the role that social class plays in some forms of extreme violence and how this position, including access to socio-economic resources, compounds the violence and the propensity of gaining safety. It was within these examples that identity became less transient as the operation of power systems was seen to stabilise and restrict the fluidity of identity, often through the discriminatory nature of systems of oppression that uphold the order of society on macro and micro levels. It is however, evinced that this process enables categories to work both

for and against an individual. Furthermore, identities can be constructed and reconstructed through human agency, further evidencing the fluid arrangement of social categories. Subjectively, it is difficult to ascertain why someone may have been discriminated against or how someone may *feel* an experience, yet the respondents rightly suggest that the service users' own interpretation of their feelings and experience, as well as how they define themselves, is crucial to unpacking this idea. The centralising of experience and subjective interpretation was not attributed to the effects of government policy or theory per se, but to strong messages and shared ideologies that emanated predominantly from the activist movement, and from knowledge gained working on the frontline of VAW services. The consideration of both structural and experiential accounts is expressed as best practice, and, interestingly, relies heavily on how social divisions are represented through discourse.

The responses, therefore, substantiate the theoretical view that identity categories are socially defined, and rely upon understandings in particular time and contextual frames. The service providers had to negotiate competing definitions of identity and how the parameters of these definitions shifted and modified the complexities of responding to unique experiences that reflect the multiplicative nature of regimes of inequality. The assortment of definitions – their own perception, the construction of self by the service user, those produced in theory and in government policy, and those created contingently by dominant ideologies – along with the different levels on which these exist – structural, subjective and representational – and the different regimes of

inequality – gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality and age, amongst others - formulate the kaleidoscopic lens with which the service providers must manage identity and social categories. Consequentially, hierarchies intersect at all levels of social life and identity facets work together to produce specific effects on different planes.

In line with dominant constructions of identity in other spheres, observations made by the service providers are predominantly predicated on difference, and how difference often equates with inequality. Against a background of multiculturalism and community cohesion, and shifting and multiple discourses, this engagement with difference is actualised most visibly by the representation of predominantly ethnicised women. Again, the thorny issue of women with uncertain immigration status was highlighted as a particular concern; one which implicated the service providers in a practice that the majority did not agree with<sup>3</sup>. This provided a tangible relationship between the operation of structural constraints and the location of specific identities. Moreover, specific examples illuminate the sometimes subtle, but significant, hesitancy and reluctance of some well-intentioned service providers to attend to issues that they view solely through a cultural lens, and how this cultural lens creates what are seen as homogenous conditions. Language barriers, misguided respect for diversity, the barriers those contextual elements such as honour and shame create and the suggestion that the decision for ethnicised women to leave a violent relationship poses a greater risk to their safety, illustrate how difference is often articulated in perceptible ways which affect the delivery of

service. This is not to suggest that only ethnicised women have to deal with the complexities identified above, but that adopting a singular focus, in this case that of ethnicity, and by extension culture, detracted from the often intersectional outlook of the respondents and reinforced the understanding and operation of difference in this context. For example, when the racial category 'white' was mentioned it was often integrated with gender, class and age observations as well. The fact that government policy maintains many of the same divisions will further compound this dislocation of ethnicised women from the overall gendered approach.

That said, all the service providers advocated the provision of both specialist and generalist services, with most opting for a personal preference of mixed provision in terms of ethnicity and faith, and some for services which attend to both men and women<sup>4</sup>. Those who have difficulty with perceived cultural nuances are still clearly committed to overcoming those challenges. The move towards victim-led as opposed to, for example, women-led or faith-led, services are not representative of services across the UK but they do signal a discursive shift in terms of who is constructed as the victims of domestic and other forms of interpersonal violence in the public imagination, and may be indicative of the way funding is now operating for non-statutory organisations. Again, this is a point in which the spheres of theory, policy and practice collide, and will be discussed shortly. What these preferences do tell us about practice, though, is that service providers clearly believe some form of intersectional engagement with identity and social structures is possible within a system that



acknowledges both differences and similarities, and that mixed provision and specialist services can still capture the interlocking effects of multiple social divisions whilst retaining a focus on one or two in particular, or adopting a more general outlook.

### **MAIN FINDINGS: LINKS BETWEEN THEORY-POLICY-PRACTICE**

It would seem relatively fruitless to try and theoretically deduce how social divisions operate in the social world without an engagement with experiential narrative. In trying to establish this link between theory and empiricism, for the VAW field, there is a third important sphere, that of government policy. However, there are still problems in the theory-policy-practice nexus and the usefulness of this relationship remains contested (Locock and Boaz, 2004). At his address to the Economic and Social Research Council in 2000, the former Home Secretary, David Blunkett, made a series of statements about how we could re-connect social science research and policy-related issues; many of them centred on engaging with real issues that affected people's lives, being realistic about recommendations, diversifying questions and working on a macro level. He concluded by stating that '...social science research is central to the development and evaluation of policy' (Blunkett, 2000). The need for a rational policy approach, based on a 'what works' mantra is vital for the VAW sphere but '...despite the current emphasis on rationality and evidence based practice, political imperative has served to obstruct the application of research to policy formation and practice

development' (Goldson, 2001: 76). This field, though, has seen a flurry of feminist inflected policy documents, so theory and research in this particular area are demonstrating potential to be directive of policy, and therefore, practice. This thesis has revealed several tensions between theoretical and political categories, and lived experience, as well as some consistencies, some of which are discussed below.

Identity is rendered intelligible through different understandings of social divisions across the three spheres. However, all three predominantly see identity as difference and, thus, through social markers which deviate away from central and normalised constructions of categorisation. Even strands of critical social theory, and systemic and constitutive versions of intersectionality, are charged with focussing too readily upon groups on the fringes of society and 'extreme' cases (Prins, 2006). There is unity, then, in that all three realms are operating within 'discourses of naturalization' (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 199) that create contingent boundaries of social divisions. Still, this difference is often highlighted in diverse ways. Policy often sees difference as a dislocating force in the context of VAW, creating a chasm between ethnicised women and a gendered response. Practice often responds to difference in pragmatic ways but also in a manner which suggests that ethnicity and culture are divisive in terms of the approach that should be adopted. Thiara and Gill (2010: 50) argue that there is a tendency, from all quarters, and especially non-intersectional theory, to highlight, rather than attend to difference, negating the conceptualisation of VAW *in relation* to difference. Importantly, much of the above engagement with

difference leaves the racial category white as ‘...the routine, default comparator...at the same time whiteness remains undifferentiated and unproblematic as an ethnicity itself’ (Hudson, 2008: 267). A critical application of intersectionality would assure that both privilege and oppression are viewed as the products of multiplicative regimes of inequality. There is a disjuncture, then, in terms of how theory, policy and practice, in the context of this thesis, deal with difference, although this may be partly attributable to standpoint and political sensibilities. It is important to note that a degree of match can be evidenced between certain quarters of academia, activism and polity (Wilson, 2010), although these differing viewpoints do little to ease the conflict between static categories and lived experience.

Further adding to these difficulties is that constructions of difference are socially defined and are subject to change across space and time (Ludvig, 2006). These shifting parameters and perceptions further serve to fracture the alignment of the nexus. These social constructions comprise the dynamic between individuals and institutions. Constitutive intersectionality and other conceptual tools view social divisions, and their associated meanings, as active and fluid, enabling dynamic, shifting and multiple constructions of identity (Prins, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006). This fluidity is mirrored in how identity is lived (Skeggs, 2004) and the narrative from service providers demonstrates the contested nature of social divisions in everyday practice. There is, however, evidence of fixed, singular and monolithic categories in both theory and practice which disrupt the synergy between theoretical categories and lived experience.

Thiara and Gill claim that despite widely accepted critical accounts of unitary approaches to social divisions, intersectional analysis is yet to be ‘...employed to study VAW in the UK’ (2010: 49). The adoption of such an approach, as advocated throughout this thesis, could ease the tension between the two domains.

Although government policy significantly improved its engagement with gender, the construction of other social division’s remains fixed. The state’s approach to identity is unilateral in contrast to the multiple definitions flowing through theory and practice. Whereas policy creates its own boundaries in the expression of social divisions, service providers have to negotiate a plethora of contested notions. As such, many service providers interviewed in this study were reluctant to use over-determinable categories of identity, choosing instead to articulate social divisions through support needs. However, ethnicised women appeared as the most tightly defined, although there were several attempts to unpick this homogenisation. Viewing ethnicised women primarily through their ethnic status correlates with the outlook adopted by government policy. This outlook, produced static notions and homogenous expectations of ethnicised women. However, this resulted in marginality within government policy whereas in practice, ethnicised women were responded to in a variety of ways, with individual service providers looking to adopt what they resolved as the most effective response. Although these responses may result in peripheral treatment or isolation, this still demonstrates a disjuncture between

current policy initiatives and those committed to addressing the complexities of violence against ethnicised women through multiple frames.

Nevertheless, theory, policy and practice all see the importance of attending to cultural specificities, largely predicated on ethnicity. Problematically, what this has led to is a concentration on culture rather than violence, in many instances (Burman et al., 2004; Dustin and Phillips, 2008). This is one of the discernable commonalities between the three spheres. Whilst certain divisions may be more salient or influential at any given time, indeed ‘...regimes of complex inequality are rarely coequal...Often one regime may be more significant than the other’ (Walby, 2009: 273), ethnicity is often too centralised and solitary when addressing violence against ethnicised women, regularly at the expense of gender and differential power relations associated with social class. For this reason, amongst others, the relationship between theory, policy and practice could be strengthened and improved through an analysis of how structuring forces of inequality locate different identity groups in relation to power, and to each other. In a society marked by multiple systems of domination, individuals’ experiences are comprised of both the exercise of human agency and the operation of structural constraints, such as the omnipresent gender order. Immigration has consistently proved problematic in all three domains, and this illustrates the necessity for a structural as well as an identity-led model. The inextricability of these is evidenced by the way migration continues to shape and restructure ethnic regimes of inequality.

Gender inequality requires no exercised violence other than the maintenance, through power and control of resources and representations in such a way as to limit or preclude access to them by women. It is therefore vitally important to account for how all three spheres produce dominant discourse and contribute towards shared norms and ideologies which uphold these conditions. Long-standing myths and well timed, and carefully crafted moral panics, continue to shape dominant understandings of VAW and the contexts in which violence frequently occur. One upshot of negating an intersectional approach to VAW is that simplistic accounts prevail. For example, one-dimensional explanations of culture are used to frame violence against ethnicised women, and gender-neutral scripts suggest that men and women are equally at risk of domestic violence. These rudimentary understandings permeate theoretical, political and practical responses.

Politically, we have witnessed a shift from multiculturalism to community cohesion (Worley, 2005; Wilson, 2010), and this is now the framework which governs race relations in the UK (Patel and Sen, 2010). Many argue that despite this discursive shift, the ideals behind it remain consistent – that social cohesion in Britain is fundamentally an issue for certain groups, those who have migrated to this country, and their ability to integrate into mainstream life (Schuster and Solomos, 2004). Wilson (2010: 66) argues that community cohesion is a ‘...essentially racist framework of policies based on the politics of fear and the state’s concern with national security’. This ideological framework supposedly promotes understanding and respect, and recognises

that groups of different people 'get along well' (Worley, 2005: 487). Part of this agenda, and one which is particularly relevant to the VAW field, is that this cohesiveness is, according to the state, best achieved through cross-cultural contact and, as such, those services which are seen to attend to only certain groups of people such as specialist VAW organisations, face the threat of closure or a depletion in funding. Worley (2005) argues that the crux of community cohesion is the erasure of the concept of specific needs altogether. In light of this thesis' findings, this context creates a series of tensions between, and within, the theory-policy-practice nexus.

Ethnicised women are not mentioned prolifically in government policy on VAW but when they are, they are highlighted as visible victims and are often connected to specific forms of violence, including forced marriage and honour-based violence. The government state their commitment to helping all victims of violence yet, under the conditions of community cohesion, it is the very services which attend effectively to ethnicised women that are fighting to survive. This contradiction appears to have ignored a great deal of research confirming the need for specialist services for ethnicised women (Burman et al., 2004; Rai and Thiara, 1997). It also seems unimportant to policymakers that ethnicised women have experienced, and continue to do so, a multitude of problems in mainstream services, many of which are underscored by racism and ethnocentrism (Inam, 2003; Wilson, 2010). Furthermore, conflating issues of forced marriage and immigration, which simultaneously claim to support

women whilst controlling immigration, also raises challenges for theorists committed to enhancing the treatment of ethnicised victims.

The questioning of single-groups and co-existing communities, appears to have filtered through into dominant discourse which informs service providers, and wider public opinion. By the second round of interviews in 2010 there was a shift towards a victim-led model, and many of the respondents made the connection between this type of focus and current funding preferences. All five women interviewed in 2010 worked for organisations who offered their services to any victim of domestic violence, forced marriage or honour-based crime. The two tier system of specialist and non-specialist provision currently operating in the UK is under threat. With high profile, national battles likely to be ongoing<sup>5</sup>, many services dedicated to ethnicised women face a struggle for funding in a climate of integration. Whether this struggle can be assisted by an intersectional framework will be addressed shortly, but it is clear that the conditions and ideological underpinnings of community cohesion raise particularly important points for coalition work, not only across academic and activist terrains, but across ethnicised borders too.

## **MAIN FINDINGS: INTERSECTIONALITY**

The above discussion has gone some way to identifying intersectionality's relationship with policy and practice, but this section will address what we have learnt about intersectionality in the specific context of



this thesis. It has been argued that VAW is a gendered problem and that to fully understand this violence, theory, policy and practice must attend to cultural and structural differences amongst women. Intersectionality can, therefore, be used to centralise gender as the most consistent regime of inequality in order to retain issues of commonality and shared experience, whilst simultaneously, acknowledging how this is cut across by other social divisions and systems of domination to produce specific effects. A comprehension of experience and identity must move beyond recognising difference, to responding to difference, and to considering the social context of both structural and individual arrangements (Jackson and Scott, 2002; Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005a). Through recognising that regimes of inequality are separate entities, with their own ontological basis (Yuval-Davis, 2006), but that they occupy an interactive and compounding space, constitutive intersectionality can look at gender and ethnicity separately as each prioritises a different sphere of social life, and then at the point at which they intersect, and how they produce relations by co-constructing one another. Markers of difference and identity are not ‘...merely exclusive and limiting forms of categorization’ (Prins, 2006: 280), they are dynamic and complex in their formation. Capturing the unique interplay between social divisions is vital as social categories are historically contingent, and intersectionality is therefore necessarily flexible. Moreover, as structurally induced categories are fluid and subject to change via classifications, policy and ideological discourses, so too are multi-layered understandings of self. The differing and competing perceptions of identity highlighted throughout this thesis support the theoretical claim that identity can only be properly

understood through narration and storytelling (Ludvig, 2006; Prins, 2006), and that a static focus on categorisation does little to move us forward.

Intersectionality is designed to capture the very complexities of identity and experience, and the interaction with ordering social systems. It foregrounds differential power relations within and between heterogeneous groups and communities. In the climate of community cohesion this type of approach is imperative. Although, arguably, this agenda has a form of intersectionality at its heart, and wishes to move away from distinct, single-identity groups, its politically instructive undertones can be read as a controlling and divisive schema. Intersectionality can assist ethnicised women and the fight for the survival of specialist services (Thiara and Gill, 2010; Wilson, 2010). The existence of specialist services does not detract from the intersection of multiple dominatory systems which create numerous complexities and contradictions for ethnicised women. Intersectionality does not erase the notion of specific needs, nor the need to address them. On the contrary, intersectionality promotes them, deals with them and captures them in their ability to be both similar and different. Furthermore, intersectionality can encourage researchers and policymakers to abandon ethnicity-culture as the sole prism with which to view ethnicised women, and to transgress simplistic explanations of violence in ethnicised contexts. 'An intersectional approach is necessary, not only in providing an understanding of the ways in which different social divisions impact on and differentiate experiences of VAW among diverse groups of women, but also for challenging the problematic unidimensional articulation of

cultures and communities reflected in recent policy and legal developments' (Thiara and Gill, 2010: 41). In turn, this may filter through into dominant discourse having, hopefully, much resonance with service providers.

Intersectionality is useful as a lens through which to analyse government policy inasmuch that it frames enquiry with specific questions and concerns. Its use prompts researchers and policymakers to take into account a multiple array of social divisions, and to judge their relationships to one another. This necessarily includes an interrogation of the relation of different identity groups to power. For the policy analysis in this thesis, a simple frame predicated largely on the frequency and context of six social divisions – gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age and social class – was adopted alongside an examination of if, and how, these divisions are placed in relation to each other, and whether they are underscored with structural systems of domination which uphold their operation in social life. From this intersectional lens, the expression of social divisions on structural, individual and discursive levels were deduced. Through this analysis it is possible to determine how central social divisions are deemed to be to the experience of VAW, and to the appropriate responses. What this further enables an intersectional analysis to glean is how fluid and contested policymakers believe social categories to be, and how far they go in shaping representations of them. Essentially, policy documents on the gendered problem of VAW can be broken down so that the category 'woman' is deconstructed so as to enable multiplicative identities to be situated in relation to their differential claim to power. As Yuval-Davis (2006: 199) notes

'categorical attributes are often used for the construction of inclusionary/exclusionary boundaries that differentiate between self and other, determining what is 'normal' and what is not, who is entitled to certain resources and who is not'. Some of this information could be extracted without the use of intersectionality, but is likely to be bound up in separate enquiries, missing the intersecting and concretely enmeshed nature of social divisions and how they relate to political constructions of identity. Continuing to use an intersectional frame to address future policies, will indicate whether other significant group memberships are considered integral to the fight against VAW.

In some respects, intersectionality is more developed in practice than it is in theory. Implicitly, through dealing with a variety of changeable versions of identity and difference, the service providers from this study evinced an understanding about how social divisions modify each other and influence the experience of violence, provision and empowerment. Although all the respondents suggested that it would be a difficult, and not necessarily productive, task to attend to every social division, mirroring arguments in theory about illimitable categories and selective choice for methodological convenience (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Ludvig, 2006), they responded to what was presented to them, and these were rarely solitary and singular forces. The overlapping and interactive nature of social divisions appeared to have more resonance in lived experience, and the complexities of multiple group memberships were more tangible. Here, though, the ambiguity of intersectionality is clear. Service providers work with scripts of difference, and

how these create boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, alongside generic constructions of victims which, sometimes, fail to locate violence in structural contexts. These competing definitions make it difficult to ascertain how intersectionality is consistently adapted to responses in practice. However, in its 'strong version' (Weldon, 2005), intersectionality seemed unrealistic to the service providers – there is not enough money or time to fight every oppression that collides in the lives of women, and they must, therefore, respond to, what they deem, as the most important aspects. Conversely, there would be little point in naming intersectionality as an approach to practice as, in the context of the reality of the situation, it is something which is implicitly considered and filtered through the assessment of support needs. This did not always appear to be the case when ethnicised women were attended to and it is, therefore, necessary to learn from practice that the way in which difference is understood shapes provision significantly.

What we learn about intersectionality then is that its flexibility and adaptability is absolutely necessary if it is to become a frame which moves beyond the conceptual and operates meaningfully as a methodological tool and a guiding lens in practice. As social divisions are constantly in flux, operating on a variety of levels, and often at the command of regimes of inequality which are modified and conditioned by historical and ideological discourses, an approach such as intersectionality needs to be accommodating enough to cope with these shifting terrains. How this will operate in policy and practice will be dependent

on how willing these domains are to adopt a multifarious approach. Some recommendations about the use of intersectionality are outlined below.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The overall recommendation of this thesis is that all domains which attend to the issue of VAW should be alerted to the idea that multiplicative social divisions and structural regimes of inequality intersect to produce specific experiences and effects, in order to understand the complexity and diversity of the continuum of this range of violence. In the context of ethnicised women ‘...the challenge for researchers, activists and practitioners is to recognise the intersecting dimensions of power and oppression, thus enabling us to move our focus away from cultural factors to also consider issues of marginality and exclusion’ (Thiara and Gill, 2010: 48). The cornerstone of intersectionality is to better understand women’s experiences and to strive for social justice. Crucially, then, an intersectional approach can offer any scholarly endeavour the opportunity to fulfil a central goal – to translate theory and research into action and policy (Burgess-Proctor, 2006: 42). As we have seen, socially defined categories are constantly in flux, and shifting contexts are historically contingent, meaning an exact fit between theory, policy and practice is difficult. Intersectionality can be adopted to try and manage those dynamic adaptations. In line with this, a few specific and broad recommendations are made for each sphere:

## ○ Theory

- Retain a gendered approach to VAW whilst building in specificities through the adoption of an intersectional lens.
- Ensure that understandings of VAW in ethnicised contexts are not reduced to simplistic notions of culture, but are located in a multifarious framework which similarly attends to oppression, inequality and agency.
- Researchers are reflective in their practice, and continue to build coalitions to strengthen the ability of theory to account for the very real experience of VAW.
- The project of critical whiteness studies continues to shift popular conceptions of race, ethnicity and culture.

## ○ Policy

- That future governments build upon the centralising of gender in *Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy* (Home Office, 2009b) by responding to multidimensional individuals and experiences<sup>6</sup>.
- That VAW continue to be adopted as a broad and diverse term to tackle the array of violent acts perpetrated in the UK and elsewhere.

- That the term VAW is used to structure an integrated and cohesive framework of policies.
- That the protection of vulnerable women is not conflated with any other issue which seeks to address a different political imperative.
- That all victims of VAW should receive the same rights to access benefits and housing under the Housing Act 1996.

○ **Practice**

- A continuation of both specialist and non-specialist services.
- That both an individual and structural (Websdale and Johnson, 2005) approach to VAW is adopted in practice. This can further help to politicise the issue of VAW.
- Practitioners take into account multiple identities, including their own, and are reflective about their own social location and its implications for their practice.

**LIMITATIONS**

The research carried out during this thesis might be improved in several ways. As with many empirical studies, the scope of the experiential data is problematic - the narrative from ten service provider respondents cannot be taken as representative of the whole sector. The conclusions drawn from this



data can only contribute to the wider body of innovative work, exploring the relationship between practice-based responses and multiple group identities. For example, the respondents who comprise this study advocated the continuation of a two-tiered system of specialist and non-specialist service provision, which is supported by other studies (including, Burman et al., 2004). However, they overwhelmingly encourage the use of mixed, mainstream services for ethnicised women which contradicts the well established argument that specialist services offer some ethnicised women the crucial help they need to address the full complexities of how violence manifests itself in their lives (including, Rai and Thiara, 1997). Although a larger pool of respondents may not necessarily address the issue of representation, it is possible that a more detailed interview schedule, perhaps engaging with the service providers at different intervals over a specified period of time, may have broadened their responses to the effects that theory and policy have on their practice. The gap that exists between the two rounds of interviews does provide some comparative capacity, however.

Reflexively, it was necessary to make slight changes during the semi-structured interviews. Whilst this is to be expected, I wish that I had foreseen some of the more intricate tensions between theoretically formed questions and practical responses. I do appreciate that these competing definitions and understandings became one of the main findings in terms of practice. However, this did raise particular questions about how to work with endless lists of social divisions and locations. The interview questions were designed to allow the

service providers to relay the categories they felt were important, yet they were also often making this judgement on behalf of the service users they assist. Subjectively, is it possible to determine how or why someone has been discriminated against? Who decides what is and is not important to experience? This, I suspect, will be a constant in the limitations drawn against intersectional approaches. As Ludvig suggests '[I]t is impossible to take into account *all* the differences that are significant at any given moment' (2006: 246; her emphasis), and this creates a continual tension between lived experience and theoretical categories.

Given the context of the thesis, violence against ethnicised women, it may also have been helpful to address some of the parallel community cohesion, race relations and immigration documents during the policy content analysis in Chapter 4, such as *Marriage Visas: The Way Forward* (Home Office and UK Border Agency, 2008) and *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team* (Home Office, 2001), in order to cross-reference the context and use of social divisions and structural regimes of inequality. The reliability of the content analysis in terms of exact frequency is also questionable. Although quantitative data was not central to the analysis, the approximate number of times a search term appeared in a document was recorded, and I was the only person to take part in the procedure which affects trustworthiness. The scant mention of social divisions, particularly in the first two documents, meant that the interpretive frame of intersectionality was much more important than the recurrence of terms or themes, and the content

analysis always intended to be qualitative. However, the use of a software package, such as NVivo 9<sup>7</sup>, may have assisted the content analysis process.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has centralised the concept of intersectionality so as to illustrate how its adoption, in various forms, can help us to understand the spheres of policy and practice and, by extension, what we learn about intersectionality in the process. It has assessed whether intersectionality can help broaden the questions we pose, making the crux of analysis about relevant responses which are culturally and structurally specific and agency-led. The intersectional template can be effectively applied to various discourses, including government policy and service provider practice which, in turn, enables us to yield new insights and to ground analysis in the language and ideologies of official agencies and in the experiences and narratives of workers in the VAW field.

Through a focus on social divisions and the systems of domination which underscore them, intersectionality reveals that government policy does not see identity modal as being particularly significant to the experience of violence nor to an adequate response. Largely, generic victims are used to organise the documents and there is no noteworthy engagement with regimes of inequality. This exposes neither an individual nor a structural approach to the problem of VAW, but one which is sufficiently ambiguous, and non-committal to providing

safety, protection, justice or support to victims predicated on identity or social location. There are, of course, notable exceptions. We witness a diametrical approach to VAW that, on the one hand, continues to produce homogenous policies aimed at a stock group of victims for whom gender is seen to be the overriding determining factor, and on the other, marks particular groups, including ethnicised women, as differentiated by very visible identity factors, though ones which are never viewed as distinctly intersecting with others. For ethnicised women, this results in them being viewed through a sole prism of ethnicity which situates them as distinct from, and marginal to, the mainstream focus of the documents, yet highly visible and representative of ethnicity in the context of VAW. However, this affords them little specialist attention and their inclusion can be read, through an interactive and multifarious lens, as tokenistic, gesturing towards a problematic group of victims, without underpinning this consideration in the operation of multiple forms of inequality. This peripheral treatment continues alongside a state-led community cohesion agenda which threatens to close the very services designed to attend to the specificities of violence against ethnicised women.

An intersectional frame allowed us to examine how service providers engage with the question of identity, and to decipher where their prominent influences on the relevance and nature of social divisions comes from. The respondents presented multiple understandings of identity, and social divisions were worked with on individual and interactive levels. For example, the relative saliency of gender operated almost unconsciously as a central division, but it

was also frequently coupled with other facets and understood to be interactively producing specific effects. Regardless of these competing definitions, the respondents reacted to what they were presented with in terms of service and support needs, and the use of an intersectional vision in practical terms suggests that through these needs the most meaningful aspects of identity are filtered. Ethnicised women are seen to have different and additional needs, and through the representation of these, comes many of the service providers understanding of ethnicity and culture, and the way these two interactive modal provide a context for the violence they experience. Despite the shortcomings of this approach, some of the service providers in the main, paradoxically, argued that ethnicised women should not just be viewed through these statuses and the provision of effective, mainstream services should be promoted for ethnicised women alongside the continuation of more specialised support.

Analysing the three strands – theory, policy and practice – allows us to decipher the degree of match between them and where we can try to reduce the gaps and omissions. Intersectionality can be used as a bridge to create a more fluid link between the three spheres. However, with a focus on identity and experience, two constructs which are subject to change and adaptation, there may always be a disjuncture between the ways in which theory, policy and practice respond across different time and contextual frames. That said, applying an intersectional lens allows a series of important connections to be made between lived experience, the discursive formulation of violence in policy

documents and the theorising of difference, identity and social structures. Once we make these links more definite and consistent, we will witness the disparity between reality and theories diminish.

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<sup>1</sup> Gunew (1991: 31).

<sup>2</sup> Davis (2008: 79).

<sup>3</sup> Three service providers from across the two rounds of interviews agreed with immigration stipulations in principle, but took issue with the process and bureaucracy which surrounds them. One respondent from the second round 'wholeheartedly' supports the way immigration is dealt with, even in the context of domestic violence.

<sup>4</sup> In these instances it was clear that men and women would be largely kept separate, but that an individual service could offer its expertise to both men and women.

<sup>5</sup> As mentioned previously, the Southall Black Sisters had a long fight to secure the continuation of funding from Ealing Council in 2007 through to 2008. See [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk) for a full transcript of the final court case. The refuge manager from another London based Asian only women's refuge, Asra, talks about the sub-contracting of women's services by local authorities leading to the potential merge of specialist services. See Valios (2008) for further details.

<sup>6</sup> See Verloo (2006) and Yuval-Davis (2006) for a discussion on the effectiveness of policies adopting intersectional frameworks.

<sup>7</sup> NVivo 9 is a software package that helps to organise and analyse information such as government policy documents. See [www.qsrinternational.com](http://www.qsrinternational.com) for more details.

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## CONCLUSIONS

### **Acting On The Intersections: Violence Against Ethnicised Women**

There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all.<sup>1</sup>

We exist in social contexts created by the intersections of systems of power...and oppression.<sup>2</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis began with the hypothesis that when the issue of VAW is viewed solely through the prism of gender or the prism of ethnicity, inaccurate and ineffective accounts of experience and need will be generated. The partial exclusion of ethnicised women in traditional feminist discourse and multicultural discourse can leave them tangential to academic inquiry, policy decision-making and service provision priorities. Underpinning this is a lack of knowledge or gumption which fuels the belief that a non-interventionist approach, by academics, activists, the state and service providers, is more respectful to community cohesion and cultural identity. This thesis contends that non-intersectional discourses and frameworks, predicated on singular and isolated views of identity and structural oppression, will never fully interrogate

the complex problems women face in a society that enacts multiple and interactive layers of coercion and subjugation.

Davis suggests that ‘...intersectionality could become a feminist success story’ (2008: 67). Intersectionality has been presented throughout this thesis as a theoretical framework that is capable of mounting a significant challenge to the enduring problem of men’s VAW through attention to multiple-constituted identities and cross-cutting systems of power relations, such as hegemonic masculinity and ethnocentrism. By way of a conclusion, the following sections will address the main questions of this thesis by summarising various themes and chapters, highlighting the importance of expanding critical options that intersectionality provides and indicating the contributions made to the theorising and strategising of VAW. Chapter 1 provided an illustrative critical history of violence against ethnicised women, evidencing the need for comprehensive intersectional engagement, whilst Chapter 3 outlined how data were selected and collected, and the different methods of data analysis adopted, including the appropriation of intersectionality as a guiding lens for content analysis.

## **SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS AND MAIN THEMES**

Ethnicised women comprise distinct gender, ethnic and cultural subjects in the theorisation of VAW. Essentialist, narrow and complacent theories adopted by many disciplines to investigate and explain men’s violence are ill-



equipped to document and attend to the cumulative and consistent harms that are relayed through typical and aberrant violent behaviours. Chapter 2 began by rehearsing some prominent feminist debates that fuelled the original problematisation of mono-causal analysis and the initial conceptualisation of intersectionality. To review, the foundational category of 'woman' was challenged for failing to acknowledge differences that exist amongst women, and for being used as a code with which to represent the concerns and needs of predominantly white Western women. The multi-faceted, intersectional nature of individual subjects was seldom raised in feminist endeavours, despite debates about race and racism burgeoning in theory and activism. Rather than viewing the interaction of identity characteristics, dominant agendas used dichotomous relationships to create hierarchies of difference and priority, and these binaries, amongst other things, have stalled theoretical advancements and penetrated policy and practice schedules. The use of additive analysis across academia reinforces the separation of social divisions and perpetuates the absence of a cumulative evaluation. All of these practices contribute to ethnicised women being faced with the impasse between the broad feminist movement and the anti-racist movement. It was through recognising the inadequacy of these approaches that intersectionality emerged as one potential way forward.

Intersectionality was introduced as a concept devised by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) that discursively constructs and defines multiple axes of identity and discrimination. The approach refers to the interaction of two or

more social group memberships, or forms of discrimination, that compound to shape identity, subjectivity, experience or response. Intersectionality's basic inquiry is two-fold; we need to recognise that our identity is made up of a multitude of facets that can not be added or subtracted, and how these particular divisions interact to produce specific effects. Moreover, our identities are modified by systems of power that exist within society and operate through hegemonic ideologies and structures. Crenshaw (1991) later used VAW to demonstrate the multi-dimensions involved in experiences, responses and cumulative events.

The use of intersectionality has been far from uncontested, however, and there remains ongoing, critical debate about its application. Two broad approaches emerged, systemic and constructionist (Prins, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006), which differentiate in their foregrounding of structure and agency. A constitutive approach adopts a dynamic view of power in which the human subject is active and social divisions are unstable and heterogeneous; they have their own ontological levels and are not reducible to each other, thereby warranting both individual and interactive analysis. Identity is therefore fluid and is played out in multi-layered ways. This represents social divisions expressed on a micro level through experience and the construction of subjectivity. A constitutive approach also addresses the expression of social divisions on a structural and macro level as well as through discursive terms in language and ideologies. This multi-level analysis gestures towards a prevailing issue for intersectional engagement – how best to address the interface

between structural inequality, subjective experience and ideological construction.

Chapter 2 introduced how this interactive framework mounts a considerable challenge to the continuation of VAW, and impacts upon the meaning and representation of this social problem. Inextricably linked to this is the issue of power and its prolific interplay with systems of control and domination, and how it intermingles with social divisions to create all-encompassing effects on the experience of violence. Intersectionality, the chapter established, can be used to illuminate and attend to the very complexities of violence against ethnicised women, and the critical and difficult questions which arise from it. The apparent shift in principal academic and social thinking from race to ethnicity and culture, signifies an important realisation for the VAW field - that culture is mediated through structural forms of oppression including the ever-present hegemonic masculinity. Intersectionality can generate the understanding that we need to think in culturally specific and culturally competent ways without ever succumbing to cultural excuses or defences. The interlace of gender and ethnicity, in particular, is important to address the marginality of ethnicised women in VAW discourse, but equally, this interaction serves to act as a reminder that over-stressing the role of culture displaces the effect of gender and other social divisions, and contributes to ethnicised women being viewed through a substantially different lens.

A main purpose of this thesis has been to utilise intersectionality as a lens with which to analyse government policy. The idea of intersectionality as an analytical tool has received little theoretical attention (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006; Winker and Degele, 2011). Content analysis was adopted as a method which was framed by intersectionality. The heart of this analysis was to uncover whether social divisions – gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age and social class – were addressed in New Labour policy documents, and, if so, how central they were to the formulation of strategies, and how closely they were aligned with each other and with structural formations of inequality. Chapter 4 discovered through the use of an intersectional lens a series of inconsistencies across government documents despite a time of renewed commitment and action. These inconsistencies amounted to the under-estimation of social divisions generally, and the over-emphasis of the role of ethnicity for ethnicised women.

In the first two documents *Safety & Justice* (Home Office, 2003) and *Domestic Violence: A National Report* (Home Office, 2005b) social divisions are not considered to be of central importance to the presentation of domestic violence or to the principal aims of the policies. They read as though they are purposefully vague, never committing to addressing violence on the basis of identity. This extends to the relative neutrality of gender. Furthermore, this nonalignment negates any deliberation of how structural forms of inequality underscore the ordering and operations of social divisions. Similarly, no specific address of identity means that there is no acknowledgment of the role in which human agency can play in progression. Therefore, when specific divisions are

raised they are particularly visible yet clearly insignificant to the overriding construction of domestic violence. There are no substantial inferences to ethnicity which marks ethnicised women as both marginal and detached. When ethnicity is alluded to it is clearly in reference to minority ethnic groups. Coupled with the ambiguous use of the term 'community' in conjunction with ethnicity, this visibility for minority ethnic groups inextricably links violence against ethnicised women with ethnicity, and not with gender, or with any other compounding social division. This creates a homogenous location for ethnicised groups who come to symbolise the representation of race and ethnicity in government policy. This demonstrates what Burman et al. define as 'pathologised presence' (2004: 335). The documents, therefore, do not deal with difference across or amongst groups very effectively, culminating in simplistic and narrow understandings of the relationship between experience, identity and response. What this supports is the existence of a 'parallel universe' (Patel and Siddiqui, 2010: 109) for ethnicised women, who see the construction of the violence they suffer dislocated from mainstream VAW agendas and attended to through a focus on ethnicity, or more accurately, culture. Of equal importance is the vacillation between domestic violence and VAW. Both official and unofficial definitions of these two rubrics create discursive boundaries for the inclusion and exclusion of ethnicised women.

Unfortunately, much of these problems persist in *Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy* (Home Office: 2009b), despite the considerable improvement with the engagement of gender. This move,

underlining the strategy to combat VAW within the operation of gender inequality, including important discursive messages around the sexualisation and emphasis on women's bodies and physical capital, cannot be undervalued. However, this document does not attend to the multiple needs of ethnicised women; in fact ethnicity is mentioned less than in the previous documents. Whilst a concentration on gender is deeply appreciated, without building in an analysis or understanding of how the category 'woman' is broken down to show how women are situated in differential positions to each other through the operation of other interactive social divisions, the document cannot connect with the conditions in which VAW is perpetrated or experienced.

The acts of forced marriage and honour based violence also bear witness to a significant change – these acts are no longer consistently correlated with ethnicised communities and often form part of the mainstream focus of the VAW agenda. However, dubiously, they are not gendered; in fact, they are associated with no discernible victim. This is odd in a document so principally concerned with the function of gender inequality. So herein lies the problem. It is insufficient and inaccurate to propose that these acts of violence are only experienced by ethnicised women, or that these acts comprise the entire nature of violence against ethnicised women, and yet it is also inadequate to leave them neutral when all other acts of violence (bar prostitution), are readily identified as gendered problems. With the move towards community cohesion eliminating the relevance and ontological basis of difference, is this neutrality purposeful? The shift from a sole focus on ethnicity in relation to ethnicised

women has been replaced by a document which steadfastly centralises gender, and yet those acts of violence more commonly associated in popular and official discourse with ethnicised women, are left ungendered. Arguably, as we move towards the erosion of specific needs under the community cohesion agenda there is even more necessity to fight against cultural homogeneity whilst retaining a very definite gendered framework.

It is also glaringly obvious from the policy analysis that the immigration stipulations currently in operation in England and Wales are discriminatory and draconian. Ironically, contemporary, hegemonic rhetoric would have us believe that the UK operates 'soft' immigration policies. Here, attitudes are preoccupied with the supposed erosion of national identity and traditional 'British' values. A culture of suspicion and deception surrounds the government's decision not to allow a woman with uncertain immigration status access to public funds when exiting a violent relationship. A woman's immigration status, one facet of her intersectional identity, can be manipulated by government policy to restrict her access to help and provision, and, therefore, potentially confine her to a life of violence. How she experiences this discriminatory practice will compound with the interpersonal violence she has encountered and her status as an undocumented immigrant. These, in turn, will intermingle with her other social divisions to produce specific effects. These cases illustrate the necessity of attending to social statuses independently (immigration status) and co-operatively (gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation), in order to capture the specific and complex effects which are produced. The example of

women without recourse to public funds is, perhaps, the most effective at highlighting how identity modals and the systemic dominatory systems of power which underscore them, collude to exclude a certain group of women.

Applying only a gender or ethnicity lens to these government documents would neglect to focus on the multiplicity of social divisions and the complex tapestry which is produced through the convergence of systems of oppression. If we adopt an intersectional approach which addresses multiple facets of identity then we can see if, and how, policy positions women in powerful/less ways to one another, and how the interactive nature of divisions compound and heighten each other. An intersectional lens as an analytical frame has exposed the shortfalls of government policy and the effects of a narrow and inconsistent approach to identity, as well as how a neutral or unilateral discursive framework misrepresents the issue of VAW. Continuing to use this frame will enable critical social theory to uncover how future government documents deal with social stratification along multiple lines.

Alternatively, much of the stativity observed in government policy was replaced by fluidity and multiplicity in the accounts of the ten service providers who were interviewed about their experiences of working in the VAW field. In particular, the participants were asked questions which broadly relate to similar themes, despite the time gap between the two rounds of interviews, such as, how they access and assess information on identity, how identity manifests itself in relation to violence and provision, and the impact of theory and policy



on practice. Using the techniques of grounded theory both sets of interviews were analysed and coded until three separate but interconnected categories were raised directly from the data – perceptions of identity; needs-based provision and official discourse. These categories were fully explicated in Chapter 5, attending to the aim of discovering whether a version of intersectionality is already implemented in practice and how fruitful these considerations are deemed to be.

The analysis revealed that the service providers use multiple methods to access and assess the salience and operation of social divisions, and these techniques include establishing a connection between identity and experience and identity and service needs. Importantly, at the core of the picture being constructed is the exercise of human agency. Agency-led responses are evidenced through a strong correlation with the perception of self, as well as the centrality of how service users understand how their unique experiences feed into effective and relevant responses. Alongside this more individual approach is the recognition of structural mechanisms such as ethnocentrism and inequity in access to labour resources, and cumulatively, power. These perceptions of identity are therefore fluid and are bound up in how categories of difference are structurally organised *and* then reconstructed and negotiated by individuals.

The service providers mostly understood their reactions through appropriate responses to the support needs which were presented to them.

Overwhelmingly they were reluctant to isolate the assessment of identity to visible or discursive cues, preferring to allow identity to be filtered through the representations of service needs. For example, the immediacy and nature of provision often means responding to risk, and this context can provide several clues in terms of which social divisions may be pressing for an individual woman. This formed part of a cyclical process whereby service needs would guide the construction of an individual's identity. Furthermore, labelling needs as 'normal' and 'typical', or 'challenging' and 'additional' appeared to be more palatable to the participants, rather than referring to people in that manner. The specific needs of ethnicised women are thought to be best handled within broadly mainstream services, but those which attend to VAW in a specialist way. Here it is clear that the majority of respondents believe that the nature of ethnicised women's support needs could potentially be exacerbated by specialist or secular provision. The needs of ethnicised women are a point where we witness the most static constructions of social divisions, and this is despite a multiplicity of ethnic regimes being made apparent. Fixed notions of identity are filtered through the construction of community, honour and shame constructs and language barriers.

Additionally, there was a definite link evinced between offering a range of services to a wide scope of victims and securing funding. This issue spanned the two sets of interviews but had got progressively worse by 2010. The impact of the community cohesion agenda pushing race relations in the UK at present, has been a central thread running through several of the chapters. However,

the service providers did not feel that this need detract from an intersectional vision – whether a service is predicated on generality or one or two particular social divisions does not discount the multiplicity of identity or systems of inequality which underpin experience. This was not the only tangible effect the service providers pondered due to official discourse. Shifting definitions and poorly executed legal sanctions created a rift between policy and practice as did the responsibility of having to implement some of the more disagreeable government stipulations. Again, of note, was the plight of women with uncertain immigration status and the implication that many service providers felt in a discriminatory practice. Indeed Service Provider C suggested that ‘...it’s [turning women and their children away] the worst part of my job, you know. My job is to help women not to tell them that I can’t’.

These competing definitions of identity and the way in which they are presented to the service providers, points to the instability of identity as a whole category, and to the competing and fluctuating nature of social divisions. These categories are clearly socially defined and as experience is located in discourse, understandings are mediated through hegemonic and historically contingent contexts. This provides conditions in which identity in the context of VAW is understood to be marked by difference, and underscored by the workings of an unequal social system. The constraints placed upon ethnicised women are culturally and structurally internalised against a wider ideological backdrop of social and community cohesion. This is to the point where Rose (1999) suggests that the term community is now governmental. Received

wisdom suggests that multiculturalism provides a legitimate reason to avoid tackling violence perpetrated against ethnicised women, and we see evidence of this from both the first and second round narratives. Similarly, this climate promotes the idea that those intragroup differences between women are inconsequential and can be dealt with in mainstream services. Again, this evidences an expression of social divisions at a discursive level and alludes to the power of hegemonic rhetoric.

Even though the service provider perspectives were not necessarily explicitly conceptualised, internalised and addressed as being intersectional, many of the points raised indicate the serious consideration that is given to interrelating problems and interactive subjectivities. Thus, a version of intersectionality is practiced. Services cannot respond to groups of women as though they are homogenous entities, but they must address the operation of multiple characteristics and cultural and structural forms of violence without losing sight of similarities and the benefits of sharing experiences. Distinctions are drawn more prolifically on the basis of race and ethnicity, suggesting that difference in this milieu is difficult to handle. Perhaps the most significant effect theory and policy can hope to have on practice is the production of counter-discourse which seeks to remedy discriminatory and fixed notions of ethnicised people and communities.

This thesis contributes to the widening discursive horizons of an intersectional approach. 'Intersectionality first and foremost reflects the reality

of lives' (Shields, 2008). Crucially, this connection to lived experience reinforces the praxis-led priorities of VAW and affords theory the opportunity to have a meaningful impact upon policy and practice. Intersectionality's theoretical underpinnings dictate that an interrogation of structural and institutional responses is a staple part of analysis and the flexibility and accuracy of its approach facilitate a well-rounded and comprehensive investigation of VAW as a social problem articulated through various discourses. This thesis offers a reading of the links between violence, identity, structure and agency.

Intersectionality has made significant headway in VAW literature (Sokoloff and Pratt, 2005) but has yet to be applied to the study of VAW in the UK (Thiara and Gill, 2010). At the core of this study is the argument that a credible account of gender relations and significant and constructive analysis of VAW has to be much broader based and comprehensive than existing challenges. This thesis contributes to the wider debate on the problem of violence against ethnicised women and sits comfortably alongside existing critical work that aims to create a discursive space for the utilisation of a more consistent and distinct multifarious agenda. This thesis flows through the benefits of an intersectional approach via the considerations of theory, policy and practice, with each section moving independently from examining methodological and experiential data. The study offers an approach that combats the monolithic consideration of gender and the limits of multiculturalism through the adoption of an understanding that the intersections and interactions of social divisions and the operation of systems of

power impact significantly on the experience of violence and responses to this violence. Women are routinely discriminated against because of their intersectional identities. This thesis re-directs the focus and priorities of VAW discourse in an attempt to prevent inequity widening. Equally, this thesis reminds us that, at times, similarities are as important as differences, and intersectional identities bring both privilege and oppression.

### **WHERE NEXT?**

Ultimately, this thesis is offered in the belief that it has added to our knowledge and understanding of intersectionality and the importance of adopting its inclusive, specific and challenging notions in the VAW field. As Thiara and Gill (2010: 24) note, we are just at the onset of a 'critical conversation' about intersectional analysis and VAW in the UK and a deeper and more critical engagement with this approach is necessary to further the campaign for freedom, safety and justice for all women. The most fruitful way to move forward from this thesis, I believe, is to more fully address how difference tends to overwhelm commonality in VAW discourse, and through the adoption of constructionist intersectionality connect with narrative explanations to gain clues on how to work more meaningfully with interlocking approaches. A life course perspective documents the harm or experiences of its subjects across their lifetime and in a manner which echoes the ethos of intersectionality, fosters a cumulative approach to experience and views events as complex, multifaceted and interrelated (Pantazis, 2004). A life course

perspective would advocate that VAW is viewed as a series of social harm and, as such, social harm theory (Dorling et al., 2008) is also worth exploring<sup>3</sup>.

On a personal note, I hope to advocate the adoption of intersectionality within critical criminology circles. The discipline of criminology has ignored, and continues to do so, many gendered, sexed and racialised harms (Stanko, 1985; 1998). Even the more social theory based branch of critical criminology has largely viewed these concerns as peripheral (Carrington, 2002; Rafter and Heidensohn, 1995). There are, and continue to be, significant calls from feminist quarters to abandon the prism of criminology (Cain, 1990; Naffine, 1997; Smart, 1995; Young, 1996) or to side-step traditional and mainstream perspectives in favour of critical and multiplex ideas (Bosworth, 1999; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Thalia and Cunneen, 2008). Therefore, even in its most radical expression, when working in criminology we ‘...must move on two fronts: building feminist knowledges and continuing to challenge and correct a nonfeminist field for its gender blindness, ethnocentrism, and theoretical rigidities’ (Daly and Maher, 1998: 12). I think an intersectional approach to the experience of VAW and other significant gendered harms offers criminology the best way of moving forward.

## **CONCLUSION**

This thesis has engaged with theoretical, political and practical responses to the omnipresent problem of violence against ethnicised women

and concludes that adopting an intersectional framework offers the best approach to the complex questions posed by multiple systems of domination. Research, policy and provision based on inadequate non-intersectional frameworks will always fall short of connecting with, and capturing the experiences of, women who suffer the effects of cross-cutting and interactive regimes of inequality. Intersectionality is necessarily flexible – it is accommodating enough to deal with the shifting and dynamic terrain of identity construction; it is adaptable enough to be used as an analytical lens; and it is able enough to deal with the complexities of lived experience and appropriate responses. Although its use in a variety of contexts – as a broad policy perspective, a theoretical framework, an analytical strategy, a mechanism for social change and a self-supporting concept – still has a long way to go, this thesis contributes to the burgeoning utilisation of an intersectional approach in critical social theory. It also asserts that intersectionality can be used in the VAW field to advocate both a structural and culturally-relevant, rather than relativist, response.

A degree of match between effective and ethical research, policy, and practice is crucial to the actual lived experience of women and the pursuit of safety and social justice for all. Whilst this thesis makes many other vital theoretical and practical considerations known, the crux of the argument must always be better outcomes for women in dangerous positions. With this in mind, it is once again, a call to institutions which govern our society and produce dominant ideological constructions, to correct discriminatory and



disciplinary notions of regimes of inequality including sexism, racism and ethnocentrism. It is essential, in the meantime that the assiduous efforts of activists and advocates continue in order to provide shelter, support and aid for women survivors of VAW wherever possible. I hope to be part of the continuing battle.

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault (1979: 8).

<sup>2</sup> Sokoloff and Dupont (2005a: 43).

<sup>3</sup> Aside from how intersectionality could be enhanced by a life course and social harm perspective, I also think that the body is a prominent feature of intersectional analysis. I would like to research the body as the primary site of the construction of difference, and pay particular attention to the experience of sexual coercion and how the body is punished for its varying displays of feminine sexuality. In essence, how bodies may tell the story of violence and coercion in contemporary society that is saturated with sexual discourse. I would like to draw predominantly on Mason's (2002) work on the embodiment of violence, and Levy's (2005) work on 'raunch culture'.

## APPENDIX 1

### Safety & Justice: The Government's Proposals on Domestic Violence      2003

Content Themes	Frequency
Women (girls)	40
Men (boys)	23
Gender	4
Race	2
Ethnicity	23
BME	6
Refugee (asylum)	0
Culture	0
Religion	0
Immigration	9
Sexuality (LGBT)	27
Social Class	2
Age (young; elderly; adult; child)	82
Minority	10
Priority	0
Identity	0
Specialist	14
Cohesion	0
Inequality/Equality	1

### Domestic Violence: A National Report      2005

Content Themes	Frequency
Women (girls)	7
Men (boys)	2
Gender	1
Race	0
Ethnicity	1
BME	7
Refugee (asylum)	0
Culture	0
Religion	0
Immigration	7
Sexuality (LGBT)	11
Social Class	2
Age (young; elderly; adult; child)	47
Minority	1
Priority	0
Identity	0
Specialist	16
Cohesion	0
Inequality/Equality	0

**Together we can end Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy 2009**

<b>Content Themes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Women (girls)	153
Men (boys)	19
Gender	24
Race	0
Ethnicity	1
BME	5
Refugee (asylum)	8
Culture	2
Religion (faith schools)	2
Immigration	3
Sexuality	1
Class (urban/rural)	10
Age (young; elderly; adult; child)	116
Minority	3
Priority	2
Identity	0
Specialist	19
Cohesion	0
Inequality/Equality	12

Note – Some terms are accompanied by other categories which were subsumed within the terms, whilst others in brackets elude to the contextual reference found in that document – for example, Religion (faith schools).

## APPENDIX 2

### **The interview**

This is a semi-structured interview and as such, the discussion may take many directions and the questions are designed as a guide rather than a definitive list of points.

We can stop the interview at any time.

Your responses are confidential and anonymous and will not be attributed to you at any point in transcription.

### **The topic**

The focus of the thesis is to draw out the effects of theory and policy on service providers' practice.

Briefly, my research uses a theory called intersectionality to analyse policy, theory and practice based responses to violence against women. Intersectionality attempts to make visible the multiple factors that structure our experience (gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, disability and so on) and how these interact with each other as well as with systems of power (the state, the legal system, education etc.).

**Some, or all, of these questions were asked in each of the second round of interviews. Additional questions were asked based on the context of the answers and dialogue.**

### **Questions**

- Can you tell me a little bit about what your role is, what your service offers and who you help.
- Would your service provision be classed as specialist or generalist, and in what ways?
- Would your service provision class itself as any of the following:
  - Feminist-inspired specialist services

- Feminist-inspired generalist services
- Anti-feminist
- Faith-based organisation
- What happens when you take a referral from a service user or their advocate?
- Do you consider multiple factors when assessing service users?
- What systems do you have in place to gain information on identity?
- Do you ever judge identity on what is visually presented to you?
- Are any identity categories particularly important with the service users you tend to work with?
- Do you think gender, ethnicity and class impact upon the experience of violence?
- Would you specifically ask about...sexuality, class and religion?
- Do you see experience as an interaction of different identity groups? gender, ethnicity, class etc.?
- How central do you see someone's identity to their experience?
- Do you base your response to service users on their identity?
- Do service users talk about their identity?
- How do service providers work with Intersectionality? Is it implicitly used in service provision? (Explanation prompt)
- What might be gained, if anything, by naming it explicitly?
- Are there ways in which trying to address all the different parts of someone's identity can be complex for organisations? (For example, have local authorities pushing a community cohesion agenda tried to problematise women's only services?)
- Is the complexity of activism further complicated by intersectional approaches?
- How do you think Intersectionality works to hinder oppressed groups? (Explanation prompt)
- How do you think Intersectionality works to assist privileged groups? (Explanation prompt)
- What are the effects of theory and policy on service providers practice?

- How does government policy support or hinder the use of an intersectional approach at service level?
- How would you describe the violence that your service users experience?
- Do you locate FM, HBV in DV or more broadly VAW?
- What are the limitations of practicing Intersectionality?
- What are the limitations of an intersectional theory?
- What are the limitations of an intersectional approach to policy?
- What would you identify as your, or the movements, research needs?

## APPENDIX 3

### **Are you interested in participating in research about local domestic violence service provision?**

#### Interview Information

I have recently carried out a research programme and am looking to consolidate on the 'experiential' information that I collected. I would ideally like to talk to service providers who work with women whose lives have been affected by violence.

Briefly, my research uses a theory called intersectionality to analyse policy, theory and practice based responses to violence against women. Intersectionality attempts to make visible the multiple factors that structure our experience (gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, religion and so on) and how these interact with each other as well as with systems of power (racism, the state, the legal system, education etc.). Intersectionality looks to capture the complexities of women's experiences by highlighting both differences and similarities.

What my research has shown so far is that a version of 'intersectionality' is used by service providers in their practice. I would like to gauge the reliability of this information by conducting a few more interviews.

- Do you and/or your service assist women based on a variety of factors including gender?
- Is someone's identity important to the experience of violence?
- Do you think that the relationship between different forms of identity, for example, ethnicity and gender, creates specific experiences? And needs?
- Does government policy assist you in providing a holistic approach? Does it hinder you?

These are the types of questions that would be asked should you choose to take part. The interview should not take up a great deal of your time although I am interested in listening to your opinions on the current state of service provision. I am happy to conduct interviews at any time which is most convenient.

If you require any further information or would like an informal chat, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks. I look forward to hearing from you,



Helen

Contact info:

Helen Monk

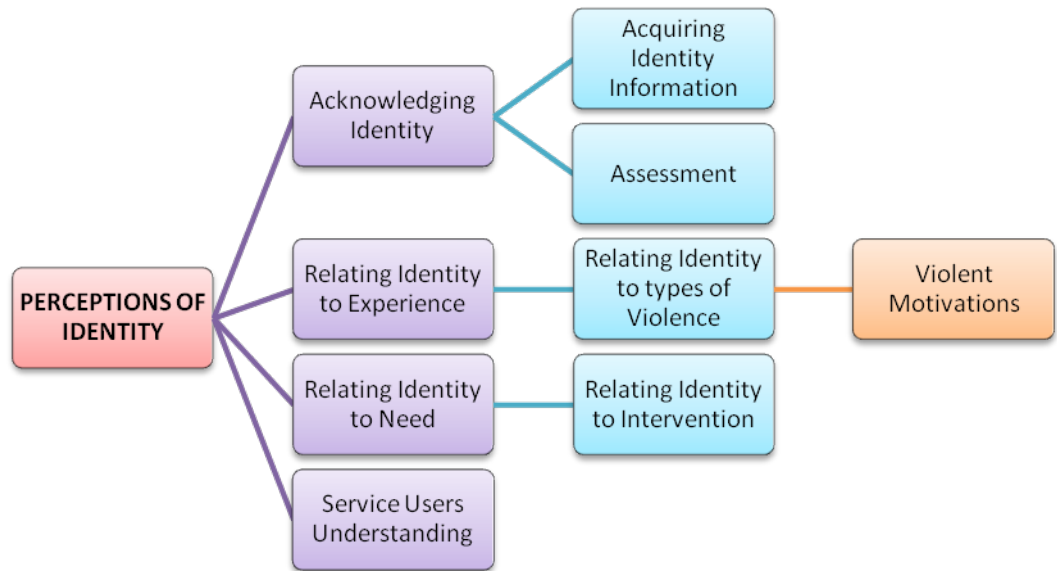
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## APPENDIX 4



Example of the process of raising codes and categories to a higher order theme  
– Perceptions of Identity.

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