

What's 'OK' and 'not OK'?: An exploration of the meaning(s) of young women's attitudes towards and experiences of a healthy intimate relationship

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What's 'OK' and 'not OK'?: An exploration of the meaning(s) of young women's attitudes towards and experiences of a healthy intimate relationship

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ABSTRACT

Though our understanding of the problem of gender-based violence (GBV) has grown over the years, there has been limited focus given to the voices of young women. Our understanding of young women's perceptions about their role, identity and the nature of abusive behaviour within their own intimate relationships, including the implications for their well-being, is limited. Using a symbolic interactionist approach, this research explored young women's understandings of what it means to have a healthy relationship, and the negotiations of their identity and behaviour within their intimate relationships.

A regional study completed across seven secondary schools in North Wales, included a focus on an attitudinal survey (n=220) to explore young women's perceptions on gender norms and un/healthy intimate relationships, with a particular focus on their gendered attitudes. A series of semi-structured interviews were completed in order to gather in-depth information from 25 young women aged 15-18 years old, on their experiences of intimate relationships, focused on the progression of these relationships and the patterns of abuse experienced as part of these relationships. This included an exploration of the use of social media, including the gendered patterns of online and offline abuse, the nature of coercive behaviour and the psychological harm inflicted by such abuse, including the impact of everyday forms of harassment and sexual bullying in schools and beyond.

A thematic analysis identified two key points: firstly, the impact of gendered expectations on young women's abilities to navigate the 'uncharted territory' of young intimate relationships. Secondly, within a perceived 'post-feminist' society, young women continue to face challenges when negotiating their feminine identity, in particular sexual 'double standards'. Despite their ability to express attitudes supportive of gender equality, they demonstrated limited space in which to operationalise this understanding within their own intimate relationships.

The findings have relevance for policy and practice, and contribute to an emerging field of literature exploring the nature of young intimate relationships focused on the manner in which young women negotiate the conflicts inherent in contemporary constructions of gender. The findings suggest the importance of a comprehensive educational approach focused on promoting gender equality and healthy relationships across communities.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original research, has been written by me and has not been submitted for any previous degree. All sources are acknowledged as References.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis outlines the findings of a mixed methods study exploring how gender norms influence the nature and patterns of behaviour within young intimate relationships, including how their interactions shape their individual identities, their power to progress these relationships and also the nature and patterns of abuse as part of these relationships. The focus is on understanding how young women (aged 15-18 years old) define and conceptualise particular behaviours within their own intimate relationships, and how this subsequently impacts on their identity and well-being. The intention was to allow and enable young women to articulate and discuss their attitudes towards, and experiences of, intimate relationships. Each stage of this research endeavoured to give voice to the young women to promote them as active participants. This chapter outlines the overall aim and objectives of the study, followed by an overview of the conceptual framework, the research context and background, and a brief outline of the key discussion from the literature on the nature of teenage intimate relationships.

The problem of gender-based violence (GBV) continues unabated. Though our understanding of this issue has grown over the years, there has been limited focus given to the voices of young women. The adoption of the Istanbul Convention (2011) and the publication of the landmark UK Domestic Abuse Bill (2019) signal developments in the right direction. The traditional role of young women within intimate relationships has been associated with passivity and respectability (Connell, 1987). Our understanding of how young women conceptualise their role, identity and abusive behaviour within their own intimate relationships is limited, as is our knowledge of the implications of their behaviour on their well-being. A rich body of research has revealed the incidence and prevalence of violence and abuse across young people's relationships, from their own intimate relationships (Barter et al, 2009, Wood et al 2011, Barter et al 2015) to child on parent/carer harm and abuse (Hunter & Nixon, 2012; Condry & Miles, 2012 & 2014; Biehal, 2012; Wilcox, 2012; Holt, 2012), and child sexual exploitation (Jay Report, 2014 & Casey Report, 2015). The degree of harm is clearly evidenced, as is the gendered nature of the harm (Barter et al, 2009; Berelowitz et al. 2012; Sundaram, 2014).

The change in definition of domestic violence and abuse in March 2013¹ to include 16-17

¹ The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:-

year-olds, the recent policy debates on related matters such as the age of sexual consent, social media influences, sexualisation, non-consensual circulation of sexualised images (Ringrose, 2012) and the exploitation of young women (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2013; Jay Report, 2014; Casey Report, 2015), present the ideal context for this research. Despite this mounting interest and these key messages from research (Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011; Fox et al, 2013; Barter et al, 2015), there remains limited Welsh research focusing on young women’s attitudes to gender norms, and qualitative research focused on exploring their relationship experiences and the impact of abuse on their well-being. There is also limited evidence of mixed methods research on this topic, specifically research focused on gathering the attitudes towards, and experiences of, intimate relationships. My aim was to address this gap in the academic debates due to my interest in the context and significance of the change of the Home Office definition of domestic violence and abuse (Home Office, 2013), which re-focused this issue to include young people as part of the emerging agenda of ending violence and abuse towards women and girls. The intention is to contribute to the academic debates by opening the conversation with young women on their intimate relationships, by focusing on the progression of their intimate relationships, the nature of abuse in their intimate relationships and their power within these relationships. The research was small-scale and exploratory in nature, but also culturally and geographically specific to Wales. However, key themes have resonance and relevance for other UK based countries.

1.2 Positioning the Research: The Welsh Context

This is Welsh research with Welsh young women conducted during a period when the focus and importance of gender-based violence is increasing in Wales, as a result of the implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015². Devolution in Wales has resulted in a shifting policy landscape, whereby Westminster retains powers over particular service areas (e.g., Criminal Justice), with the powers of certain service areas devolved to Wales (for example, Social Care,

‘any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, **violence** or **abuse** between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality’ (Home Office, 2013).

² In April 2015 the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) passed the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act. The aim of this legislation is to improve arrangements for the:-

- a). prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
- b). protection of victims of such abuse and violence;
- c). support for people affected by such abuse and violence;
- d). appointment of a National Adviser on gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Education, Health). This essentially means that particular services related to domestic violence and abuse are devolved, whilst others continue to be non-devolved.

The population of Wales was measured as 3.1 million in 2011; a five per cent increase since 2001 (ONS, 2011). North Wales covers an area across the counties of Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Conwy, Gwynedd and Ynys Mon. Until the 1996 re-organisations of Councils in Wales, several of these counties were amalgamated, with the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 enforcing the creation of 22 local authorities in Wales. The Williams Commission (2014) recommended that local authorities in Wales are significantly reduced, with the intention that once again several areas merge to form joint local authorities (Williams, 2014). This has resulted in local and national discussion during a period of austerity in order to establish public services across the country, to provide efficiency savings, respond to the demographic changes and the needs of Welsh citizens, to align boundaries and reduce complexity. As a result, several areas are facilitating joint services across the spectrum of council service provision. Despite this, education services remain separate across the local authorities, with certain aspects of social care provision delivered jointly on the basis of partnership agreements; for example, Youth Justice Services and the Out of Hours Service.

Due to the potential alignment of local authorities in Wales, a decision was taken to focus the research in two aligned/neighbouring areas, with the data collection completed in two of the six North Wales counties. The decision to work in North Wales was made due to my knowledge of the area and existing multi-agency professional relationships, the development of key campaigns in Wales³ and the revised legislation⁴ in Wales. The research area included a mixture of rural and urban areas, with a high proportion of Welsh language speakers.

1.3 Naming and Defining the Issue

GBV is underpinned by inequitable power relations, based on gender inequalities, that undermine a person based on their gender or (perceived) sexuality. GBV includes a continuum of behaviours and attitudes (Kelly, 1988), such as domestic violence and abuse, which accounted for 18% of all recorded violent crimes in the UK in 2011 (Chaplin et al 2011), with an estimated 1.2 million female victims in 2017 (ONS, 2018), with sexual harassment and the social norms sanctioning this behaviour.

³ Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, Campaign in the earlier stages and then the development of the Dyma Fi/This is Me campaign.

⁴ The Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015

The following terms are used throughout, and therefore are defined from the outset. Young people's intimate relationships are defined as extra-familial intimate relationships, which includes an element of dating. During the course of this study, the terms 'young people', 'young men', 'young women' and 'young person' will be adopted, with the exception of when other research specifies and makes reference to terms such as 'teenager', 'adolescent' and 'child'. Whilst frequent reference is made to violence and abuse within relationships, the term abuse will mostly be used as it recognises a continuum of harmful attitudes and behaviours (Kelly, 1988) within young people's intimate relationships. Reference will also be made to 'dating violence' when discussing US-based research.

The definition outlined within section 24 (1) of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015⁵ intends to capture all forms of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence and specifies "abuse" as including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse; "domestic abuse" as abuse where the victim is or has been associated with the abuser and "gender-based violence" as violence, threats of violence or harassment arising directly or indirectly from values, beliefs or customs relating to gender or sexual orientation; female genital mutilation; forcing a person (whether by physical force, or coercion by threats or other psychological means) to enter into a religious or civil ceremony of marriage (whether or not legally binding). The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 also introduced a duty on local authorities and local health boards to promote an individual's well-being, including children, adults in need and carers. The definition of 'well-being' used in the Act within section 2(2) includes: '*physical and mental health and emotional well-being, protection from abuse and neglect*' and '*domestic, family and personal relationships*'. This Act now places a duty on local authorities to offer an assessment of need and support services when required in cases of domestic abuse, which essentially widens the safeguarding net further across statutory agencies in Wales. The Welsh perspective now reinforces the notion that domestic violence and abuse is a gendered issue that predominately impacts on girls and women, with boys and men as the primary perpetrators.

1.4 The Nature of the Problem

The 2009/2010 British Crime Survey (BCS) and recent figures suggest that 16-19 year-olds was the group most likely to suffer abuse from a partner (Chaplin et al, 2011; ONS,

⁵ A broad range of terminology is used to conceptualise forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV). These include domestic violence, domestic abuse, intimate partner abuse or violence and violence against women (VAW).

2017), with the majority of victims female (70%) (ONS, 2017). However, key agencies, such as Women's Aid have argued that the prevalence rates of domestic violence and abuse are generally unreliable (Women's Aid, 2018). The Crime Survey for England and Wales (formerly the BCS) understates the problem, as not all forms of abuse are captured, nor is consideration given to patterns of repeated intimate partner violence; it offers the best data available (Women's Aid, 2017). Research reflects the gendered nature of intimate partner violence and abuse whereby women are subjected to more abuse than men when the frequency, severity, range and impact of the abuse is considered (Barter et al, 2009; Humphreys et al, 2008; Safer lives, 2009; Stanley, 2011, WHO, 2005; Wood, et al, 2011, Radford et al, 2011). Abusive behaviour within intimate relationships is gendered, primarily due to the structural gendered power dynamics within society which favour young men/men. It is argued that the social construction of masculinity and the presence of structural inequalities which perpetuate gendered norms dictate normative scripts for both genders. These gendered norms provide the foundation for young people's attitudes and expectations (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005) of their role and identity.

The nature of young intimate relationships has shifted significantly, as 'online' relationships and the emergence of the new technologies play a key role in perpetuating gendered norms and patterns of coercion and control within young people's intimate relationships (Ringrose, 2012). Significant concerns have also been identified regarding the coercive nature of teenage relationships and the confusion between 'caring' and 'controlling' behaviour (Barter et al, 2009) with particular practices such as 'sexting', reflecting wider gendered sexual pressures. Young women are subject to sexual 'double standards' whereby sexually active young men are labelled as the 'norm', and sexually active young women are stigmatised or labelled in a derogatory manner as 'slags/sluts' (Ringrose et al, 2012). Current debates continue to highlight the gaps in education focused on promoting healthy relationships; in particular, the lack of focus on teaching the importance of 'sexual consent' (Emmerson, 2014) and 'respect' within young people's intimate relationships. The recent Home Office campaigns, *This is Abuse* (2010-2015), *Disrespect Nobody* (2016), the recent work on making positive relationships (Renold, 2016) and the Welsh Assembly *This is Me* campaign, (2018) are steps in the right direction.

1.5 Research Question: Aim and Objectives

This study sought to address the following research question: *What can young women's attitudes and perspectives tell us about the nature of young people's intimate relationships?*

This empirical research explored the following sub-questions:

- *What do young women's attitudes tell us about gendered norms in young people's relationships?*
- *What do young women's experiences tell us about gendered norms in young people's relationships?*
- *What are the nature and patterns of abuse within young women's intimate relationships?*
- *What roles do media technologies, such as Facebook⁶ and Snapchat⁷ play in the conduct of young people's relationships?*
- *What are the consequences of intimate partner abuse on young women's well-being, identity and understanding of 'healthy relationships'?*
- *What are the knowledge and perceptions about support services available and what are the perceived barriers to accessing support?*

The overall aim of this research is to evaluate young women's attitudes towards, and experiences of, intimate partner abuse. The key objectives of this research are to:-

- Identify young women's attitudes to gender norms as part of their intimate relationships;
- Explore the nature of behaviour in young people's intimate relationships;
- Advance the knowledge available to inform the development of prevention education and early intervention services to promote healthy relationships. The intention is for this research to contribute to academic debates that intend to shift the focus from protection to one that also incorporates prevention, early intervention and well-being.

⁶ Facebook is a global free social networking site. Users set up a profile and can then send messages, post statuses, upload videos or photos to those who they have selected to be 'friends' with on the site. You can communicate with others by 'liking' what they post on Facebook.

⁷ Snapchat is a mobile phone messaging service that allows users to send message, a photo or video. The message lasts up to 10 seconds before it disappears. However, recipients of the message can take a screen shot of the message.

This study is the first mixed methods approach to researching gendered dynamics within young intimate relationships with young women in Wales. This study gathered quantitative data by utilising an attitudes questionnaire on gendered dynamics, and conducting qualitative data by analysing 25 semi-structured interviews with young women. The purpose was to engage with young women in order to develop an understanding of their attitudes on gender norms, to gather a perspective on their experiences of the online and offline nature of their intimate relationships and gain a sense of their perception of a 'healthy' intimate relationship.

1.6 Situating This Research: Gaps in the Literature

It is acknowledged in academic literature that bodies develop gendered identities due to the constant 'doing' of attributes associated with masculinity or femininity (West & Zimmerman, 1987), which is an active social construct that can be 'undone' in particular circumstances (Deutsch, 2007). Structural powers dictate gendered norms and inequalities associated with the concept of young men/men as active and controlling, and young women as passive and vulnerable (Connell, 1987). Within a post-feminist discourse there is a common belief that young women are empowered, autonomous individuals, which is in contrast to the perceived normative feminine characteristics of passivity and respectability. The everyday challenges faced by young women are further compounded by the false belief that young women have the same degree of power as their male counterparts. For example, the meaning(s) of 'appropriate' femininity has long been associated with ideas of controlling risk and respectability (Campbell, 2005).

In recent years, there has been an expansion of research focused on young intimate relationships and the patterns of violence and abuse within these relationships. Despite this, there are gaps in UK academic literature around the progression of young intimate relationships, gender and dating norms and the continuum of abusive behaviour within these relationships. This study aims to address some of these gaps by adopting a 'mixed methods' approach, linking young women's attitudes and experiences by drawing upon feminist frameworks focused on promoting young women as active agents (James & James, 2004) and a theoretical framework, focused on symbolic interactionism (Goffman, 1969; Denzin, 1989). This study contributes to addressing these gaps by exploring both attitudes towards and lived meaning(s) of young intimate relationships, and also examines the overall structural link to the normative social construction of gender in our society today.

Existing research on young intimate relationships often neglects to draw upon the ways in

which attitudes and gender norms shape the embodiment of gendered roles for young people (see exceptions: Sundaram, 2014 & Renold, 2016). UK-based studies have focused on the prevalence and patterns of abuse within young intimate relationships (more recently, Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011; Barter et al, 2015), in comparison to the research conducted in the US, which has focused on dating violence, primarily targeted at College and University students. Whilst it has been of benefit to draw upon these studies, there are significant differences between the UK and the US; in particular, around 'dating' norms, which has made it a challenge to make a significant comparison. The majority of US-based research on this topic has primarily focused on large-scale surveys and the prevalence of physical and sexual violence measured against adult-centric tools (for example, the Conflict Tactic Scale), which cannot be easily applied to a UK context. It is also questionable whether US-based research can be generalised to the European culture and context (Hellevik, 2017). Whilst there is a comprehensive body of US-based research covering diverse aspects of the dynamics of such relationships, particular categories of young people, such as pregnant young women, young mothers and young women in secure settings and disabled young women are yet to receive detailed research attention in the UK.

Within UK-based research, there are some gaps around how a continuum of abuse within young intimate relationships, gender and structural inequalities intersect. The work of Sundaram (2014) draws upon the negotiation of gender and sexuality within schools, highlighting the presence of harmful gendered expectations. Recent UK-based research (Barter et al, 2009 and Wood et al, 2011) has focused on the nature and impact of abuse within teenage relationships. However, this research has predominantly focused on gathering the views from both young men and young women, whilst the aim of this present study is to offer a female-only space in which to share attitudes and experiences. There is limited research separating and focusing on the attitudes and experiences of young women or young men, with previous research focusing on data gathered from a mixed-gender space (Regan & Kelly, 2001; Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011; Barter et al, 2015) or a male-specific space (Fox et al, 2013). As a consequence, the conceptions of young intimate relationships, and the influence of gendered attitudes and abuse on these relationships, have not been situated purely from the perspectives of young women. This research was situated within a Welsh context, as there has been limited Welsh research completed (for exception see: Barter et al, 2009). Whilst it is acknowledged that this study builds on previous research on young intimate relationships, the progression of young intimate relationships remains an area requiring further exploration, due to the gap in

current UK-based research. As illustrated, research has focused on ‘dating violence and abuse’, ‘hooking up’ (Bogle, 2008) or the impact of social media on dating norms, rather than the progression of intimate relationships or the impact of gender norms on the ritual of forming of romantic relationships. This research has engaged with young women who have been in intimate relationships and those who are yet to encounter these experiences, with the aim of providing a more nuanced picture of young women’s attitudes towards their gender, normative expectations and their perception and experiences of intimate relationships from both these perspectives.

1.7 Research Summary

This study focuses on the everyday attitudes and experiences of young women by exploring how they negotiate their identity and power within their intimate relationships. The conceptual framework is based on a symbolic interactionist approach (Goffman, 1969; Denzin, 1989), which informed the research methodology, findings and analysis. As such, and as explained in further detail in chapter two, some elements of this theory have been adopted, revised and rejected, but the theory applied derives from this framework. Elements from other frameworks are also considered and applied, such as the ‘doing of gender’ (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The philosophical framework and lens underpinning this research was feminist theory and feminist research methods. The aim was to identify with participants as active agents, with a focus on their ‘lived experiences’ (McCarry, 2005). A feminist research perspective outlines the importance of establishing a ‘non-exploitative relationship’ dependent on formulating a trustful relationship with research participants in order to gather high-quality data (Maynard, 1994). Whilst there may exist a range of intersectional factors influencing the presence of violence and abuse within intimate relationships, the primary factors considered within this study are the construction of gender norms, abuse and power.

The empirical work for this study involved the completion of a questionnaire (n=220) and semi-structured interviews (n=25) with young women aged 15-18, conducted in seven schools, and the youth justice services in North Wales. Specifically, the research process was separated into three key stages:

1) **Advisory Stage:** A young people’s advisory panel was established in order to co-produce the research documents (e.g. information leaflet for participants) and research tools and to provide feedback on questions, language use and the use of particular interview techniques, e.g. vignettes. Research demonstrates the benefits of including young people in research projects, not only to provide them with a ‘voice’ (Article 12

UNCRC), but also to assist young people in developing transferable skills (Kirby, 2004; Shaw et al, 2011) and provide them with audience and influence (Lundy, 2007).

2) **Questionnaire Stage:** The fieldwork commenced with an attitude questionnaire (n=220) on young women's attitudes towards GBV, including their perspectives on broader gender norms, gender norms within relationships, the use of media technology, such as sexting, snapchatting and Facebook, and on attitudes towards a spectrum of abuse in intimate relationships. A number of validated scales to measure attitudes towards/knowledge about GBV were considered and adapted to the context of Wales and the age of the sample. The questionnaire assisted in establishing 'lines of inquiry' and in isolating key themes to be explored within the qualitative interviews.

3) **Interview Stage:** Interviews were completed in order to gather a sense of the participants' 'lived experiences', to triangulate the quantitative data and capture a more nuanced understanding of their perceptions of their intimate relationships. Within the sample school sites, 25 young women participated in the qualitative stage. Semi-structured interviews were used in order to allow a degree of flexibility and provide participants with a degree of 'power'. Vignettes were used as part of both stages in order to assist with 'setting the scene' in a non-threatening manner (Shaw et al, 2011).

1.8 Thesis Structure

This chapter has situated the study within the current research landscape in a perceived post-feminist society, and instigated an outline of the key themes investigated through this research. The literature review will further situate the study and expand upon the key research themes of gendered attitudes, sexual double standards, the impact of social media and the nature and patterns of abuse in young intimate relationships. Whilst these themes will be explored in more depth in a review of the literature in chapters two and three, this chapter has begun to emphasise some of the central tensions faced by young women within their intimate relationships. Both literature review chapters will reflect more broadly upon the conceptual framework, gender, sexualities, coercive control and social media, and expand upon the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study drawn from academic debates and feminist theory. Chapter two draws upon the debates across the literature in order to situate the theoretical position on the construction of gender and gender-based violence (GBV). This chapter explores the conceptual framework, with a focus on symbolic interactionism. Chapter three reviews the research context on the nature, patterns and prevalence of abuse within teenage intimate relationships.

Chapter four describes the philosophical stance underpinning this research, the research

design and methodology adopted in order to address the research questions and aims and objectives. In line with feminist methodology, this chapter offers reflections on the research process and explains some of the barriers faced. Chapter five summarises the quantitative findings from the attitudinal questionnaire, and identifies key themes that are further explored through the qualitative research stage. Chapter six documents the analysis of the qualitative data in a thematic manner, with an exploration firstly on the themes of gender and relationships, including what young women want from their intimate relationships and the progression and development of these relationships. This is followed by a discussion on the double standards of sexuality, including a focus on gender norms, coercion and 'slut shaming'. Finally, the qualitative chapter examines the nature and patterns of abuse; in particular, the nature of coercion, the influence of social media and the escalation of the patterns of abuse within young intimate relationships. Chapter seven brings together the key messages from this research to inform recommendations for future developments to the prevention work with young people, focused on promoting healthy intimate relationships. Chapter eight concludes by drawing together the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative stages and summarises the key arguments by portraying the relationship between gendered attitudes and the experiences of young women within young intimate relationships. This chapter also illustrates some limitations of the study and the contribution to current academic debates and makes recommendations for future research, policy and practice developments.

1.9 Significance and Scope of the Study

The aim of this study is to enrich our understanding of the influence of gender norms, the progression of young intimate relationships and the dynamics of abusive patterns within these relationships in order to contribute to the academic debates and inform future prevention and intervention programmes to inform young healthy intimate relationships. As explained, there is limited Welsh research, specifically qualitative research with young women focusing on abuse within young people's intimate relationships; however, this is an area of research that has received increased attention in recent years in the UK (Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011; Fox et al, 2013; Barter et al, 2015).

This study aims to expand on current debates on the nature of young intimate relationships by exploring the progression of these relationships and young women's experiences of a continuum of abuse (Kelly, 1988) within these relationships, with an exploration of their identity and how their limited choices are negotiated through their embodied practices within intimate relationships; this contributing to our understanding of the everyday

conceptualisations and experiences of young women within young intimate relationships. This research contributes original findings to the current academic debates on GBV; firstly, by making empirical contribution to the growing literature on young intimate relationships in Wales via data gathered from the questionnaire and semi structured interviews; secondly, the research findings further develop an under-researched area on gendered norms and abusive behaviour patterns within young intimate relationships by shifting the analytical focus from protection and welfare to ‘active agency’ and well-being; and thirdly, it offers findings in the aim of contributing to the debate on the development of prevention and early interventions to be used with young people in schools and beyond.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The definition, meaning(s) and scope of gender and femininities and the resulting implications for the lived experiences of young women are often debated by academics and practitioners. The literature review covers two chapters. This chapter is focused on the theoretical debates on the construction of gender and GBV. As part of this discussion, the literature and existing research will be outlined with the aim of defining key concepts and critically situating the research. The discussion will then focus on the key debates on the social construction of gender, sexuality and GBV. This thesis draws upon several theoretical frameworks, with the theoretical foundation of this thesis informed by an understanding that gender and sexuality are socially constructed. This chapter will ‘set the scene’ with regard to the key frameworks influencing the shape of this thesis, specifically a symbolic interactionist approach (Goffman, 1969, Denzin, 1989) and the social construction of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Key debates on gender, femininities and female sexuality are considered, with a focus throughout on Kelly’s concept of a continuum of abusive behaviour.

In addition to establishing a relationship to the research process, conceptual frameworks provide a scaffold within which strategies for the research design can be determined, and fieldwork can be undertaken (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). The process of mapping specific ideas (feminist perspectives, symbolic interactionism, active agency and positive empowerment) contributed to a better understanding of the ontological and epistemological role of each concept in shaping the research methodology and analysis. This research draws upon elements of a symbolic interactionist approach (Goffman, 1969; Denzin, 1989), including Goffman’s dramaturgical model, and West and Zimmerman’s (1987) concept of ‘doing gender’. The idea of positive empowerment and ‘active agency’ (James & James, 2004) is also used to focus on how young women draw on and modify social, cultural and sexual scripts within their own intimate relationships, which are located in broader meaning(s), norms and societal processes, including gendered dating norms. Symbolic interactionism provided a framework focused on the self-development of identity (Cahill, 1980), which informed the research methodology, findings and analysis.

This research focuses on the meaning(s) of human conduct, and the constructive and emergent nature of interactions within young intimate relationships. The emphasis is on how young women continually modify and negotiate their behaviours as a result of their interactions and how their understanding(s) influences existing and new definitions of

behaviour within young intimate relationships. Recent research on related topics has also adopted a symbolic interactionist approach as a framework for analysing the sexualities and ‘everyday’ gender scripts (Jackson & Scott, 2010; Lamont, 2014). As the focus here is on the nature of young intimate relationships, “Interpretative interactionism speaks to this interrelationship between private lives and public responses to personal troubles” (Denzin, 1989, p.10). Adopting a symbolic interactionist perspective allows the analysis of the young women’s description of their social interactions, which reflects their construct and interpretation of the meaning(s) of their intimate relationships (Giordano et al., 2006). Within this work, it is the interpersonal level of social interactions which is most of interest; in particular, when gender roles and sexuality are embodied and performed on a social, virtual/social media and intimate platform. On this more intimate level, social scripts are modified in light of our experiences of intimate relationships, and our identity construction, which is often formulated by us and for us. As discussed further within the findings chapters, intimate relationships, sexual behaviour and sexuality are symbolic (Delamont, 2003), and associated with a range of different behaviours; for example, intimacy, desire, pleasure, friendship, power and control.

Social attitudes are conceptualised as individual sets of beliefs, which are influenced by social situations, interactions and individual qualities (Charon, 2010). Our attitudes, understandings and behaviours are also shaped by the manner in which we present ourselves to others; in particular, the manner in which others interpret, disregard, oppose or support our actions (Goffman, 1959; Tombaugh, 2009). The application of a symbolic interactionist perspective aims to capture the meaning(s) generated by young women when creatively reflecting and describing their attitudes towards, and experiences of, their intimate relationships. As stated, it is the very intimate and interpersonal level that is the focus of this study; in particular, the progression of young intimate relationships and the nature of abuse and coercive control as part of these relationships. It is during these first intimate relationships that relationship scripts are embodied and constructed; in particular, the degree of agency available to allow young women to embody or resist normative scripts and values.

2.2 Symbolic Interactionism

The conceptual framework has evolved during the research process (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). Initially, I reflected on adopting a framework focused on feminist constructivism (Locher & Prugl, 2001); specifically, the idea that feminist theory is influenced by social constructivism when shaping gendered identities. Adopting this approach posed

challenges of constructing a framework inclusive of both concepts, as key tensions are evident and could not be ignored; specifically the perspective of whether constructivism occurs on a biological basis. The epistemological gulf between both concepts (feminism and constructivism) proved challenging when aiming to draw upon a mutual position in order to shape a practical conceptual framework. As a result, symbolic interactionism was considered as the conceptual framework; specifically, as constructivism is an extension of this theory, and as the focus of this approach is on social constructs and interactions. Furthermore, this approach, as explained later in this chapter, aligned with other key aspects of this research; for example, active agency.

Elements of symbolic interactionism are drawn upon here, with a focus on a situational approach to symbolic interactionism; specifically, that individuals enact socially-constructed roles and relate to each other in terms of shared meaning(s) (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism focuses on the small-scale or micro view of everyday interactions in an attempt to understand how individuals experience and understand their social worlds. This perspective concentrates on the detailed understanding of relationships. Whilst the focus of this research is primarily on social interactions within intimate relationships on a micro level, consideration will also be given to broader influences on a macro level (e.g. societal power structures that favour young men/men). As Kitzinger (2009) explains, the everyday “micro” oppressions are often the most common, and equally the most resistant to analysis and political change, as they are seen as mundane and, to a degree, acceptable. The focus is on behaviour, social roles and identity; specifically, how individuals respond to their environments, symbols and to each other through their social interactions. Denzin (1989) conceptualised that behaviour is self-directed and observable at two levels; the symbolic and the interactional, with individual meaning(s) self-evolving through their interactions with others. Charon (2010) discusses that social actors view the world through their own perspective, with reality regarded as social, ‘out there’ and interpreted as a result of individual experiences. Symbolic interactionism focuses on the role of ‘the self’ and ‘the other’. The idea of ‘the self’ is defined as an object of individual actions, whilst the role of ‘the other’ imagines the world through the eyes of another (Charon, 2010). Rock (1979) described ‘the self’ or the ‘situated self’ as a social construct, which emerges from language and shapes the nature of our social interactions on a micro level.

The ‘active’ role of individuals in shaping their meaning(s) is focused on the use of language and communication to interpret their meaning(s). This idea can be linked to ideas discussed later focused on Goffman’s (1956) ideas of how we present ourselves in

everyday life. As discussed later, there are limitations on the 'active' role an individual can play. Symbolic interactionism is grounded on the assumption that it is only through the social behaviour of individuals that society can come into being, and as such, society is constructed, maintained, and transformed by the social interaction of its members. As members communicate with one another by means of symbols (Blumer, 1969), for example, language, gestures and social cues, their social interactions are based on the meaning(s) given to these symbols (both consciously and unconsciously). Different ways of seeing these symbols affects the outcomes of social interactions. For example, the meaning(s) attributed to the label 'boyfriend/girlfriend', which in turn influences the nature of social interactions. The process of 'naming' within intimate relationships and peer groups can be based on power. For example, the use of negative labels/language attached to and associated with young women (sluts/slugs/whores). The impact of the meaning(s) allocated to these labels subsequently shapes intimate and peer relationships. For young women, particular labels, which attach either negative or positive symbols, can shape the nature and meaning(s) of their social interactions, which are often negotiated within an unequal space. The 'typifying' of young women is considered, for example, the expected role young women should perform in the dating scene, on social media and within their intimate relationships. What you 'become' through social interaction is constantly negotiated in the aim of either maintaining positive symbols or changing negative symbols, which can then influence the actions undertaken.

Gender is shaped through social interaction and the process of a situated 'doing of gender', which West and Zimmerman describe as involving, '...a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine "natures"' (1987, p.126), which creates "...differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological" (ibid, p.137). As mentioned, conceptually, this thesis is situated within interpretive and symbolic interaction theories (Goffman, 1959; Denzin, 1989), which argue that meaning(s) connected to actions or behaviours are 'socially constructed' and shaped by our intersecting needs of gender, age, sexual orientation, social class, cultural background, and socioeconomic status. For the purpose of this research, gender is defined as a social construct, which enforces binary static roles and responsibilities for young men/men and young women/women by dictating culturally ascribed and acceptable "natural" behaviour. As such, "The gendered identity is an interactional production. It is embedded in those interactional places (home and work) that

give recurring meaning to ordinary experience” (Denzin, 2008, p.29). Symbolic interactionism concentrates on social norms and the “natures” that shape typical experiences which are defined as "natural" (Fields et al, 2006) and which maintain social arrangements. As explained by Deegan & Hill;

To symbolic interactionists, *gender* is learned social behaviour associated with each anatomical sex. It is a social classification every person (or actor) is taught the meanings of gendered behavior...Being a man and woman, moreover, is a social definition that is learned by individuals throughout their lives. Women and men are, therefore, social products. They emerge from a process of human interaction based on language and the human capacity to understand it. (Deegan & Hill, 1987, p.4).

Due to the aim of self-presentation, in particular the intention of presenting a favourable self-impression, Goffman (1979) claimed that there is no “natural” male or female, therefore rejecting essentialist views of perceived natural physical differences in favour of socially constructed differences. West and Zimmerman (1987) echo this perspective that gender is ‘socially scripted’ as we are doing gender and power. Goffman suggested a lack of gender identity as we ‘do’ gender as part of our social interactions (1979, p.8), with the continued characterisation of a particular role sustaining the prescribed identity under our own and external sources of regulation. West and Zimmerman (1987) stated that individuals are continuously assessed for their gender performances in both interactional and institutional environments, therefore linking the micro and the macro elements of gender performance.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, Goffman (1959) maintained that social interactions or the ‘doing’ of gender should be studied as an enactment in a theatrical performance (dramaturgical model). This idea can be linked to our sense of self, notion of our inner and outer self and identity. Similar to actors on a stage, we use strategies of impression management, providing information and cues to others that present us in the most favourable light (Goffman, 1959, 1963, 1971). In their capacity as performers, individuals are concerned with maintaining the impression that they are living up to particular normative standards, therefore ‘staging’ the identity of particular gendered roles. Goffman’s model focuses on the presentation of self (1959) and the division between the outer and inner self, the playwright, producer, actor and part. The focus is on adopting theatrical metaphors of ‘performances’, which is the front stage performance and the back stage ‘self’ performance to explore the nature of human interaction. The dramaturgical model focuses on the “front” and “back” stage areas, including the tensions between both roles, with the “back” focused on the preparation of the performance and the illusion of

one's self presentation, with gossip regarded as 'staging talk'. This idea of the influence of "back" and "front" stage presentation of self will be discussed further during the data analysis with reference to the analysis of young people's behaviours within their intimate relationships. As part of this self-presentation, various symbols are employed; for example, cues, hints and expressive gestures, emphasising the reliance on appearance, the mask of performance and the requirement for the capacity to switch enacted roles. As such, we are embodied social actors (Goffman, 1979).

As explained, Goffman conceptualised social life as a staged drama, with the idea of 'the self' and social ritual core principles. He believed that each individual through social interaction presents and expresses a 'self' or a 'personal front' (Goffman, 1959, p.24). He saw individuals as 'social actors', depending on props as if everyday communication was a staged performance, with dialect and costumes used as dramatic devices to produce a shared sense of reality. As if communication was a staged drama, the flow of information across daily conversations is often controlled by social norms, but is also concealed as if it were a drama, to ensure the control of our individual situated self. To perform is to be an active actor that plays a role to control the flow of information and manage situations; for example, shameful situations.

Social actors manipulate the presentation of 'self' to present a favourable performance (Goffman, 1959). As seen later within the qualitative discussion, social stigma also plays a key part in the performance of everyday social interactions. We maintain 'face' by following social norms; Goffman (1967) defines this as 'facework' and its aim is to maintain the ritual order of social interaction. As part of the 'staged' social interactions, Goffman (1959) discusses the idea of 'aggressive facework' which involves selecting a victim for whom the audience will have little sympathy. Failing to adhere to social rituals or invading another's 'self-territories' as defined by Goffman (1983) is contrary to social norms. Goffman (1963) identified how individuals defined as having 'spoiled identities' found it a challenge to negotiate their environment. This is due to the lack of acceptance of them by others, but also Goffman explored how people's reactions can 'spoil' individual identity. The exploration of Goffman's model, and what Lamont (2014) terms as "symbolic gendering", will influence the data analysis process of this present study; in particular, the gendered norms, cultural practices and the young women's navigation of negotiating relationship scripts associated with dating traditions and relationship progression.

Several commentators have noted a key limitation of symbolic interactionism as failing to

acknowledge the impact of social structures on individual interactions. Criticism has mostly focused on the micro/macro divide, the small scale nature of social interactions and a perceived lack of concern for the context of social interactions (Meltzer et al, 1975). This criticism can also potentially be regarded as the strengths of this approach; for example, the potential knowledge that can be gained from observing small scale social interactions. As mentioned earlier, our ability to 'actively' make choices requires further consideration; in particular, the impact of structural inequalities and social norms on our power. There is a general lack of consideration of the impact of social structures on everyday interactions (Kuhn 1964; Meltzer et al. 1975). However, as argued by Fine (1993), the balance between personal agency and structure is central to symbolic interactionism; in particular, how individuals influence structures, how social realities are expressed and the limits on individual choice. As Denzin notes, "interactionism is both a theory of experience and a theory of social structure" (1992, p. 3). Whilst the power balance within our society should not be seen as universal, conceptualising individuals as active participants that construct their own reality goes beyond the basic notion of social constructs informed by the socialisation process. Symbolic interactionists have developed ideas to link the micro and macro levels of society, to illustrate the emotional and unconscious aspects of behaviour, with examples of symbolic interactionists exploring the impact of emotional experiences and control (Fine 1993). Symbolic interactionism can therefore assist in developing our understanding of the link between micro and macro structures.

Symbolic interactionism does consider how we are both active agents in the construction of our reality and how the 'doing' of our reality is shaped for us by social structures (Waskul & Vaninni, 2006). Whilst symbolic interactionism envisions individuals as active agents when shaping their social interaction, not all social actors are conscious or 'active' actors; specifically, due to structural constraints on their power and choice. Individuals can often face limitations to their power when sharing their views, relating themselves to others or when shaping their own identities. All large-scale structures are inevitably grounded in the symbolic constructs that individuals adopt, and therefore there is an automatic interest in the impact of power when analysing individual realities (Fine, 1993). Indeed, power cannot be assumed to be equal within everyday social interactions, and it is the intention of this present research to empower young women to promote their active agency. As mentioned, whilst symbolic interaction primarily focuses on the micro level analysis of social interaction, I argue that it does consider that social interaction is a

process regulated by cultural norms. Consideration will also be given to young women's ability to maintain an equal role within their intimate relationships, as gender is socially constructed based on the inequality of power and control of those with more power (young men/men) over those with less power (young women/women). As Deegan & Hill state, "In all aspects of public life, women have been expected to be less powerful and less significant than men" (1987, p.5). The aim within this present study is to draw upon values of 'active agency' to give participants a voice and therefore more power. Symbolic interactionists focus on the constraints of culture, as well as how individuals use their agency to navigate those constraints to align their feelings with social expectations (Fields et al, 2006).

Goffman (1967) also examined how the gap between the macro and micro social worlds could be bridged. He believed that we considered ourselves and others when we act, which he conceptualised as 'ritual'. Goffman (1974) acknowledged the impact of structures on communication and interactions, specifically how interactions are 'framed', with the existence of formal and informal rules to prevent 'outsiders' from joining, therefore connecting the interaction order to the production and reproduction of social structures, illustrating the relations of power in social life. He saw 'self' identity as a social product, dependent on the validation of performances aligned to social norms, with individual ability to sustain self-image for others, dependent on access to structural resources and the possession of desirable attributes.

This section of the chapter has outlined the theoretical context of this research by focusing on the manner in which symbolic interactionism and the 'doing of gender' forms the theoretical foundation of this research. Therefore, the aim of this conceptual framework was to gain a balance between a structuralist and individualist approach (May, 1996). The focus is on how this approach can contribute to our understanding of social interaction within young intimate relationships; in particular, of social inequality and the nature and patterns of abusive behaviour. The following discussion will focus in further detail on positive empowerment.

2.3 The "Doing" of Gender

When considering the definition of gender, the concepts of the social construction of gender and power are prominent. Superficially, gender is constructed based on the male and female physical characteristics determined at birth. Anecdotally, the 'common sense' view of gender is based on biological determinism, reinforced by media perception of gender determined by DNA, hormones and sexual organs. The symbolism of the phallus,

vagina and breasts construct an outwardly physical image of gender; however, gender construction is primarily social, not biological; ultimately formed via socialised roles, responsibilities and behaviours.

Essentialist assumptions of specific gendered attributes are rejected here as the physical body should not control individual identity on a discursive or individual basis. Essentially, following the perspective of ‘..the analysis of gender as a social structure that has its origin in the development of human culture, not in biology or procreation... (Lorber, 1994, p.1).

The impact of the social construction of gender is evident throughout society and is therefore the foundation for our gendered identities. The social construction of femininity acts as a ‘foil’ maintaining the gendered power dynamics in contrast to masculinity. Connell debates the complexity of defining masculinity and the relationship of men and women’s ‘gendered lives’ by applying a ‘three-fold approach’ to gender, focusing on patriarchal power and production in the sense of division of labour and emotions. Essentially, men gain from power and kudos, whereas women drive for change and respect (Connell, 2001, p.31). Women have a dual role: biological role as child-bearers and social role as the family member most responsible for ‘socialisation’ (Stanley & Wise, 2002). Additionally, the concept of a ‘family’ interlinks with the notion of socialisation and gender roles. The degree of influence of education, media representations and wider social media is also debatable. An understanding of how gender is produced in social situations will afford clarification of the interactional scaffolding of social structure and the social control processes that sustain it (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.147). The social construction of gender foci is femininity and masculinity, which maps on to biological sexual differences that revolve around being female or male. Biological arguments of gendered division essentially result in the discrimination of women based on their biology and the oppressive biology of men; whereas in contrast, social construction arguments focus on roles, stereotypes and essentially the subordination of women linked to expected and perceived gendered social norms. Essentialism is rejected here as relying on simplistic, dualistic categories of gender, in favour of the notion of gender as a fluid social construct evolving with societal changes, social interactions and individualised identities.

The statement “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (de Beauvoir, 1973, p.301), signals the perspective that gender is a “doing” rather than a “being”, which is continuously embedded in everyday social interactions (West & Zimmerman, 1987). West and Zimmerman (1987, p.127) define gender as “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate to one’s sex

category". Goffman (1977) saw no biological truth to "sex", stating that the separation of bodies was as a result of social interaction, with both Goffman and West and Zimmerman (1987) emphasising the situated interactional construction of gender.

While it is individuals who do gender, the enterprise is fundamentally interactional and institutional in character, for accountability is a feature of social relationships and its idiom is drawn from the institutional arena in which those relationships are enacted. (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p.136-7).

Gendered selves are performances rather than representations of embodied truths (Goffman, 1959), while the separation of 'male/female' and 'sex/gender' is social, symbolic and political (Delphy, 1993) and legitimises gendered social division (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The reality of gender construction is subjectively formed by social relationships which are focused on personal identity in a fluid and changeable manner.

Delphy (2002) describes the arrival of the concept of gender bringing the promise of progressing ideas beyond the concept of sex, with the growing focus of the idea of 'sex roles' being socially constructed rather than biologically determined. Delphy rightly questions whether this division has gone far enough, as gender and sex continue to form interwoven dichotomies, socially determined by the biological, or as 'gender the content and sex as the container' (p.52). For this purpose, the methodological and epistemological grounding of both concepts are flawed and, as Delphy suggests, the independence of both should have been questioned from the outset, as the correlation between sex and gender is coincidental, with the hypothesis of gender preceding sex (and vice versa) requiring further exploration (ibid).

Gender is embedded across society in all aspects of daily living, be it within the family, work/labour, clothing, mannerism or sex. The gender labelling of children begins with parental social cues within the ambit of socially acceptable behaviour norms in order to encourage the 'doing of gender' in a particular manner (West & Zimmerman, 2002).

Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine "natures." (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.126)

Power is quintessential in the social construction of gender, as structural inequalities favouring men results in a lack of equality for women. The degree of 'choice' around gender identity is restricted by our body, material circumstances and social position. Roles are gendered according to social experiences, beliefs and, to a lesser extent, individual opinion. The essence or the gendered identity of women is not purely dependent on gendered social norms. We construct our own identities based on cultural and social

factors, influenced by life experiences and choice. This level and degree of choice is influenced not only by opportunities, but also by social norms which favour male-gendered roles. The concept of social construction argues that power is external; power can play a key role in the construction of gendered identities. The social construction of gender suggests that gender roles are continually shaped and constructed. Conversely, societal hierarchy and the presumed reality of 'equality of compromise' are not commenced on equal power platforms, further compounded by societal feminine power division to challenge expected social gendered norms which impact on the fluidity of gendered identity roles.

The gender status of women affects the social construction of sexuality, fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting, not the other way around. Responsibility for the work in the domestic sphere is an outcome of women's gender status, not its cause (Lorber, 1994, p.285).

Gender as a social construct, if further shaped as a result of power, oppression and GBV. The 'relationship' scripts of young women are governed by feminine heterosexuality linked to gender norms, inequality and the status of the hegemonic male, which highlights the binary of defining women relational to the power held by men. Young women's voices can offer an alternative 'script' to challenge social norms and stereotypes in a society manifested by men.

2.4 Sexuality

'Sexuality' is a social construct and represents all erotically significant aspects of social life and social being, with a particular focus on "desires, practices, relationships and identities" (Denzin, 1989, p.83). Gagnon & Simon (1973) argued that sexuality is a social construct; reflexive, and evolves throughout our lifespan. Gender permeates all aspects of social life and sexuality is no exception. Gender and sexuality intersect, although sexuality cannot be directly moulded onto gender. As part of everyday life we 'do' gender in two ways; firstly, as a practical accomplishment of interpretive interaction and secondly, through practical activities; for example, having sex (Jackson & Scott, 2010, p.92). The intersection of gender and sexuality are continuous and observable, which can be problematic, as explained by Denzin, (1989, p.11);

..everyday life revolves around persons interpreting and making judgements about their own and others' behaviour and experiences. Many times these interpretations and judgements are based on faulty, or incorrect, understandings. Persons, for instance, mistake their own experiences for the experiences of others.

These meanings can be fluid and therefore the definition of sexuality is subjective; what is

sexual to one person may not be to another.

As explained, symbolic interactionism emphasises the micro face-to-face interaction, which is relevant when researching sexuality, and is seen as symbolic, with meanings created by these symbols, as explained; “The symbolic meaning associated with sexuality affects how we think about ourselves, how we relate to others, and how others think and relate to us” (Longmore, 1998, p.44). Longmore (1998) reflects on the uses of symbolic interactionism in the study of sexuality; in particular, the adoption of key concepts of situation, scripting, identities and self. Symbolic interactionists allow for the analytical separation of gendered and sexual aspects of the self, as we continually re-negotiate our sexuality (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Jackson & Scott, 2010). Gender is constructed so that characteristics of femininity are undesirable and subordinate to those of masculinity; this in turn limits the role and sexuality of young women within their intimate relationships (Tolman et al, 2016). The sexuality of young women has primarily been linked to biological essentialist views, focused on the misconception of young women as lacking desire (Fine, 1988) and passive to the sexual demands of young men/men.

Women have less status, power and control within their intimate relationships, as they are subjected to a ‘double standard’ that supports and promotes men (Richardson, 1997), limiting their autonomy and sexuality and resulting in oppression. This gendered ‘double standard’ impacts on a wider spectrum of behaviour, including their agency of appearance, social activities, employment and leisure activities. This perceived ‘natural’ role of women as lacking sexual desire whilst preferring love, is in opposition to the construction of what is ‘natural’ for men. Social norms dictate that women are required to be passive until their desires are activated by men (Jackson & Scott, 2010). As discussed, sexuality is a social construct established by prescribed ‘sexual scripts’ informed by our social interactions, which are focused on ‘learning’ sexual behaviour, including our wants and desires (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). Our understanding of sexuality and the sexual scripts we draw upon are also shaped by the perceived ‘natural’ gendered power and control favouring men (Holland et al, 1996). Despite the belief that the presence of a sexual double standard favouring men over women has been eroded with time (Scott & Jackson, 2010), the dominance of male sexual pleasure remains, which limits female sexual desire. Young people’s access to alternate sexual scripts is limited, as gender awareness precedes the sexual self. These sexual scripts are developed through social interaction, involving ongoing interpretations and negotiations. The act of being sexual or having sex aligns with Goffman’s dramaturgical analogy as the “performance should seem effortless so that the

work and practice behind it remain hidden” (Jackson & Scott, 2010, p.64). Young people also assimilate their environment, including being influenced by social media and their peers (see: chapter six for further discussion on this point).

2.5 Promoting young women as ‘Active Agents’

Within a post-feminist society, it is generally argued that gender equality has been achieved. In reality, the gap between the perception of equality and the actual degree of equality continues (McRobbie, 2007; Sieg, 2007a). The key tenet of feminism is the political perspective to strive for change in order to challenge the oppression of women. Considering the strengths of different feminist perspectives is key to the theoretical perspective of this thesis; not only when considering the conceptual framework, but also in order to inform the research methodology. Feminist theories span a spectrum of beliefs and perspectives, with detailed discussion on each perspective unnecessary here and beyond the scope of this thesis. Feminism is generally driven by the rejection of essentialism, and the myriad of sexist oppressions due to the biological and social construction of being a woman, equating to everyday sexism and abuse. Feminism has been described as a political movement in response to the oppression of women; “Feminism starts from the view that women are oppressed and that their oppression is primary. Women’s freedom of action is limited by the power of men because men possess more economic, cultural, and social resources than women” (Abbott & Wallace, 1990, p.10). As outlined within the introduction, feminism is broad, and encapsulates a spectrum of feminist movements and ideologies. Feminism offers a range of perspectives, with the notion of gender as a social construct influential across the spectrum of feminist ideology.

Central to this research is a feminist perspective focused on challenging relationships based on power and control (Kelly, 1988, p.4), and of conceptualising young women as ‘active agents’ framing the incorporation of the ‘voices’ of young women into research about and for them (Miner & Jayarante, 2014). The approach adopted is therefore focused on a feminist methodology, and a participatory approach in keeping with an emerging ‘sociology of childhood’ (Mayall, 2000; James & Prout, 1997) focused on gender relations, power and control (Kelly, 1988). Particular aspects of the sociology of childhood were used to inform the framework of this present study; specifically the conception of young people as ‘active agents’. Active agency essentially conceptualises children and young people as ‘social actors’ who are active (rather than passive) in the construction and determination of their own identity and social lives (James & James, 2004). Therefore, an approach focused on promoting young women as ‘active agents’ who can analyse their

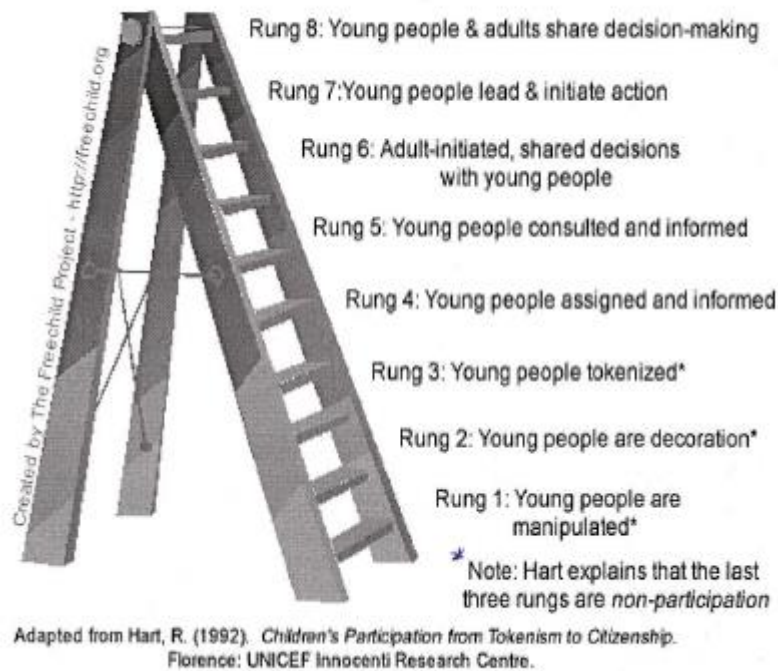
own meaning(s) aims to reconcile and offer an alternative approach in order to limit the social constraints placed on young women's agency, and conceptualise them as social actors who are worthy of study in their own right (Highet, 2003). To supplement the child/young person centric context, a 'positive empowerment' approach was applied in order to frame young people's rights within the ethical framework of autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence (Downes et al, 2014). Maintaining a focus on positive empowerment and unequal power relations will also assist in spanning the gap between the micro and macro level, as individual interactions cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of the social context, shared meaning(s), and social barriers.

Mayall's (2002) conception of the sociology of childhood argues that, to raise the social status of children/young people as a social group, they should have a voice and a central part in shaping our understanding of the nature of society. Mayall draws upon feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1991) to help shape her understanding of the nature of childhood, which encapsulates both gender and generation, which is persuasive as it addresses power in an intersectional manner. However, the idea of a child standpoint analogous to women's standpoint (Harding, 1987) is less persuasive. A dualistic approach to subjectivity and objectivity focused on a particular standpoint fails to consider the uses, limitations and the reality of multiple positions. It is questionable whether any social group should have a specific 'standpoint' when each individual has his or her own needs and subjective worldviews. Taking account of children and young people's individual views is important in order to develop an understanding of the common domains across their narratives and their subjective 'lived' experiences, rather than to shape a 'standpoint'. Situating a child/young person standpoint within the sociology of childhood is too simplistic, as individual narratives require acknowledgment on a subjective level rather than as a part of a 'standpoint'. Achieving a 'child standpoint' will not elevate the status of childhood or adolescence as suggested by Mayall (2002). Indeed, a range of experiences is central to all perspectives, as the subjective nature of multiple realities is required to avoid assumptions of a male/woman or female/man standpoint, as with the idea of the construction of a child/young person standpoint. The gendered scripts and narratives of young women are diverse, which makes it impossible to simply generalise their experiences. Focusing on enhancing the participation of young women in research works to include their active knowledge and experience from their objective and subjective perspectives to influence social policy research and practice from multi positions. Sensitive topics such as sexism and abuse require contextualising within a web of

intersecting needs and with young people participating as individual ‘active agents’, rather than through a fixed universal ‘standpoint’.

Arnstein (1969) and later Hart (1992) illustrated participation on a ‘ladder’ with eight rungs, with each rung of the ladder representing a model of participation ranging from manipulation/tokenism on the bottom rungs to empowerment/young person led on the higher rungs. Figure 1 outlines Hart’s model of participation:-

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Several levels of Hart’s categorisation of tokenism apply to research where young people are ‘active agents’ working in partnership or directing the researcher (Arnstein, 1969). This notion of ‘active agency’ signals a shift in the landscape towards a model of empowerment, rather than children and young people as agents of secondary socialisation (for example, by peers, parents, education/school or the media). The model adopted for this study equated with rung six of Hart’s participation ladder, focusing on adult-initiation with shared decision making. Whilst the notion of child/young person’s fully-led participation, as outlined in rung eight of Hart’s ladder, is challenging; it may be appropriate for particular projects around community development or youth directed projects. However, it was inappropriate in this instance due to limited funding, a tight timescale and predisposed research aims. If adopted in a fluid manner, there are benefits to using this ‘ladder’ as a framework; however it also has limitations. For example, how children and young people are allowed to participate is key to the quality and impact of

their participation. The space for young people to become ‘active agents’ should go beyond a model, process or ‘one off’ consultation, with engagement/consultation with children/young people becoming the norm and part of everyday life.

Participating in research on GBV can provide positive experiences for young women (Shorey, 2010), as children and young people are often ignored or excluded as part of sensitive research on topics such as domestic abuse (Stanley et al, 2009). There is limited research available focused on including children and young people on equal terms with adults (Holt, 2011; Överlien, 2010). Working closely with the participants assisted in balancing the ‘power’ dynamics and facilitated the inclusive reflection on the research activities (Shaw et al, 2011). The young women’s advisory group (see chapter four) assisted in balancing the power gap between the ‘researcher and researched’. Feminist research demonstrates the strength of adapting research tools suited to the research participants in order to ensure clear comprehension, effective information retrieval and reporting. Essentially, focusing on reflective practice resulted in a more sensitive methodology (Borland, 1991). This conceptualisation promotes the inclusion of children and young people in research, focusing on their everyday lived experiences. Further discussion on the application of this framework as part of the methodology is discussed in detail in chapter four. Specifically, the discussion outlines the aim of giving participants an ‘active’ role in this research, but recognising that this cannot be free of constraints or limitations. The reality of engaging young people as ‘active agents’ in research is complex and should be grounded in their wishes, feelings, experiences and diverse needs. For the purpose of this present study, the young women were fully involved in each of the research stages, with the participation ladder used as a visual tool to explain their role as ‘active’ participants, but also to outline the limitations on their power.

2.6 Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

GBV is a social problem embedded across societies, rooted in the inequity of power based on gender, supported by institutional power, control, laws and policies dictated by hegemonic gendered norms. GBV is permitted due to the acceptance of social norms that supports the continuum of GBV and the general link between GBV, power and masculinity. Of course, not all men are violent or abusive, but the power men acquire throughout societal settings is evident as part of their status (Connell, 1987). Generally, the lack of opposition to the concept of masculinity is automatically accorded to men, irrespective of their personal attributes or skills, but rather is a given based on gender. As a result, this power and control accorded to men ensures that the violence towards and abuse

of women is both supported and perpetuated.

Ideas and values related to gender affect how men view themselves as men, their social and intimate relationships and institutions and policy frameworks. Although differences between men and women are much less notable in more equitable societies, all societies tend to confer a higher social value on men than women, and a range of norms and powers derive from this (Jewkes et al, 2014, p.2). GBV is the expression of this oppressive unequal gendered power, causing the control and discrimination of women to their detriment. Essentially, the foundation of GBV is rooted in gendered iniquitous allocation of wealth, power and prospects (Zero Tolerance, 2014). Central to the social construction of violence is the concept of power, utilised to subordinate women and maintain gendered hierarchy for the benefit of men. Power is primarily static, granted to particular social groups, and subsequently utilised to subdue social and politically vulnerable groups. Gendered roles function as a primary social system for distributing power to ensure that power is utilised ‘everyday’ through our gender. GBV takes a range of forms and according to the UN, violence against women and girls include any act

... that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (Declaration Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993).

The meaning(s) of violence and abuse is fluid, ‘everyday’, normalised and endemic; circumventing a criminal definition and reinforcing the context and level of tolerance of GBV (Stanko, 2002). The continuum of abusive behaviours is linked by common denominators key to various forms of harm and abuse, focusing on constructing the seriousness of abuse, not on a linear line linking experiences or a hierarchy of abuse, but based on a myriad of forms of sexism and oppression experienced daily, with the threat of violence making women fearful and vulnerable (Kelly, 1988). Kelly’s aim was to illustrate GBV as the norm, rather than sporadic or abnormal occurrences, recognising the overlapping of different behaviours and the commonality of the experiences of these behaviours. The impact across the continuum is evident,

Women’s accounts reveal again and again that the more subtle violations of the person have long- term repercussions. Violence and the threat of violence are used by men to control women-either to enforce their will or punish women for perceived transgression (Kelly & Radford, 1996, p.29).

This concept of a continuum links women’s experiences with the common cause and consequences of violence/abuse which are informed by gendered inequality, social norms,

roles and expectations of masculinity and femininity. The notion of a continuum avoids obscuring the nature of abuse and patterns of violence perpetuated by men against women. As part of this present research study, the use of Kelly's continuum is central in connecting and contextualising young women's everyday experiences of their intimate relationships to gender norms.

Polar gendered roles based on unequal power result in the utilisation of abuse and violence in order to maintain dominance; not only to dominate, but also to sabotage the change of this pattern. A multitude of evidence suggests that women continue to experience discrimination, not only in the workplace, but also through the infliction of violence (Kelly, 1988, Dobash & Dobash, 1998, Hearn, 1998). Violence and abuse is synonymous with 'supremacy' and 'masculinity', whereas 'weak' or 'sensitive' men are described as 'feminine'. GBV is not simply violence, but a form of power, control and degradation of women's bodies, minds and souls via hegemonic masculinity. Male 'success' often involves influence over the lives of others, with failure ridiculed; 'men who fail to be dominant are the object of jokes, scorn, and sympathy from wives, peers and society generally' (Sawyer, 2004, p.25).

Feminist perspectives of domestic abuse seek to understand the gendered nature of society and its norms within an intersectional framework that incorporates additional lenses, such as race, class, ethnicity, age and disability (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Theories exist which offer counterarguments to the feminist perspective of GBV; for example, the 'mother domination' theory (Pleck, 2004), which describes a 'cycle of oppression' of boys by their mothers, subsequently resulting in men as oppressors, justifying men's violence. Such theories provide poorly-reasoned arguments intended to camouflage the reality of GBV as a result of structural inequalities, power and control. Utilising particular theories focusing on specific behaviour patterns as an explanation for men's abuse of women fails to consider the persuasiveness of a spectrum of feminist perspectives and the critique of individualist explanations for GBV.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has developed the theoretical context by highlighting how symbolic interactionism, West and Zimmerman's "doing of gender" and the concept of "positive empowerment" (Downes et al, 2014) enables a renewed analysis of agency (Jurik & Siemesen, 2009) in the "doing of gender". As mentioned, the focus on empowerment was to ensure that participants were viewed as "active agents" and individuals in their own right, and to therefore reduce the power imbalances between the researcher and the

participants. This chapter has evaluated the relationships between gender, femininities, sexualities and GBV. Despite popular perceptions that women are equal and as empowered as men, there continues to be a void between female anticipation of equality and the reality of equality within their social interactions (Sieg, 2007; Lamont, 2014). Young women in particular struggle with their perceived understandings and attitudes focused on a contemporary fantasy of ‘post-feminist’ equality (McRobbie, 2007).

This research explores the “doing gender” in social interactions situated within young intimate relationships, within schools and peer groups, and contributes further to the development of the conception of “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Across each of these locations (see: chapter six) there are examples of the implications when young women perform a role contrary to the traditional gender role; resulting in abuse, coercion, control, bullying and being ostracised from their community and peer group. In this thesis, I reflect on and evaluate young women’s attitudes and experiences of their intimate relationships and how this may conform to and challenge established gender norms and distinct sex categories, and explore the nature of abuse within younger relationships and what this may mean for the category of “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

This chapter has raised several key tensions and nuances around the meaning(s) of gender, which requires further unpacking within the context of young intimate relationships, and therefore forms the basis of this research. The relevance and suitability of the use of symbolic interactionism as a framework for this present study is relevant from a conceptual standpoint, but also from a practical perspective, as the values base of this approach focuses on understanding attitudes and actions from the position of the social actors, which aligns with the ideas of ‘active agency’ and feminist methodology. The review of the literature highlights the requirement for further empirical research focused on the impact of gender on the attitudes of young women and their experiences of intimate relationships within a supposed ‘post-feminist’ society. The following chapter will outline an overview of the literature on the nature and patterns of abuse within young people’s intimate relationships.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the context and background to the research topic, including an outline of the development of the literature review. The focus is on reviewing the existing research on the attitudes of young people towards gendered norms and abuse; provide an analysis of the emerging themes on the nature and patterns of abuse within teenage intimate relationships, with a focus on interlinking factors, such as social media and child well-being matters. Following this discussion, there is an outline on the perceived barriers to accessing support. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the key messages from research and practice.

3.2 Developing the literature review

This chapter will begin by outlining my literature search strategy to explain how I developed my literature review. Aveyard (2014) suggests that the aim of a literature review is to summarise a body of research available on a topic. It was necessary to ensure that I was accessing resources of the highest academic standard. In order to do this, I conducted an electronic search so that I could access multiple online journal articles. As explained later, I also used a ‘snowball’ approach to identify the relevant literature, as simply completing an electronic search can never be fully comprehensive.

Throughout the search process, I documented the searches completed to evidence that I had followed a systematic approach in my literature search. Key search terms were used to narrow my searches such as ‘young people’s intimate relationships’ and ‘gender’ which were inputted into specific bibliographic databases. The Boolean search logic was used to combine keywords to assist in the production of more relevant results. The search process is documented in the table below.

Database searched	Key search terms used
<p>As suggested by the University of Lincoln library guide for social policy, the following databases were searched:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Lincoln catalogue • SocioINDEX • Academic search complete • Igenta Connect • International bibliography of the social sciences • JSTO Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts (ASSIA) • Sage Premier • Scopus • Social Care online • Social policy and practice • Springer Link • Taylor & Francis online • Web of Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people’s intimate relationships AND gender • Young people’s intimate relationship AND attitudes • Young people AND gendered dating norms • Young people’s intimate relationships AND abuse • Young people AND social media • Young people AND intimate healthy relationship

Table 1

Aveyard and Sharp (2013) state that following a systematic approach in literature searching, appraisal and re-analysis will suffice and will produce good quality literature based research. In order to follow a systematic approach, it is important to firstly establish an inclusion and exclusion criteria based upon the research question and sub questions (Rhoades, 2011). To inform this search, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria was adopted to practically focus the search of the literature:-

Inclusion Criteria

- Articles and reports published in English or Welsh.
- Articles and reports published from the year 1994 onwards, from the date of when the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

definition of GBV was ratified (on the 20th December 1993). I felt that literature published twenty years ago may still have a valuable contribution to my research (search period of January 1994 until March 2019).

- Research focused on children and young people up to the age of 18 years old.
- Reported patterns of abuse in young people's intimate relationships in a manner aligned to a continuum of abusive behaviour.
- Reported changes of attitudes of young people towards abusive behaviour in intimate relationships.
- Reported impact of gender norms on the nature and patterns of behaviour in young people's intimate relationships.
- Reported on the use of social media and young people's relationships.
- Reports on prevention and early interventions to address abusive behaviour in young intimate relationships.
- Any study design.

Exclusion criteria

- Research or reports published not in English or Welsh. This was due to the fact that I did not have the appropriate resources to translate literature that was in other languages.
- The search was refined to focus on the following items, books, journals, reports, conference materials and these. Therefore, all news items were excluded from the search.
- Whilst international research was not excluded from the search, the focus will be on identifying and reviewing UK and European based studies.
- Articles and reports published prior to 1993 onwards.
- Adult-centric research.
- Studies/research that report on other forms of abuse towards young women, for example, female genital mutilation.

The relevance of the inclusion and exclusion criteria was reviewed, to ensure that the approach was responsive throughout. Following the searches of the specific bibliographic databases, the citation was examined to determine whether the titles and abstracts were relevant. The literature found was then screened as to whether it was relevant to the research question and sub questions (Neely et al, 2010); with the inclusion/exclusion criteria used to screen the full-text of the remaining studies. During this process unrelated

studies and duplicate studies were removed. For those remaining studies, a catalogue system separated into key themes was used to note the title, author, purpose, methodology, findings and key thoughts on each study. A folder was created for the identified literature for each theme relating to the research question and sub questions (gender, attitudes, dating norms, abuse, social media and healthy relationships). These key sub-headings allowed me to clearly structure the discussion in the literature review to focus on each key theme individually.

There are limitations to this approach; specifically, that adopting an electronic search is not entirely comprehensive, and will not identify all the relevant literature. This is due to literature being categorised using different key terms which may leave some highly relevant research unidentified (Aveyard, 2014). Whereas using multiple electronic bibliographic databases was the main component of the search strategy, it was not the only component, as multiple strategies enhance the thoroughness of the search (Aveyard, 2014). My aim was to use a variety of keywords and also to undertake a snowball review of the reference list of the eligible studies identified in my literature search. I also manually searched through specific journals repeatedly identified as containing eligible studies, which also included using the process of forward citation searching with seminal articles. As part of these searches, I searched the publication lists of key authors and also contacted some of these authors to request copies of particular studies. Other useful resources included publications and statistics from the Welsh Government, and key charities such as the NSPCC. In order to manage publication bias, the literature search also included grey literature, specifically unpublished literature, such as conference reports and government documents that met the inclusion criteria laid out above, as recommended by Berkeljon *et al* (2009). However, due to grey literature not being subject to a peer review process, it was crucial to scrutinise this literature (Rhoades, 2011). In fact, the inclusion of grey literature can minimise the effects of publication bias (McAuley *et al.* 2000; Pappas and Williams 2011) as relying on published literature only could lead to an overestimation of effects (McAuley *et al.* 2000). I have recognised and reflected on the influence of potential bias throughout my search strategy and have therefore included a variety of sources to try and minimise this risk.

3.3 Context of Young People's intimate relationships & Abuse

The prevalence of violence and abuse within teenage relationships in the UK (Barter *et al* 2009, Wood *et al* 2011), across Europe (Barter *et al*, 2015) and in the US (Hickman, Jaycox & Aronoff, 2004; Wolfe *et al*, 2001b) is well known. Research generally highlights

that the severity and impact of abuse and harm inflicted on young women is greater than on young men (Foshee, 1996; Molidor & Tolman, 1998; Barter et al, 2009; Stark, 2007). Despite mounting interest, there remains limited UK research focusing on a broad spectrum of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and its impact on young women. The definition change of domestic violence and abuse in March 2013, to include young people aged 16 and 17 focused on:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. (Home Office 2018, para 1).

The recent policy debates on related matters such as the age of sexual consent, social media influences, sexualisation, non-consensual circulation of sexualised images (Ringrose, 2012; Renold, 2013) and the exploitation of young women (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2013), present the ideal context for this present study. Research on teenage GBV and abuse has been undertaken in Canada, Australia and more prominently in the US, where a substantial body of research exists, focusing on 'dating violence'. Indeed, the US has a rich body of research covering diverse aspects of the dynamics within young people's intimate relationships (for example: Foshee, 1996; Wolfe et al, 2001a) and sexual coercion in these relationships (Silverman et al, 2004), though there is less research on the continuum of GBV. Therefore, the range of potential harms caused by a continuum of abuse is under-researched, both in the US and in the UK. This includes exploring the nature of coercive control⁸ and the psychological harm inflicted by such abuse, as well as everyday forms of harassment, such as sexual bullying, including groping, and gendered patterns of verbal abuse (for exceptions see: Fox et al, 2013; McGlynn et al 2017; Ringrose, 2012; Zero Tolerance, 2014) in schools and beyond. Williamson (2010) highlights the importance of critically evaluating the coercive and controlling aspects of abuse to ensure that the impact on a woman's identity and sense of self is realistically understood and addressed. The pattern of abuse within young people's relationships parallels adult intimate partner abuse in that it exists on a continuum, extending from verbal and emotional abuse to sexual assault and murder. However, as discussed in chapters six to eight of this thesis, there are also key differences in the nature, patterns and visibility of abuse in young intimate relationships, in comparison to adult intimate relationships.

⁸ Coercive control is described as a pattern of intimidation, isolation, and control used by men to limit women's autonomy (Stark, 2007).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines young people's right to be protected from harm and live within a safe environment. As mentioned, the change in definition of domestic violence and abuse in the UK was widened to include coercive behaviour and violence and abuse suffered by 16-17 year-olds, which was followed by the implementation of the Serious Crime Act 2015. Section 76 of this legislation created a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour, demonstrated as part of a familial relationship, which carries a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment, a fine or both. The new offence closes a gap in the law around patterns of controlling or coercive behaviour in an ongoing relationship between intimate partners or family members. The key focus of these changes was to include young people as potential survivors of domestic violence and abuse, to include coercive control as part of the definition in order to assist us to acknowledge the trends in abusive behaviour patterns. Shifting the focus on coercive behaviour concentrates on a pattern of behaviour, control and power, rather than maintaining a focus on a singular incident, which aims to foster a progressive understanding of GBV.

A greater incidence and impact of such violence and abuse on young women in comparison to young men is evidenced (Barter et al, 2009; Barter et al, 2015), with a significant impact of GBV on young women from disadvantaged backgrounds (Wood et al, 2011). There is elevated normalisation of abuse and controlling behaviour amongst young people (CAADA, 2013). Evidence suggests significant trends of peer violence and abuse across younger relationships, illustrating this behaviour as the norm rather than the exception, in the UK (Barter, et al. 2009; Berelowitz, et al, 2012; Fox, et al., 2013; Wood et al, 2011) and globally (Chung, 2005; Barter et al, 2015). Key concerns focus on the presence of this abuse across online and offline communities (Barter et al, 2015; Ringrose et al, 2012). Indeed, victims of teenage domestic violence and abuse are twice as likely to have sent a sexual image or message, compared to young people who had not been victimised (Barter et al, 2015). The impact of domestic abuse on pregnant young women is under researched in the UK; however, the available research demonstrates higher levels of risk of abuse for pregnant young women (Rosen, 2004; Schutt, 2006; Wood et al, 2011). Research has begun to explore this complex issue further and reflects links with 'coerced sex' (Wood & Barter, 2015), sexual pressure, sexual negotiations and autonomy (Coy et al, 2010). Gang activity also exacerbates the presence and risk of domestic violence and abuse, including sexual exploitation and coerced criminal behaviour (Beckett, et al., 2013). The overall impact on well-being is significant, with survivors/victims of this form of harm

achieving poorer educational outcomes and experiencing a significant impact on multiple health outcomes (mental and physical) (Barter et al, 2015).

3.4 Young People's Intimate Relationships & Gender

Chapter two discussed the key debates on the social construction of gender, sexuality and GBV, including the static embodiment of prescribed gendered sexual scripts linked to our situated 'doing of gender'. This section will further explore the application of young women's 'doing of gender' within their own intimate relationships. Overall, a review of the literature indicates that gender equality, empowered sexual identities, pleasure and desire remain invisible for young women. Men's role as the provider and women's as caregivers is central to the definition of masculinity and femininity, with young women reluctant to be the instigator within their intimate relationships (Furman & Hand, 2006). Narratives of romance position young men as sexually desiring and aggressive, and girls as yearning for love and relationships, which dismisses the importance of women's sexual desire (Fine 1988; Tolman 2002).

The literature on young people and masculinities highlights the role and influence of education and the schooling environments as agents of socialisation, which is germane to the discussion here. It has been argued that schools are sites for 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Nayak & Kehily, 2008), reinforcing institutional regimes of power and gender. The gendered nature of sexualisation within schools happens much earlier within a framework of gendered playground games. The normalisation of 'everyday' sexual harassment on the basis that 'boys will be boys' is (re)asserted within the power of male patriarchal dominance (Renold, 2013). Research by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG, 2011, p.11) outlines the prevalence of sexual and sexist bullying on young people in Wales across year groups six (19%), seven (15%) and 10 (10%), with 45% of those surveyed stating that they had been 'groped' against their will. This research also shows that young people with special educational needs are particularly vulnerable (WAG, 2011). The objectification of girls and young women by young men, and young women's experience of sexual harassment and assault in schools is also of concern. EVAW (2010) revealed that 29% of girls aged 16-18 reported experiencing unwanted sexual touching at school, with nearly three quarters reporting sexual name-calling on a daily basis, with terms such as sluts used. Not only does this raise concern about the formation of a healthy sexual culture, but also on the impact of the sexualisation of young women. It has been argued that sexual harassment functions as a precursor to the acceptability and perpetration of violence and abuse (Stein & Gadin., 2017), is linked to sexual homophobic bullying in

schools (Rivers & Duncan, 2013) and to the display of sexual harmful behaviour (Smith et al, 2013).

Reducing sexism and sexual bullying was a key strand of the Government's Ending Violence Against Women action plan (2014). The Bailey Review (2011), which evaluated the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood, offered limited analysis of the gendered nature of the sexualisation of young women (Bragg, 2012). As explained by Sieg (2000), researchers have continually illustrated the challenges faced by young women in developing positive sexual identities within the 'regimes of youth regulation' (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997). Normative gendered attitudes continue to shape the landscape for young intimate relationships, including the pressure on young women to be passive and appear like a 'Barbie doll', which aligns to the perception of the male notion of attractiveness.

There remains a visible conflict between the concept of sexual knowingness and experience on the one hand, and the expectations of girlhood as innocence on the other. Society positions young women as either active sexual beings, or passive, with the complex sexual subjectivities of young women more complicated than this static binary (Ringrose & Renold, 2012). Dominant constructions of young female sexuality has only served to perpetuate the sexual commodification of young women and the false promise of sexual liberation packaged as 'girl power' (Coy, 2013). In reality, any form of sexual liberation is subject to shaming, with the aim of reversing any perceived sense of sexual freedom.

The practice of slut shaming (Ringrose & Renold, 2012) and the derogatory labelling of young women stigmatise them, whilst labels on young men promote their sexual agency (Fjaer et al, 2015). The image of a slut signifies the shaming of female sexual desire. Heteronormative assumptions function as a barrier to re-shaping sexualised roles of young women, and indeed young men. Not only do these assumptions reinforce these gendered requirements, which are also reflected in the media; specifically, the images perpetuated by popular youth cultures and the porn industry, there is also a challenge for young men to adhere to normative standards of the hegemonic male, with the provision of limited space for them to negotiate their identities beyond this static hegemonic script (Johansson & Hammaren, 2007). The challenge faced by young women is of negotiating a female identity, with shifting appropriateness dictated by the requirement to be virginal, whilst also available to sexually please the opposite sex. Continuously, young women are subjected to a 'double standard,' whereby sexually active young men are labelled as the 'norm', and sexually active young women are stigmatised. As stated by Hird & Jackson,

‘Young women, as ‘gate-keepers’ of heterosexual relations, must negotiate complex and contradictory discourses that penalise membership in both ‘sluts’ and ‘angel’ categories’ (2001, p.35). Young women are placed on a tightrope in order to negotiate this binary of the angel/slut tightrope, whilst disregarding the emotional impact on young women and the idea of sexual female pleasure.

3.5 Attitudes and Gender Norms

A norm is conceptualised as a belief embraced by the majority within a community and can be identified as an actual, perceived and misperceived norm. Social norms can influence attitudes and behaviours on an individual and community level (Berkowitz, 2012). The aim of this section is to highlight the existing evidence reflecting the gendered norms, attitudes and expectations that both scaffold the nature and patterns of abuse within intimate relationships and act as a barrier to shifting this normative perspective. The importance of investigating the relationship between social norms, attitudes and abusive behaviour is evident (Price et al, 1999; Flood & Pease, 2009) in order to gauge whether attitudes reflect the ideas of abusive behaviour on a continuum of interlinked ‘everyday experiences’ or as episodic incidents. The importance of exploring this causal link is clear, as attitudes are a significant factor in order to understand the perpetration of violence and abuse against women (Flood & Pease, 2009), evaluate community and institutional responses to this ‘hidden issue’, identify power dynamics and assist us to understand how to challenge this issue. In order to explore the nature of young intimate relationships, it is necessary to interpret the social and gendered context of their ‘everyday’ lives, including young women’s conceptualisation of gender and its impact on their attitudes and understanding of GBV. As identified in the previous section, the normative socialisation of young women enforces the idea of males as ‘strong’ and ‘in control’, and females as ‘weak’ and ‘compliant’, reinforcing gendered responsibility within relationships. Research has illustrated the challenges for young women in identifying control, and indeed the line between care and control (Barter et al, 2009). Specifically, the impact of coercive control, the visibility of this impact and the impact of gendered control in particular on young women; for example, the isolation from peer groups.

Young women and young men indicate that gender norms shape their behaviour expectations within relationships; primarily the expectation of male dominance (Wood et al, 2011). There is also well-documented evidence on the continuing presence of gendered sexist attitudes to the acceptability of violence and abuse within certain circumstances (Burton and Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Lacasse & Mendelson, 2007;

McCarry, 2009; Lombard, 2015). Young men tend to hold more sexist views compared with young women (Morrison et al., 2007), with the impact of age on attitudes evident. Most young people regard violence and abuse against a partner as wrong; however, a high majority of young people do choose to condone this form of violent and abusive behaviour in particular circumstances (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Lombard, 2015). The situational context of violence and abuse shapes the degree of empathy, justification and acceptability of this behaviour (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005), in particular within specific scenarios; for example, if she was his wife or if he was 'provoked', illustrating attitudes favouring victim blaming (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998). People aged between 16 and 24 (13%) are most likely to think that abuse is acceptable in specific circumstances, in comparison to those aged between 55 and 59, who were least likely to think that it was acceptable behaviour (5%) (ONS, 2016).

A reduction in confidence following the primary education stage has a deeper impact on young women than young men (McNeish & Scott, 2014), including negotiating ways of relating to peers and the pressure to comply with gendered expectations. Socialised gender differences of self-image also emerge during adolescence, as highlighted by Woolfe et al, 1997;

...boys see themselves more positively with respect to achievement, academic aspirations, self-assertion, and body image. Males also value control and perceive themselves as more willing to take on leadership roles and responsibilities, whereas females tend to value relationship involvement, social relationships, and a desire of more affection, intimate personal relationships, and for others to initiate more positive personal relationships with them (p.60).

Normative gendered attitudes threaten the development of self-determination and limit sexual desires and indeed the role of young women. As a result, gendered expectations and social norms impact on attitudes and stereotypes, with young women facing pressures to negotiate the appropriate level of engagement in sexualised behaviour while continuing to conform to unrealistic body images standards, whilst young men face pressure to conform to heterosexual standards of sexualised behaviour or face being labelled as 'gay' or lacking masculinity (Zero Tolerance, 2014).

Young women demonstrate high levels of 'self-blame', along with minimising the seriousness of violence inflicted (Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011), justifying violence within certain circumstances (Maguire et al, 2010, Burman & Cartmel, 2005, Maxwell & Aggleton, 2009, Schutt, 2006, Burton & Kitzinger, 1998). Alarming, within one study,

only 64% of the young men surveyed commented that they would not force a woman to have sex in any circumstance (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998). US research reflects that young men are less likely to label incidents as abusive in comparison to female students, with age a factor influencing the ability to label incidents as abusive, and with the tendency for young people in a relationship or with relationship experience to label abusive incidents as non-abusive (Carlson, 1999). Sexual coercion is tolerated and justified, with young men's behaviour 'nurtured' and excused as being 'complex' by their girlfriends (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2009). Not only is abuse within intimate relationships 'excused', but it tends to be labelled and normalised within the context and language of 'bullying/violence' (Cawson et al, 2000).

There is a view that young people with normative gendered attitudes tend to be more accepting of abusive behaviour as a legitimate method of resolving relationship conflict (Price et al, 1999). Lacasse & Mendelson (2007) conducted a study with a sample group of 116 participants (70 girls and 46 boys) to explore attitudes towards sexual coercion from the perspective of both victim and perpetrator. They argued that young women who hold the view that '*boys will be boys*' are less likely to refuse unwanted sexual advances, thus are more vulnerable to sexual pressure and abuse, illustrating attitudes favouring victim blaming. This research drew inferences that young men (with a mean age of 15 years and 3 months) who had stated that they were perpetrators of sexual coercion had higher sexist attitudes than all other boys, whereas female victims had higher sexist attitudes than all other girls (Lacasse & Mendelson, 2007). This finding is problematic, as the study omits to define the sexual coercive behaviour in question (or indeed the range of behaviours), how this was captured when gathering the sample and how the researchers then defined a 'perpetrator' and 'victim'. This raises questions about the sampling frame and the manner in which the sample was drawn. There is also a lack of explanation, in particular of the significance of the findings beyond this sample, and a lack of explanation as to why particular young women who had disclosed coercive behaviour were not included as part of the sample (as only four perceived female perpetrators were included as part of the sample). The use of a self-report measure without further triangulation of the data was also problematic.

The stigma attached to suffering abuse and violence in an intimate relationship further perpetuates the barrier to reporting. Attitudes influence the images of the perpetrator and victim of violence and abuse, which further reinforces victim blaming ideas, the social tolerance of specific behaviour and the justification for particular behaviours, as illustrated

by McNeish & Scott.

There is a continuum of attitudes to violence against women which includes considerable social acceptance of some kinds of abusive behaviour (e.g. sexual harassment). Even where abuse is generally condemned, responses to the abuse of girls and boys tend to be different: girls and women are often regarded as compliant in or to blame for not leaving violent relationships, putting themselves at risk, or behaving in a ‘provocative’ ways (2014, p.9).

Young people may not view abusive behaviour patterns as destructive; in particular, if they are inexperienced or unfamiliar with relationship norms around expectations and boundaries. Therefore, the need to educate young people on the meaning of gendered norms and abuse, in order to assist in the identification of their experiences as abusive, is evident (CAADA, 2013; Zero Tolerance, 2014). Age and lack of experience make young women vulnerable, not only due to potential reluctance to seek support and help, but also based on their understanding of care/control, abuse/ love and healthy relationships.

3.6 Young People’s Intimate Relationships & Dating Norms

For young people, relationships, ‘going out’, relationship exclusivity, ‘courtship’ or ‘dating’ morph into different forms, depending on several factors, such as local norms, age group and peers. Young people begin initiating intimate relationships during early adolescence (10-13 years old) (Stonard et al, 2015). Young intimate relationships differ from adult intimate relationships, specifically with regards to the role expectations, degree of intimacy, duration and everyday routines (Hickman et al, 2004). The majority of first intimate relationships take place during adolescence, with an estimated 88% of young people in some form of intimate partner relationship (Barter et al, 2009), and the likelihood of experiencing abuse within the first intimate relationships higher than subsequent relationships (CAADA, 2013). The first sexual experience for young heterosexual women frequently occurs within the context of ‘first love relationships’ (Hird & Jackson, 2001, p.28). Evidence from the third National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal-3) suggests that the percentage of underage sexual experiences has increased for both young men and women. Furthermore, a significant proportion of young people in the UK report not feeling ready for their first sexual activity, and as a result lose their virginity under circumstances that are incompatible with positive sexual health, with just under 40% of women and approximately 26.5% of men sharing a view that their first sexual experience had occurred at the wrong time (Palmer et al, 2019). Young people’s intimate relationships are also often the location where gender inequality is perpetuated, due to the

limited sexual scripts, gender inequality and the sexist behaviour of young men, which Chung conceptualises as ‘masquerading intimacy’ (Chung, 2005, p.449).

US evidence suggests that adolescent ‘dating violence’ emerges between the ages of 15 and 16 (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999), with these dating relationships mirroring patterns identified in college and adult relationships; primarily the abuse of power and inability of victims to leave abusive relationships (Makepeace, 1981; Wolfe et al, 1997). Furthermore, substantial US evidence indicates a high prevalence of sexual and gendered violence in student communities (Fisher & Sloan 2011), findings that recent studies in the UK echo (Barter et al. 2009; Fox et al, 2013; Wood et al, 2011). In the UK, the 1999 BCS outlined that 19% of 16-19 year-old young women suffered as a result of physical harm within an intimate relationship, patterns replicated in the 2011 BCS (Mirrlees & Black, 1999, Chaplin et al, 2011), and echoed recently, as women are more likely than men to have experienced intimate violence across all headline types of abuse (Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2016).

Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence and abuse, but there is a tendency for female victims to be held equally culpable for abuse within their intimate relationships (Regan & Kelly, 2001). The impact and severity of abuse suffered, and the differences in the nature of concerns shared by young women, is far greater than by young men (Barter et al, 2009; Childline, 2013; Regan & Kelly, 2001; Barter et al, 2015; ONS, 2016). Young women use violence defensively (Stark, 2007), with young men constructing their masculinity based on violence perpetrated (Totten, 2003). Levels of abuse on the surface appear comparable for both young men and women, masking the deeper impact of abusive behaviour patterns on female well-being and subsequently disguising the true gender divide. There are wider gendered patterns of intimate partner violence in this age group, with young women subjected to more abuse than males when the frequency, severity, and the range of abusive behaviour is considered (Barter et al, 2009; Humphreys et al, 2008; Safer lives, 2009; Stanley, 2011, WHO, 2005; Wood, et al, 2009, Radford et al, 2011, Hester, 2009; Coy et al 2009; NICE, 2016; FRA, 2014) and with male violence more severe and controlling in comparison to female-inflicted violence (Hester, 2009). Women, rather than men, experience repeated, severe partner abuse over a sustained period (ONS, 2017), with one in six young women reporting severe abuse by an intimate partner (Barter et al, 2009), 66% of sexual abuse reported by children and young people were perpetrated by those under 18 years old (Radford et al, 2011) and 56% of unwanted early sexual experiences occurred for the first time when young women were below the age of 14 years old (NSPCC & Sugar,

2005). A significant proportion of young women surveyed state that violence and abuse experienced as part of their intimate relationships have seriously affected their well-being, in comparison to young men who reported limited impact (Wood et al, 2009; Radford et al, 2011; McNeish & Scott, 2014).

Explanations of the higher prevalence of younger women experiencing GBV, revolves around societal perceptions about the current generation of young women. It is perceived that younger women tend to have a greater number of intimate partners than older women, are vulnerable to physical male strength, are more financially dependent than older women and are generally more vulnerable due to their child-rearing role (Jewkes et al, 2014). Young women often fail to identify abuse and may normalise the abuse suffered; in particular, with emotional abuse and coercive control (Barter et al, 2009). In addition to the harm and risks indicated by the prevalence rates, is the concern that,

If boys view the impact of their victimisation as negligible, they may also apply this understanding to their own action. Thus they may believe that their partners are also unaffected by their use of violence (Barter et al, 2009, p.181).

Therefore, a key risk factor is young men's attitudes towards and understanding of the impact of their abusive behaviour on the well-being of others. Despite the perpetration of violence and abuse by women and within same sex relationships, the prevalent pattern within intimate relationships is violence and abuse by men towards women (Humphreys & Mullender, 2000).

As this PhD is based on a regional study completed in North Wales, it is pertinent to shape the current evidence/research identified within a Welsh context. In 2011/12 Welsh police forces recorded 48,576 domestic violence incidents (specifically North Wales and Gwent); however there is a lack of clarity of the data recorded, the definition of domestic violence and abuse applied and whether this figure specifically related to adults or also included young people over the age of 16 years old. Despite this, this figure provides a benchmark and also indicated that men represented less than one-fifth of victims of domestic violence crimes (Robinson et al, 2012). It was also noted that 150,000 Welsh young people are affected by domestic violence and abuse (WAG, 2010). However, the exact nature of this figure is not explained; in particular, how the data was gathered and whether it related specifically to young people as witnesses or victims of domestic violence and abuse. It has been noted that a higher proportion of Welsh young women reported being forced to have sex in comparison to other UK based countries (Sugar & NSPCC, 2005). As previously

mentioned, domestic violence and abuse is a 'hidden' issue within society, therefore in reality, this figure will be higher.

3.7 Young People, Abuse & Well-being

An increase in reported incidents of intimate violence in teenage relationships has resulted in identifying this pattern of behaviour as a growing well-being concern (Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Barter et al 2009). The Social Services and Well-being [Wales] Act 2014 introduced revised duties on local authorities regarding well-being and child protection. The application of these revised duties provides a foundation for a more robust prevention and protection agenda; the shift within Welsh Councils to adopt a corporate ownership of safeguarding with the implementation of Corporate Safeguarding Boards in order to further cement this perspective. In addition, a focused agenda on child protection as 'everybody's business' (Munro, 2011) highlights the requirement to incorporate a child protection focus as a 'golden thread' weaving through all multi-agency work streams.

Children and young people suffering as a result of child protection concerns are likely to be vulnerable to a spectrum of abuse, with domestic abuse a key child protection concern, impacting on parenting capacity and positive family relationships (Reder et al, 2015). Domestic violence and abuse is also a family background factor in two thirds of serious case reviews where a child has died (Brandon et al, 2012). Exposure to familial domestic violence increases the likelihood of young women engaging in risky sexual activities and their ability to form suitable relationships (Elliott et al, 2002; CAADA, 2013; Byrne & Taylor, 2007). Those young people, who have experienced childhood abuse, neglect and domestic violence and abuse are regarded as more vulnerable and susceptible to victimisation (Stanley, 2011; Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011). Consideration needs to be given to enhancing the protective factor of young women, not only to provide protection, but to educate them on identifying patterns, signs and symptoms of abusive behaviour (See further discussion: see chapter seven).

One area in which this increased vulnerability is manifested is the nature of relationships with older males, illustrating trends similar to child exploitation (Barter et al, 2009; Barter et al, 2015), with young women who had experienced child abuse at risk of identifying abusive relationships as an 'expression of love' (Wood et al, 2011). Worryingly, the confusion of young women in attempting to identify their own experiences of victimisation, in particular sexual harm and exploitation, is linked to their understanding of consensual and non-consensual sex. Several high-profile cases illustrate the links between Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and an awareness of acceptable roles and boundaries

within intimate relationships (Casey Report, 2015; Jay Report, 2104). Due to gendered pressures and sexual coercion, young women have limited power to negotiate sexual contact and consent.

UK-based research specifies that pregnant and teenage mothers are more vulnerable to violence within intimate relationships, with one in three reporting physical violence from their current partner, two in three reporting sexual pressure and nearly all the sample reporting experiencing controlling behaviour. Young mothers reported the level of violence and abuse intensifying during pregnancy, feeling isolated and judged and generally wanting to access professional support (Wood et al, 2011).

UK prevalence of domestic violence during pregnancy has been estimated at 3.4%. Incidence rates are higher for teenagers and the incidence rate for low income, teenage mothers in the US has been found to be as high as 38% (McNeish & Scott, 2014, p.15).

US research indicates that physical violence during pregnancy is a significant concern, with young women aged 16-24 at highest risk (Harrykissoon et al, 2002). Rosen (2004) explored the relationship between teenage pregnancy and teenage violence, and hypothesized the potential role of intimate violence in shaping a young woman's ability to make an informed decision on contraception and pregnancy. The links between contraception, pregnancy and risks continue to reflect a concerning picture (Silverman et al, 2004; Collim-Vezina et al, 2006), with teenage mothers indicating several concerns regarding exposure of intimate violence, their fear of violence escalating, the potential removal of their children, being judged as 'bad mothers', being disbelieved and receiving indifferent support (Include, 2009). Through their own narratives, young women voice their increased vulnerability to abuse, violence and coercion when pregnant or undertaking their parental role.

Those in the most vulnerable category of young women are often placed in local authority care or are in custody. Despite reluctance to disclose domestic violence, and known barriers to reporting domestic violence and abuse, high levels of adult women in prison have suffered violence, with around 80% of all female offenders in prison disclosing experiences of domestic and sexual violence (Women's Aid, 2011). Despite this evidence of violence and abuse suffered by this particular cohort, the initial literature review reveals limited UK-based research exploring the particular effects of intimate violence on young female offenders, either in the community or within the secure setting. In 2011 and 2012 there were 42 and 27 young women in custody in England and Wales respectively, the vast

majority being 17 years-old, with almost half having been ‘looked after’⁹ children and almost a quarter having children of their own (Summerfield, 2011; Murray, 2012). Recent research by Wood et al (2011) was unsuccessful in its attempt to include female young offenders within their sample of ‘disadvantaged’ teenagers, and focused on other groups of young women, including ‘looked after’ young women and teenage mothers.

Youth Justice Board (2006) research focusing on the health needs of young women in custody demonstrated risky sexual lives and various forms of sexual exploitation experienced, which led to identifying sexual health, sexual empowerment and negotiation skills as areas requiring attention. The study went on to highlight the extreme vulnerability of this group; suffering the consequences of multiple forms of abuse, neglect and social exclusion, with over 40% having been previously ‘looked after’ and 90% having left school before the age of 17. US research noted that 24% of ‘juvenile offenders’ who had committed an assault were in a relationship with the victim; more prevalent than stranger or acquaintance assaults, with 67% reported female victims (Snyder & McCurely, 2008). Not only are there concerns regarding links with the youth justice system, but also wider offending and sexual exploitation connections, with gang activity/association (AVA, 2013) raising the risk ante further, which offers an explanation as to why young women suffer more abuse than older women.

3.8 The Impact of Social Media on Young People’s Intimate Relationships

Bandura’s learning theory (1977) is often used to justify abusive behaviour in intimate relationships as learned behaviour; ultimately lacking consideration for the gendered analysis of power, inequality and choice. Social learning theory and socialisation are uncritical, and assume that children/young people are naturally socialised by their parents and peers, with substantial evidence outlining the impact of the media on attitudes on GBV (Flood & Pease, 2009). The use of social media has changed the nature of communication in intimate relationships and is integral in shaping the landscape of young people’s peer and intimate relationships (Daniels & Zurbriggen, 2016). As the nature of interpersonal communication has shifted with the widespread use of the Internet and mobile phones, so has the possibility for emotional abuse; specifically, the ability to monitor movements. Not only has social media ensured that information is easily accessible, it has also provided a means for surveillance and constant communication.

The social media and internet era has brought its uses and limitations for young people.

⁹ Children who are ‘looked after’ by a local authority under the Children Act 1989 and Social Services and Well-being Act 2014. Therefore, children who are placed within the care of the local authority.

Evidence suggests that whilst young people can access good quality sexual health information, they are also increasingly accessing sexually explicit and pornographic information (Tanton et al, 2015). The primary media genres influencing attitude towards GBV were music videos and electronic games (Flood & Pease, 2009); however, the new social media and technologies have ‘taken over’ in perpetuating gendered patterns of abuse, coercion and control via online tracking and the circulation of exploitative images (CAADA, 2013; Ringrose, 2012; Papadoulous, 2010), in particular, as virtual communication is now part of everyday lives.

Communicating online is a normal way of life for many young people and the UK’s internet access is amongst the highest in Europe with teenagers’ usage higher than that of adults (Home Office, 2013, p.6).

The internet, with its ability to perpetuate abuse by functioning as a platform to facilitate bullying behaviour, grooming and the non-consensual circulation of sensitive sexual images, can equally function as a supportive tool with vast information privately at young women’s fingertips. Mobiles and social networking are fundamental elements of young peoples’ relationships, with online and offline symmetries in control mechanisms and distinct forms of online exploitation identified.

The idea of ‘image based sexual abuse’ has been conceptualised as the non-consensual making and sharing of private sexual images, which should be situated on a continuum of sexual violence to ensure sufficient connection with a broad spectrum of sexual violence, harassment, gender norms, victim blaming attitudes, choice and consent (McGlynn & Rackley, 2017; McGlynn et al, 2017). Recent research reflects the experiences of young people of ‘image based sexual abuse’; in particular, how sexual images and messages can be used to inflict humiliation and control (Stanley et al, 2018). Sexual peer pressure via social media is more prevalent than online ‘stranger danger’ (Ringrose et al, 2012), with a growing trend of sharing indecent images on mobiles acknowledged. Home Office (2013) figures reflect that 6% of young people (aged 11-16) had received uncomfortable messages or images on the subject of sex. The use of Facebook, Snapchat and so called ‘spy apps’ perpetuate the cycle of abuse and coercive control. This is now within an era when online and offline control and surveillance is accepted as normal by many young people (Barter et al, 2015).

Sexting is the practice of sending sexual images via text or instant messaging; however, the term ‘sexting’ is an adult term, illustrating the gulf in adult discourse and young people’s ‘everyday’ lives (Ringrose et al, 2012). Despite the relative paucity of empirical data on

sexting, much debate focuses on the negative gendered impact of sexting (Phippen, 2012; Ringrose et al, 2012; Wood et al, 2015), whereby there is a higher likelihood that young women will be the recipients of these unsolicited messages (Ringrose et al, 2012). There are links to the sexualisation of young people, specifically young women (Ringrose et al, 2012; Renold, 2013). Research indicates that 12% of 11-16 year-olds (Ringrose, 2012) have received sexual images online, with a change in prevalence rate with age, as younger children/young people (11-12 year-olds) are less likely to receive sexual images, though less change is observed with class status (Livingstone et al, 2010; Ringrose et al, 2012). Unwanted sexual activity has extended to the virtual sphere, with a high prevalence rate of engagement of young people in unwanted sexting with relationship partners (Drouin & Tobin, 2014; Drouin et al, 2015).

Sexting can be a consensual and a desired element of friendships and intimate relationships. Hasinoff (2015) argues that young people's capacity for choice should be realised when debating about 'sexting panic', and in particular the need to educate about consent. Hasinoff offers practical advice and an alternative view of sexting beyond its potential risk for young people. However, as illustrated within chapter six of this thesis, sexting in certain circumstances is harmful and linked to GBV; for example, when young men and men constantly request 'nudie/selfies'¹⁰, rate physical appearance and share images of young women without their consent.

Young women are labelled as 'sluts' and 'slags', as part of the male perception of the female body as their 'possession' for pleasure, in a similar manner to the general sexual role of women framed as 'sluts' and 'angels' (Hird & Jackson, 2001). Recent research has highlighted the regularity of exposure and access to pornography, with young men generally viewing pornography positively (Martellozzo et al., 2016), whilst it has been argued that young women view its consumption as uncomfortable and distasteful (Horvath et al, 2013). Significant concerns have also been identified regarding the coercive nature of teenage relationships and the confusion between 'caring' and 'controlling' behaviour (Barter et al, 2009), further perpetuated by 'sexting' and the frequent viewing of pornography (Stanley et al, 2016), reflecting wider sexual pressures. The continued exposure and gendered consumption of pornography maintains both sexist attitudes and sexual coercion through its unrealistic and unloving image of sex (Flood, 2009). 'Revenge pornography' involves the circulation of nude or partially nude photos or videos without

¹⁰ Nudies is a term often used by young people when a request is received for a naked or partially naked photo. These requests are often sent via instant or text messaging. This practice is often linked to sexting.

the person's consent, with a plethora of broad academic definitions provided for this relatively new phenomenon. There are also debates across the literature that this non-consensual circulation of images or videos occurs within the context of the breakdown of an intimate relationship (Walker & Steath, 2017). Whilst the 'revenge' element links to the notion of a relationship breakdown, there are several examples drawn from the interviews that demonstrate that defining this issue as a broader form of sexual harm (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016) on a continuum of technology-facilitated abusive behaviour would be more suitable (as suggested by McGlynn et al, 2017); specifically, as the continued circulation of the image and reaction to this act is often sustained by a wider peer group.

The use of social media invades all aspects of everyday life through the continued use to form on/offline relationships; very much pervasive for the new media generation. Seeing, believing and striving towards the sexual standards/images of porn serves as a masculine measure of proving sexual knowledge (Martellozzo et al., 2016). However, in reality, pornography only serves to further oppress and restrict sexual liberation due to its unrealistic depiction of sex. Equally, a distressing factor is young men's tendency to turn to pornography to learn about sex; in particular, their use of pornography as a manual for sexual relationships (Coy, 2013), which is concerning, particularly when consideration is given to the non-engagement of key issues, such as consent.

3.9 Healthy Relationships and Accessing Support

A woman is assaulted on average 35 times prior to the initial contact with the police, with 73% of all incidents of domestic violence involving repeat offending (ATL, 2009). The strength and resilience of women when negotiating strategies in violent relationships across cultures is well-evidenced (WHO, 2005). The 'hidden' element of domestic violence and abuse and the barriers to reporting incidents pose a challenge when attempting to quantify the exact financial cost and implement a strategy to address this issue (WAG, 2018). Barriers to reporting domestic violence and abuse include lack of confidence, shame and fear. As mentioned, GBV is a 'hidden' societal issue; even more so for teenagers, with teenagers more acceptant of, and dismissive of abusive behaviour patterns. Young people's attitudes to 'barriers' primarily focused on the difficulty in leaving relationships due to perceptions of love and forgiveness, rather than practical difficulties in accessing support. This issue is further explored in chapter seven of this thesis.

Young people are more likely to report online rather than offline violence/abuse, as it

appears 'easier' than direct or 'hidden' violence and abuse (Barter et al, 2015). Young women tend to identify their intimate relationships as abusive on reflection, and when the relationship has ended, specifically when their identity is not related to their boyfriend/partner (Chung, 2005). Young people report the failure of professionals to fully understand their views and anxieties about abusive relationships, with further barriers, such as lack of awareness of the harmful effects of violent teenage relationships, and stigma resulting in low reporting levels (Barter et al, 2009).

Evidence from the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal) reflects that the percentage of young people referring to school as their main source of information about sexual issues has steadily increased from the findings of Natsal 1 to Natsal 3, with similar percentages of men and women reporting lessons at schools as their key source of information about sexual issues (MacDowall et al, 2015; Tanton et al, 2015). A lower level of participants reported their parents as the key source of information, however the percentage of women requiring information from a parent was double that of men (MacDowall et al, 2015). The findings from these studies also reflected that young people felt unprepared for their first sexual experience, as they reported they required more information, specifically about feelings, emotions, relationships, STIs and contraception (MacDowall et al, 2015). Research reflects the need to listen to the views of young people, with suggestions that teaching sessions on healthy relationships should be delivered in a manner that meets the needs of a broad spectrum of young people (Fox et al, 2014).

The uses and limitation of peer-led learning is also relevant to the design of prevention interventions on healthy relationships (a matter discussed further in chapters seven and eight). Research has demonstrated the importance of peer relationships and support when experiencing domestic violence and abuse (Humphreys et al, 2008, Refuge, Undated; Schutt, 2009; NUT, 2005). The development of trusting relationships is regarded as a prerequisite to exploring sensitive relationship issues with young people (Barter, 2016). Dewar (2015) reports that a peer led approach to healthy relationship education should not be undervalued, as it encourages a 'safe' environment for discussion by drawing upon the skills of young people as a key resource. The use of peer mentor/educators in schools can result in positive outcomes for young people (McLeod, Jones & Cramer, 2015). However, peer-based programmes need to be appropriately planned, as there is evidence that peer relationships limit the opportunities and willingness to seek support, as support accessed from peers is often inappropriate due to views expressed on the acceptability of abuse/violence (Barter et al, 2009; Burman & Carmel, 2005; Burton & Kitzinger, 1998).

However, as mentioned later, the design and delivery of peer-led interventions needs to ensure that young people are suitably trained, due to the concerns of peer pressure and bullying, but if delivered effectively, they can work to foster an ethos that challenges peer isolation.

3.10 Recent Debates on Prevention Education

Following the significant step of the adoption of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, there was a general paucity in the debate around the statutory provision of healthy relationship education. The debate continues in England¹¹, albeit on an uncertain and acrimonious platform. Charities working with young people have expressed concerns on the gaps in sex education teaching; in particular, the lack of focus on teaching the importance of ‘sexual consent’ (NCB, 2014) and ‘respect’ within young people’s intimate relationships. Despite claims by the Department for Education that high quality Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) is "central" to the curriculum (Burns, 2016), healthy relationship education remains voluntary for schools to deliver in Wales. Evidence reflects that schools do not prioritise personal and social education in Wales and, as a result, the content and delivery of healthy relationships education varies significantly across Wales (Estyn, 2017). A good practice guide on the Whole Education Approach has been designed by the Welsh Assembly Government in conjunction with Welsh Women’s Aid (2015), however, most schools continue to be unaware of this guide and its accompanying toolkit and remain confused as to which PSHE guide to follow (Estyn, 2017). Through the Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) Expert Panel, the debate has now gathered new momentum in Wales following the recent publication of the report on the future of sex and relationship education in Wales in early 2018 (Renold & McGeeney, 2017)¹². The overall aim of this report is to provide recommendations on the future of this curriculum area on how it can be improved before 2022. This report summarised that the current provision of sex and relationship education in Wales is inadequate, is too focused on the biological aspects of relationships and is not inclusive of a range of needs, young people’s views or their everyday experiences (Renold & McGeeney, 2017, p.30).

¹¹ The amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill 2017 will make Relationship Education in Primary Schools and Relationship and Sex Education in Secondary Schools compulsory, with this timescale changing on several occasions in England. However, parents/carers will have the right to withdraw their child from this education provision.

¹² The Welsh Assembly commissioned Cardiff University to undertake a piece of research on The future of sex and relationships education curriculum (2017). This was published in January 2018 and examined the current and future status of this area of education in Wales. The report was presented to the Cabinet Secretary for Education in December 2017.

The focus of prevention education for young people should be on recognising the impact of everyday forms of GBV as a continuum of naturalised harassment and abuse of women by men, rather than as a ‘sledgehammer’, or abuse perpetrated by a minority of dominant men (Stanko, 1985). Young people should be educated on understanding the impact of everyday harassment and abuse experienced by known perpetrators from their own intimate relationships, and therefore a focus should be on understanding young people’s lived experiences of abuse within their own intimate relationships. Young women should be educated on the norms associated with our gendered roles; specifically, young men’s power and entitlement to young women’s bodies (Stanko, 1985), their feelings and thoughts. The foundation of prevention education with young people should focus on normative gendered power dynamics and its impact on their experiences of the everyday routines of their intimate relationships, including the established scripts of the progression of their relationships, how they experience intimacy, coercion and abuse, and how these experiences differ as a result of their individual needs, well-being and personal profile; therefore, identifying the connections in the ways that young women experience abuse within their intimate relationships, whilst also identifying the impact of their individualised needs on their own subjective experiences.

An example of a prevention campaign, aimed at tackling abuse in young people’s relationships, is the Home Office *This is Abuse* campaign. The Home Office commissioned two separate media campaigns (*This is Abuse*, 2010-2015); one in February 2010 at a cost of £2 million, and the second in September 2011 at a cost of £1.5 million (University of Bristol, 2012). The focus was on targeting young people aged 13-18 by encouraging them to evaluate their views on abuse, violence and consent within intimate relationships. The campaign was also included as part of the Teen Soap Opera, *Hollyoaks*, and was shown on MTV, which also included several MTV adverts with high-profile celebrities. Social marketing has been a key component of domestic violence and abuse prevention work with young people, owing to the ability of this method of communication to reach young people, due to their familiarity with the use of social media. Implementing expensive media campaigns whilst at the time rejecting the debate around compulsive healthy relationship education in all schools was troubling; in particular, due to the growing concern at the time around the content, quality and impact of PSHE teaching (Ofsted, 2013). The lack of clarity and the challenges faced by this type of education is summarised well by Allen (2008): “sexuality education is a site of competing political interests, comprising parents/caregivers, teachers, school management, educational policy makers,

civil liberty organizations, conservative and liberal groups” (p. 574).

The *This is Abuse* video clips illustrated individual stories, with the onus on the audience to select the possible options available to the perpetrator and victim from both standpoints (whether to stop the abuse or not), by asking the audience to reflect on their views on the possible options available. This campaign remained focused on individualised notions of risk and responsibility, rather than the broader gendered norms that scaffold such abusive behaviours. Whilst these forms of video clips do have a place in raising awareness of this type of abuse, as discussed earlier with reference to Kelly’s continuum and Stanko’s view of the sledgehammer intrusion concept, such campaigns and scenarios should focus on reflecting on the influence of structural inequality, power and control on the abusive dynamics in intimate relationships.

Gadd et al’s (2014) analysis of the *This is Abuse Bedroom* video clip was conducted as part of the *Boys to Men Research project*¹³, with the analysis of this specific video clip discussed as part of the focus groups conducted. For the analysis, they concentrated on the discussion with three young men who participated in the focus groups, as these young men were known to be perpetrators of violence against women because they were being supervised by the Youth Offending Team. By focusing on the views of these three young men, the attention is diverted towards known perpetrators, rather than focusing on the views of a broader range of young people. This suggested the contradictory identifications for the young people viewing the *This is Abuse* video clips (specifically, the ‘Bedroom’ video¹⁴) with both anti-violence messages and victim-blaming discourses identified. They questioned the potential ‘boomerang effect’ of this prevention campaign: the risk that the message from the video clips had the opposite impact of that intended; specifically that the young men viewing the clips sympathise with the perpetrators of the abuse. I would also argue that the gendered element of this form of abuse was missing both in the young men’s discussion and also as part of their analysis. Despite the positive outcomes measured by the Home Office (2012) in their evaluation of this campaign, the campaign did have problems, as no pre-testing on the knowledge and attitudes of the young people viewing the clips had been undertaken prior to the campaign; in particular, as it has been suggested that;

Rigorous evaluation of such campaigns has proved challenging, and

¹³ *The Boys to Men* project explored the reasons why some young men become perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse, with a focus on exploring what can be done to prevent young men from becoming perpetrators. The methods adopted included an attitudes questionnaire, young people’s focus groups and biographical interviews with a 30 young men.

¹⁴ The ‘Bedroom’ video clip raised questions around abuse within teenage intimate relationships, with a focus on consent, coercion, physical and sexual violence.

methodological development in this field would be valuable. There is a need to understand how different components of a campaign that provides information, offers routes to support and raises awareness can lead to a reduction in abuse (Stanley et al, 2015, p.169).

The focus of the analysis illustrated by Gadd et al (2014) is on how these three young men excuse and justify the abusive behaviour of the young man in the video, rather than on the structural power and control of men that sustains this form of abuse, whilst they acknowledge that social marketing campaigns should not be the key or ‘standalone’ component of domestic violence and abuse preventative work with young men, due to the complexity of the fluid attitudes of young men who are known perpetrators often ostracised in society. What is omitted by Gadd et al (2014) is that preventative work needs to be universal, accessed by all young people, with a broad content that includes a focus on the impact of structural inequality, and a spectrum of attitudes and experiences of young people.

Following the *This is Abuse* campaign, a new campaign *DISRESPECT NOBODY*¹⁵ was launched by the Home Office in 2016 through the release of online and TV adverts, which aims to tackle sexting, relationship abuse, consent, porn and rape, with an overall focus on healthy relationships. This new campaign builds on the learning of the *This is Abuse* campaign and aims to cover a broader range of topics, with a focus on healthy relationships, rather than abuse per se. The website includes information on each of these topics, including video clips, individual real life stories, PHSE teaching materials and information for young people on how they can access advice and support. Based on the limitations of measuring the impact of *This is Abuse*, it may prove challenging to measure the exact impact of media campaigns on the long-term attitude shifts and behavioural change (Home Office, 2015). Whilst the full evaluation of this campaign is yet to be released, in contrast to the *This is Abuse* evaluation, the focus of the *DISRESPECT NOBODY* evaluation will be on measuring the pre- and post-campaign awareness, engagement and impact on attitudes and behaviours of a target audience in order to continually improve and amend the campaign. As mentioned, whilst marketing campaigns can be useful in raising awareness and offering initial education on sensitive topics, which can be viewed within a private space, long-term impact and behavioural change can only be achieved by adopting a more sustained approach of prevention education.

¹⁵ The campaign is supported by a specific website www.disrespectnobody.co.uk

3.11 Prevention Education: Challenging Gender Norms

The need to implement evidence-based domestic abuse/healthy relationship interventions aimed particularly at young people in the UK is now acknowledged (e.g., Home Office, 2013, EVAW, 2010; Estyn, 2017; Renold & McGeeney, 2017). Evidence from the US already illustrates the positive impact of several healthy relationship programmes (e.g. Safe Dates & LoveU2 Relationships Smart) on the prevalence of ‘dating violence’; in particular, around the acceptability of this form of abuse, awareness-raising and demonstrating skills for conflict resolution, even when short courses were delivered (two days) (Antle et al, 2011; Foshee et al, 2004). A recent meta-analysis of US-based healthy relationship interventions revealed that even minor interventions can result in changing knowledge and attitudes (McLeod, Jones & Cramer, 2015). The focus should be on age-appropriate sex and relationships education which is delivered on a consistent and continuous basis (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2013).

Schools are required to ensure that no gender-based discrimination exists within the institution, including ensuring equal opportunities (Department for Education, 2014). As discussed, schools are key sites for developing gendered identities, as described by Epstein (1998), as schooling sexualities. Children and young people develop, define and re-define their gender identities in schools through their school work, subject choices, such as science, which continues to be conceptualised as a male subject (OECD, 2015), and other school activities (Jackson, 2005); for example, after-school clubs. Indeed, schools have been found to enable heteronormative ideas both through the curriculum and via extra-curricular practices (Ryle, 2017). Any work to review the state of young people’s relationships, patterns of abuse and violence, gender stereotyping and sexism requires a re-examination of the role of schools in constructing gender identities and norms. This may be a challenge, as concerns have been raised that schools avoid responding to sexist behaviour and fail to understand its impact on pupils, which results in the majority of incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence going unreported (House of Commons Equality Committee, 2016). In fact, the concerns around sexist beliefs and name-calling has been evidenced in several studies; for example, 71% of 16-18 year olds in schools stated that they had heard sexist name-calling (slut, slag) on a daily basis, or a few times a week, with 29% of young women subjected to unwanted sexual touching in schools (EVAW, 2016). Gender norms have shaped the culture of sexist banter as an everyday harmless and accepted act, not just in school, but also within University or Higher Education settings (Sundaram & Jackson, 2015). Renold & McGeeney (2018) identify the need to eliminate sexist name calling in schools; in particular, the use of the words ‘slags

and sluts’ to describe young women, whilst young men were referred to as ‘lads’. Not only is there a need to shift attitudes within young people’s own cultures, but also the expectations of teachers and caregivers, in order to eliminate stereotypical gendered norms (OECD, 2015).

As mentioned, whilst one-off campaigns should continue to play a role in prevention education, resources should primarily be diverted to enhance the skills available in schools to deliver programmes on a consistent basis as part of the curriculum. The current PSHE framework in Wales has a well-being theme, primarily due to the policy and legislative focus on well-being across community, Health and Social Care services in Wales; for example, see the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014. This theme includes a focus on understanding safe relationships, living safe and healthy lives and inequalities and respect (WAGa: PSHE Framework, 2008). Evidence suggests that this prevention approach in Wales is primarily focused on sporadic ‘one-off’ sessions on particular aspects of domestic abuse (Robinson, 2012; Estyn, 2017; Renold & McGenney, 2017), whilst a ‘whole school approach’ is regarded as a more effective method of shifting attitudinal beliefs (Hester & Westermarland, 2005, Maxwell et al, 2010; Renold & McGenney, 2017). A ‘whole school approach’ provides a comprehensive framework for healthy relationship education, goes beyond the classroom learning and aims to shift the overall attitudes towards equality, gender and relationships across the whole community in order to achieve sustained change on an individual and structural level (Renold & McGenney, 2017). Such an approach would entail the use of teaching tools/prevention packages (Expect Respect, 2013, Maxwell et al, 2010), including a focus on gender stereotyping and the tackling of embedded beliefs of gender inequality and sexism. Recent evidence indicates that those schools that are most effective in delivering healthy relationships education do so within a culture of gender equality and respect for the rights of others (Estyn, 2017; Renold & McGenney, 2017). A ‘whole school gender education’ approach is required, which extends the ‘whole school approach’ and reflects that preventative education should have a central focus on gender and gender equality in relation to violence and abuse (Sundaram, 2014, p.24), with a focus on the influence of gender norms in shaping young people's attitudes and experiences of abuse. The core of prevention work and early intervention work with young people should focus on the transformation of unequal power relationships, and the attitudes and behaviour that underpin these. As part of this prevention support, discussion on the gendered structural inequality, coercion/pressure, appropriate behaviour in respectful and consensual relationships, boundaries of personal space and specialised

support should be explored.

3.12 Chapter Summary

Taken as a whole, this chapter has demonstrated that abuse within young intimate relationships:

- has a high prevalence rate;
- includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional abuse and controlling behaviour;
- reflects online and offline patterns of abuse;
- is gender-specific;
- is further perpetuated by the gendered attitudes and social contexts that tolerate and justify this harmful behaviour;
- has a significant impact on the well-being outcomes of victims/survivors.

This chapter concludes by stating that the prevalence and impact of violence and abuse within teenage relationships clearly reflects the gendered nature of this issue (Barter et al, 2009 & Barter et al, 2015). In order to fundamentally challenge this pattern, there needs to be a focus on re-shaping gendered attitudes that normalise, naturalise and sanction abusive and violent behaviour within young intimate relationships. As discussed, an approach needs to be adopted that focuses on challenging these attitudes and behaviours in a manner that re-shapes structural, rather than individualised concerns. In order to begin to contextualise and address these concerns, there needs to be a focus on the wider nature and pattern of behaviour within young intimate relationships, and the progression of young intimate relationships; specifically, an exploration of courtship or dating norms.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY CHAPTER

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology underpinning the research design and methods. It is structured as follows: firstly, the fieldwork context is described; secondly, the research methodology is outlined; thirdly, the research strategy is explained, followed by an evaluation of the key ethical issues, and finally a review of the data analysis process is presented.

The previous literature-based chapters provided a foundation of some of the key issues, tensions and knowledge gaps, which informed the research design. The research process was separated into three key stages, *Stage One*: Young women's advisory groups¹⁶, piloting and pre-testing; *Stage Two*: Quantitative stage: Attitudes survey with a sample of 220 young women aged 15-18 years old; *Stage Three*: Qualitative stage: 25 semi-structured interviews with young women aged 15-18 years old. For all stages of the research, the sample was located within schools, primarily due to the convenience of a captive audience, whilst also enabling an insight into research participants' everyday attitudes and experiences within their own territory and learning environment. One young person from the Youth Justice Services also participated.

In September 2014, the fieldwork process commenced with the advisory group sessions and piloting. The questionnaire was completed by participants from November 2014 to February 2015, with semi-structured interviews conducted from February to May 2015. The research was conducted in line with the University of Lincoln ethical guidelines and other key ethics sources (e.g. WHO Ethics Guidance, 2005), with ethical approval gained from the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethical Review Panel. Due to the nature of this research there were key ethical issues requiring consideration, and indeed the practical problem-solving prior to gaining ethical approval to commence fieldwork. The ethical issues primarily revolved around consent, confidentiality, the 'gatekeeper' role and the management of any safeguarding disclosure, which is not unique to this project, with similar issues also identified in related research (Lombard, 2014; Fox et al, 2013; Wood et al, 2011; Barter et al, 2009; Barter et al, 2015).

¹⁶ Two advisory groups, based in two schools, were established within the research area. Both advisory groups adopted the same ethos, ground rules and responsibilities, however the group roles differed in order to fully use the time allocated to complete all the advisory and piloting workload. Group 1 focused on advising on all elements of the questionnaire, from the more complex issues of exploring the content of the vignettes and the questionnaire, to advising on the clarity of language adopted in the instructions and accompanying leaflet, and checking the translation of the documents in Welsh and English. Group 2 advised on the clarity and realism of the vignettes, clarified the Likert attitudes tables and undertook the piloting and pre-testing work.

Prior to commencing fieldwork, it was decided that the name of the area or any other identifiable information would not be disclosed. Therefore, the local authority areas participating in the research were anonymised and given the pseudonym of *Golwenhaf*. Primarily, this decision was taken due to ethical concerns of identifying participants, some of whom may be vulnerable and revealing difficult life experiences which, if identified, may place them at risk. Also, revealing the location of the research may have discouraged participants from openly sharing their views and experiences, whilst possibly discouraging ‘gatekeepers’ from both agreeing and committing to the project. *Golwenhaf* was selected as the research site due to the researcher’s prior personal and professional experience of the area, equating to well-established links across professional agencies, resulting in the necessary organisational links and ease of access to participants. This area is typical of the Welsh context, specifically the bilingual nature of Wales and the rurality of Welsh communities. This is the first ‘mixed methods’ research project in Wales to focus specifically on the voices of young women, with this research providing a female-only space for discussion and avoided ‘competing forms of masculinities’ (Lombard, 2015, p.62) and encouraged participation outside the norm of mixed gender schooling to enable full engagement.

4.2 Feminist Research Philosophy and Approach

As discussed in chapter two, the conceptual framework is feminist interpretivist, and is primarily based on symbolic interactionism and the idea that reality is socially constructed. A ‘golden thread’ throughout is the feminist nature of this research. The feminist nature of this research is embodied in the topic, perspective and research question, which subsequently links to the research design as a whole. The focus of the conceptual framework is also feminist; specifically, the idea of the social construction of gender and the unequal structural power and control within our society which favours men. The theoretical framework was selected on the basis of its critique of issues central to this research, the social construction of gender associated with unequal gender roles, power, control and the position of women in society. Adopting a ‘mixed methods’ approach, based on the ontology of the social construct of gender, the everyday meaning(s) and lived experiences of young women, with the epistemological understanding of reality as a continuous outcome of everyday social interactions. The research methodology links to the ontology of gender as a social, rather than a biological/natural phenomenon with a feminist epistemology. Thus, the research ontology is focused on the existence of subjective multiple realities, individual truths with meaning(s) modified through the interpretive process of the social interactions and experiences of participants.

Consideration is given throughout to the impact of gender on individual social interactions that create and perpetuate gender differences and inequalities; essentially micro level oppression due to macro or structural influences. Feminist research praxis cannot be labelled with a single ontology, epistemology or methodology. A unified approach or single feminist perspective and ‘feminist methodology’ do not exist, due to various feminist theories and differing ontological and epistemological positions (Holland & Ramazanoglu, 2002). Despite this, there are consistent principles to feminist research. Historically, feminist researchers have faced increased pressure to justify the validity of their knowledge, methods and subjectivity in light of perceived political bias; ‘Feminists have been criticized for failing to produce adequately rational, scientific or unbiased knowledge’ (Ibid, p.3). Despite criticism, the general nature of feminist research is focused on exploring social power, scientific oppression and promoting social and political activism (Miner et al, 2012).

A key aim of this feminist research is on developing an understanding of the experiences of young women. Central to this research is a feminist perspective focused on challenging relationships based on power and control, and of conceptualising young women with ‘active agency’, framing the incorporation of the ‘voices’ of young women into research about and for them (Miner & Jayarante, 2014). The active agency of young women was positively empowered not only to inform the design of the research through the co-production of the research tools as part of the advisory groups, but also by gathering their attitudes towards gender norms and their experiences of intimate relationships within a space created for young women. The level of ‘openness’ of this research is in keeping with feminist methodology, of allowing participants to explain their wider meaning(s) as part of the process of giving young women a voice as research participants exploring a sensitive topic.

Feminist research perspectives outline the importance of establishing ‘non-exploitative relationships’, based on equal power and trust, in order to ensure good data quality and identify with participants as experts on their own ‘lived experiences’ (see also: McCarry, 2005; Maynard, 1994). Practically, it is challenging to completely eradicate power imbalances between the researcher and those participating in the research. However, adopting an ‘open and honest’ approach with the participants in this specific research assisted in the production of reliable data representing their experiences. I generally rejected Oakley’s (1981) suggestion of ‘intimacy’; specifically, the idea of the researcher self-disclosure and the mutual sharing of personal information as part of the interview

process. Particular boundaries were established when engaging and interviewing young(er) women, in order to encourage the active listening of their story and not to confuse my role as a researcher with my previous role of working with young people within social care and criminal justice settings. This dismissal did not equate to a rejection of a genuine commitment to strive for a non-hierarchical power dynamic between researcher and participants. Creating this degree of boundary did not necessarily impact on the process of establishing rapport or age-appropriate relationships with participants. Whilst the researcher status was not ‘downplayed’, as discussed by Reinharz (1992), I decided not to disclose my previous experience working as a social worker, middle and senior manager in social services and the Youth Justice Services. Despite this, I was able to draw on my practical social work and teaching experience, conducting undergraduate and postgraduate seminars, which requires a constant check on balanced group participation in order to encourage contribution from all students. Due to the fairly limited power of these young women within their school setting, there was a potential risk that I would feel constrained by the need to satisfy the aims of ‘gatekeepers’; for example, my ability to disclose the extent of sexist attitudes in a particular school. In practice, this concern was diverted, due to the engagement of the relevant Education Authorities and the opportunities provided throughout for participants to input their views, ask questions and seek further information during each research stage.

4.3 Research Strategy, Design and Operationalising the Research

In order to inform the research design, it was necessary to base the strategy on the objectives established in chapter one and the concepts explored in the literature review.

4.3.1 Mixed Methods: The Qualities and Limitations

Symbolic interactionism is a useful framework to address the differing epistemological stance when adopting a ‘mixed methods’ approach (Benzies & Allen, 2001). There are different schools of thought on symbolic interactionism, some of which favour qualitative methods (for example, Blumer, 1969), whilst others favour quantitative methods (for example, Kuhn, 1964). These different methods of analysis of social interactions, identity and perspectives of ‘self’ link to ideas of negotiating identity and the influence of attitudes and social norms on social roles. Irrespective of the nature of the data collected or the method employed, the focus of symbolic interactionism is on the research participants, with an emphasis on sensitively understanding individual perspectives.

A ‘mixed methods’ approach was adopted, as mixing the data set of qualitative and quantitative methods ensured that the strengths of both approaches were utilised in a

practical manner, in order to ‘offset’ potential weaknesses. The research question was designed with consideration given to the function and contribution of both research stages, the feasibility of answering the question and the required ethical framework. The benefits of adopting a ‘mixed methods’ approach, specifically the triangulating of data by using more than one method, outweighs the potential limitations (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002). Therefore, despite the challenges of a ‘mixed methods’ approach, including extensive data collection and the requirement of narrative and numeric data analysis, this approach was selected due to the following advantages: firstly, the questionnaire provided a general understanding of the trends and patterns of attitudes across cohorts of young women from different social groups and backgrounds; secondly, the use of both numerical and narrative data assisted in clarifying the research themes, with the questionnaire results assisting in both extending and refining the breadth of the qualitative inquiry, and finally, the use of both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews assisted in not only triangulating data, but in examining the research questions and sub-questions from several vantage points, essentially enhancing data quality and validity. The aim was to use ‘mixed methods’ to enhance the reliability and validity of data and explore the relationship between both data sets.

4.3.2 Young Voices: Shaping the Research Tools

As part of the initial meeting, bilingual project (see section 3.3.5 on discussion on Active Offer) information was distributed, specifically as this area is predominantly a Welsh-speaking community. This information was shared in order to assist the young women to decide whether or not they wished to participate as a member of the advisory group. The potential benefits of receiving the young women’s input and benefitting from their everyday experiences was highlighted in line with the anticipated benefits to them; in particular, as the aim was to ultimately use the research findings from this study to shape interventions to be used with young women across North Wales schools. Following the initial meetings, gaining access to and the co-operation of the schools was unproblematic. The difficulties of challenging gatekeepers has been outlined in previous research (see: Barter et al, 2009; McCarry, 2012), when attempts were made to impose criteria on participation, e.g., only permitting particular students to participate. I did not encounter such a dilemma, as all the schools allowed full access to all young women in the relevant year groups. The overall research was conducted with year 10, 11, 12 and 13 students; with the advisory group membership focused on year 10 and 11 young women. This was primarily due to the convenience of using the advisory group hours towards the young

women's Welsh Baccaulaureate¹⁷, therefore providing additional benefits and incentives to participation.

Overall, I spent seven months in both schools (two schools participated as advisory sites); from the start of the school year in the September until the Easter break. School One is a mixed sex, bilingual school (Welsh & English) for pupils aged from 11 to 16 years, which serves a wide rural catchment area, with approximately 550 pupils on roll. School Two is also a mixed sex, bilingual school (Welsh & English) for pupils aged 11-18 years old, which serves a smaller rural catchment area, with approximately 700 students on roll. Group One consisted of 13 young women, all from year 10 (15-16 years old). In summary, Group One focused on advising on all elements of the questionnaire, from the more complex issues of exploring the content of the vignettes and the questionnaire, to advising on the clarity of language adopted in the instructions and accompanying leaflet, and checking the translation of the documents in Welsh and English. Group Two advised on the vignettes design (whether the stories were realistic and made sense), clarified the Likert attitudes tables and undertook the piloting and pre-testing work. Group Two originally consisted of 12 young women from year 10 and 11, but by the second group session an additional 10 members had elected to join the group. Ideally, a smaller group would have been more suitable, but as the young women were waiting in the classroom, it was not possible at that stage to restrict participation. Despite the group size, the young women engaged well and worked effectively in pairs. In order to negotiate effectively with gatekeepers, arrangements were specified for each school. For example, for school one, in order to reduce the disruption to teaching, sessions were arranged on different days and times. Also, in order to highlight the voluntary nature of the group, some of the sessions were arranged to run before, during and after lunchtime. However, for group two the school preferred to arrange consistent sessions linked to PSHE sessions to be facilitated at the same time on a weekly basis. The aim was to maintain fluid arrangements in order to establish a co-created space where we could work together collaboratively.

As part of the research 'performance', reflexivity was fundamental to my positioning and my re-negotiated sense of self. This sense of self-reflection and the awareness of looking inwards and outwards (White, 2001) was key in evaluating the research process. For example, I strove to include myself in their discussion of youth sub-cultural norms around clothing, accessories, music and TV shows. I found myself much more aware of my dress

¹⁷ The Welsh Baccaulaureate is focused on applied learning to enable learners to develop life skills to bolster employability opportunities by focusing on practical learning, for example, critical thinking or personal effectiveness skills.

sense and in particular, my handbag choice. Since my time in High School, it appeared that the traditional school rucksacks had morphed into glamorous handbags with particular designs and labels. The carrier bag and box carrying the stationary for the advisory sessions were quickly ditched in favour of a bag in keeping with their sense of style. I have never striven to 'fit in' with particular norms or styles, so this was a new experience for me. From the research perspective, the aim of this change was to engage with young women in their environment on their terms and not to appear 'out of touch' with their style and culture.

The young women also discussed particular activities they enjoyed in their leisure time. One activity described was watching an MTV show called *Catfish*, which is an American reality series. The series focuses on the idea of online 'love'/relationships with a person often 'duped' by someone establishing a false online persona. This particular role of social media was a concept germane to this research, around the impact of social media on relationships and its ability to perpetuate lies, humiliation and coercive control, both on and offline. Therefore, I quickly clicked on the series link of *Catfish* (much to my amazement there is a film and four series) to get a sense of what it meant to be '*Catfished*'. Watching this series allowed me to identify with their interests, whilst also providing me with a reference point for discussing some of the issues around social media pertinent to the development of the research tools. I was genuinely interested in the young women, which assisted in establishing an authentic positionality to avoid the 'automatic aroma of fraud' (Patai, 1991, p.149) and gain a degree of Oakley's (1981) 'intimacy'. As our individual identities, life histories and differences weave a complex web beyond the notion of this potential superficial announcement of identity, I re-evaluated my positionality in order to establish rapport and to genuinely strive to understand their sub-cultures. Ethically, it was fundamental that the qualities of reflexivity, focused on the boundaries of the researcher role, were clear, in order to avoid 'faking friendships' (Duncombe & Jessop, 2003, as cited in Webster et al, 2013, p.84). The crucial skill was to avoid shifting my position to being patronising or, worse still, exploitative.

Incorporating and diffusing young voices as experts in their own lives in order to shape the research tools proved invaluable to the research design. Several techniques were used to encourage participation. An ice-breaker was arranged, in order to introduce young people to the advisory group setting. The exercise asked participants in small groups to imagine that a yacht had been arranged to transport them to a desert island for two weeks. They were asked to visualise the island and decide which three items they would take with them.

This 'ice breaker' proved popular in establishing the tone of the group, and also the 'fun' aspect of discussing ideas. The outcome of this discussion had wider implications for the research design, as the key items selected for this trip were iPhones or iPads. Being able to continue offline relationships was imperative for them, as they separated their three items into a social media device, charger and Wi-Fi connection. This selection of items was virtually universally adopted for each group across both advisory groups, taking priority over practical items, toiletries, friends and family. When probed further about their choices, the consensus was that social media devices were key tools in establishing and maintaining relationships, but also in keeping them 'in the loop'. This discussion re-affirmed the need to embed questions about the use of social media in young intimate relationships throughout the research tools.

The researcher positionality influences the research process and is determined "by where one stands in relation to 'the other'" (Merriam et al, 2001, p.411). An 'insider' has similar characteristics to the participant group (Gair, 2012). I soon realised the complexity of the 'insider' and 'outside' dichotomy, as both roles are not simply divided and often overlap. I endeavoured to position myself as separate from the school staff, including framing my role as a postgraduate student from the University and acknowledging my comfort with being addressed by my first name, rather than the formal labelling of the 'Miss' and 'Sir' of their school. Not only was this crucial in a practical sense in order to ensure the clarity of my identity and role, but also to ensure that the young women felt comfortable enough to discuss issues about their teachers, e.g., their likelihood of seeking advice and guidance from a teacher. I also distanced myself from my professional background as a social care and criminal justice manager, which appeared to strengthen my focus on my role as a researcher and my commitment to 'partnership' in attempting to recognise and address power imbalances. Despite my willingness to discuss my identity and history, I decided not to openly discuss my previous roles of working both in social services and youth justice, in order to avoid confusion around 'which professional hat I was wearing', and also to avoid any pre-conceived ideas of my previous professional experience. My previous work experience and commitment to social work values of empowerment and anti-oppressive practice assisted with my reflections.

The learning style adopted for each advisory session focused on cognitive thinking and encouraging participants to 'think aloud' and voice their views whilst evaluating particular sections of the questionnaire. Several visual tools were used in a simplistic, but effective manner as 'props/aids' (e.g., charts, posters, marking sheets) in order to assist to engage

young people and in ‘breaking the ice’ in order to establish rapport (Kirby, 2004). The question formats within the questionnaire varied from closed questions, Likert scales and vignettes, which are valuable in attitudinal questionnaires. Despite the fact that the advisory group was not starting its work with a ‘blank sheet’, the group discussion commenced with a brainstorm, asking them to outline the most important issues/aspects of intimate relationships. A ‘diamond ranking’ visual tool was used to rank their views on a diamond pyramid. This visual tool ranked their ideas in a clear, but age-appropriate manner. This exercise assisted in ensuring that the questions/questionnaire focused on the key intimate relationships issues for young women, which was balanced with the requirement of answering the research question and sub questions. Asking them about what is important to them in a relationship was key to understanding their vocabulary and the landscape in which they negotiate their everyday relationships.

My local knowledge, awareness of the local Welsh nuances and my ability to speak Welsh assisted in reinforcing my ‘insider’ position. Despite these commonalities between the students and me, there were several key differences. Despite my efforts to understand the young women’s language, culture and emotional cues, age was an obvious key difference; again, reinforcing the limitation of the degree of ‘intimacy’ (Oakley, 1981) that could be established with the young women. On reflection, as part of the group discussion, my lack of knowledge of ‘their’ generation was a key discussion point used by me to gain their insight and attitudes towards relevant topics to my research, for example, sexting. Despite the reinforcement of the age and power gap, the young advisors revelled in their position of advising and educating me on their sub-cultures and daily norms. This was evidenced on several occasions when they marked their comments on the draft questionnaire as part of the advisory group. Being listened to and asked their thoughts appeared to empower the young women. Despite my acknowledgement of the age difference between them and me, their response was to communicate with me as if I was their peer. Whereas I positioned myself differently from the students, they highlighted our similarities and my difference from their teachers, as I was from the University and treated them as young adults. I also endeavoured to continuously build rapport by spending time at the school and being visibly present; for example, having lunch in the school canteen with the young women. Therefore, the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ roles were fluid and interchangeable, with both positions illustrating benefits in shifting the power dynamics between me and the participants.

Comments received on the Welsh translation of the questionnaire indicated that particular

words required amendment, for example, the Welsh version of ‘sexting’, adopted in the draft version, which was generally not used or understood by the young women. As a result, within the Welsh translation, the English word ‘sexting’ was simply adopted. This was a simple amendment in comparison to the translation of the questionnaire to accommodate the gendered differences of both languages. For example, the Welsh language has a universal rather than a gendered term for boyfriend/girlfriend (e.g., *Cariad*). The availability of the advisory group to advise on particular words and phrases adopted, and the correct translation to correspond to their everyday language, was highlighted throughout the advisory, pre- and post-testing stages. One young woman expressed her wish to communicate in English. The teacher, who was exiting the room following registration, openly chastised this young woman for voicing her language choice on my request as, apparently, the school language choice should only be Welsh. Not only did this reinforce the power difference between pupils and teaching staff, but also the limits of allowing students to express their views and choice. This illustrated my position in relation to the teacher who chastised the student based on a question I asked, ultimately also disciplining me, impacting on my position of offering choice. Whilst this teacher’s actions felt inappropriate, it also served to align my position with the young women as I continued to offer both language choices and made a point of waiting for the teacher to leave the lesson.

Previous research has explored the dilemma of encouraging complete freedom of expression and language use within an advisory group setting (Barter et al, 2009, McCarry, 2012), due to the need to challenge the use of offensive language within a learning environment. This was not identified as an issue here, as ground rules for the group were co-produced with the young women from the start. On the other side of this spectrum, the young women within group appeared eager to please and provide responses that were perceived to be ‘socially desirable’. Social desirability bias specifically relates to the distortion of response as participants’ attempt to conform to socially acceptable attitudes (Bryman, 2008). I responded by reiterating the advice that there was no right or wrong answer and highlighted the need for honest answers. As the advisory group sessions progressed, the young women settled into a ‘comfort zone’, as discussions were more challenging, comfortable and reflective. Whilst this ‘comfortable’ group dynamic felt more natural, some participants began to discuss their own individual experiences. Due to the limits of ethical approval, the groups were steered away from the direction of discussing personal experiences in order to avoid the advisory groups functioning as a

focus group.

4.3.3 Vignettes

As part of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, research participants were invited to respond to hypothetical scenarios in order to elicit their views, beliefs and attitudes. Vignettes are described as: ‘...plausible written or video-recorded scenarios that stimulate thought and discussion about specific and sensitive situations’ (Simon & Tierney, undated, p.2). The aim was to provide young women with the opportunity to position their views on this continuum by responding to questions in another person’s voice, with the vignettes addressing a sensitive topic in a non-threatening manner (Stanko, 2002, Neale, 1999). The function of vignettes is to allow situational context to be explored and to clarify individual judgements on ‘moral dilemmas’ within the framework of a ‘story’ (Barter & Renold, 1999) in order to generalise, rather than personalise situations (Lombard, 2014). Vignettes also provide the opportunity for participants to have greater control over the interaction, by enabling them to determine at what stage, if at all, they introduce their own experiences to illuminate their abstract responses.

.. advantages of using vignettes include their unobtrusive ability to capture complex thought about sensitive issues, reduction of social desirability, bridging the research-to-practice gap, and standardization of procedure (Simon & Tierney, undated, p.7).

Using vignettes in conjunction with semi structured interviews was a constructive tool in previous research focusing on abuse within teenage relationships (Wood et al, 2011; Barter et al, 2009; Barter & Renold, 1999). All participants were asked to respond to the same vignettes in the questionnaire and interview (see Appendix one: Questionnaire and interview schedule). The tools included vignettes depicting a continuum of abusive behaviour, with one of the vignettes separated into three phases. The scenarios were aligned with the research topic in an age-appropriate format, illustrating characters and scenarios from different perspectives; survivor, perpetrator and bystander, in order to elicit reflection and critical thinking. Within the interview the vignettes assisted in gathering the young women’s views on the scenarios and in ‘breaking the ice’; employing vignettes as an ice breaker at the beginning of an interview can facilitate a discussion around participants’ opinions (Hazel 1995) and function as a constructive method to develop rapport and place participants at ease. Therefore, vignettes were not utilised as independent tools, but as part of the interview process to assist with ‘setting the scene’ in a non-threatening manner (Shaw et al, 2011) and designed to extract the participants’ social norms. From a methodological perspective, the tool was responsive to the research topic,

de-personalised, and assisting to engage participants. There are limitations inherent in the use of hypothetical scenarios; in particular, potential difficulties in ensuring the interpretation of the vignette in keeping with the research intention (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000), and analysing data collected; in particular, if several vignettes are utilised. Finch cautions, "...asking about what a third party 'ought' to do in a given situation is not the same thing as asking respondents what they themselves think they ought to do" (1987, p.113).

A key challenge was the range of possible interpretations of the 'stories' and potentially encouraging participants to follow a particular path of thought. However, care was taken to avoid missing opportunities of further or 'deeper' discussion as the vignettes were also used to encourage participants to reflect on their relationship experiences. Carlson (1996) used vignettes depicting domestic violence, with most participants responding that they would leave the violent relationship and seek help, although we know from other studies that this is frequently not how victims of domestic violence respond. Hughes concludes that, "...we do not know enough about the relationship between vignettes and real life responses to be able to draw parallels between the two (1998, p.384). Utilising the vignette assisted in providing a degree of insight into the participants' social world; they assisted in establishing a link between the quantitative and qualitative stages, in order to elicit more 'in depth' data on the standardised responses to the vignettes statements in the questionnaire and building on the analysis of the data.

The vignettes were designed to align to the Welsh culture, e.g., the characters mainly had Welsh names. However, despite this alignment with Welshness, other intersecting needs were incorporated as part of the research tools, e.g., sexuality and age. A crucial aspect of the vignettes' design was receiving guidance and constructive feedback from the advisory group, primarily by asking the advisory group members to describe their immediate reaction to the stories, language and characters depicted. Again, a cognitive approach was adopted by asking the young women to share their views 'aloud' in order to stimulate constructive discussion and to inform any amendments to the story. The comments reflected that a longer vignette with more details was preferred. One of the vignettes described that the couple was taking a bus home after a night out. However, the story was amended so that the boyfriend was characterised as older, with his own car. To some degree this may appear to be a minor amendment; however, the discussion stimulated the allure of older boyfriends and some of the challenges they bring, resonating with findings from related research (Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011).

The ‘check and balance’ of gaining advice from a group of young women (the advisory groups) similar to the research sample group was particularly useful when they questioned the following aspects of the draft vignette; *“I don’t think vodka is the type of alcoholic beverage I would drink, maybe WKD or lager. But to be honest, vodka is drunk, but on its own”* (comment on story one). This discussion was most certainly one of the most memorable moments for me. In the draft version of story one, during the party the young people were originally drinking vodka. I was strongly advised by several advisors that this was not their alcoholic beverage of choice, which as a result rendered a less authentic vignette. I promptly changed this aspect of the story and poked fun at myself, primarily saying that I needed a time machine or better face cream to take me back to my youth. Positioning myself as genuinely requiring their guidance, but also acting on their advice, empowered their position and assisted in gaining their trust.

4.3.4 The Piloting and Pre-testing

A professional and inviting approach was adopted throughout in order to encourage a positive attitude and response rate, which included ensuring a thorough exploration of ethical issues, and a clear presentation of the questionnaire, achieved by effective piloting and pre-testing of the research tools. Following the advisory stage, a pilot process was undertaken in order to test the tools and learn lessons regarding what worked well and the aspects requiring amending. From the list of participating schools, the schools used for the pilot were selected on the basis of having two schools from geographically diverse areas. Presentations were delivered in both schools¹⁸ to encourage participation from young women, with the provision of age-appropriate information/flyers about the group role/expectations. Involvement was encouraged, but all the young women were provided with a period of time to reflect on their choice to participate. This piecemeal process of introducing the research was crucial in ensuring that stakeholders, participants, gatekeepers and parents/carers were fully informed, not only in order to ensure informed consent from participants, but also in order to confirm the young women who wanted to engage, rather than potentially ‘mess around’ (refer to Barter et al, 2009).

The piloting stage tested for comprehension and clarity in order to ensure the young women could quickly and confidently respond to the questions. Two forms of piloting are desirable; firstly, to evaluate the comprehension of the questions, and secondly, to test the

¹⁸ As previously discussed, the research area was anonymised and given the name *Golwenhaf*. The schools participating in this research are also not named, as the same ethical principles of confidentiality apply- please see section 5.3.

distribution of items, responses and inter-item relationship. A key function of the advisory groups was to pilot and test tools to: ‘...help in devising the actual wording of questions and it operates as a healthy check, since fatal ambiguities may lurk in the most unexpected quarters’ (Oppenheim, 1966, p.26); and ‘...the desirability of piloting such instruments is not solely to do with trying to ensure that survey questions operate well; piloting also has a role in ensuring that the research instrument as a whole functions well’ (Bryman, 2008, p.247).

The advisory, piloting and pre-testing stages assisted in testing various versions of questions and the appeal of the questionnaire layout (Andres, 2012). Therefore the piloting and pre-testing went beyond evaluating the time it took to complete the questionnaire. The value of this process was to test the reliability of the questions, gauge response to the phrasing of questions, identify any issues with ‘missing data’, illustrate any potential confusion with the questionnaire instructions and whether the questionnaire ‘flow’ was appropriate in persuading young women to complete the questionnaire.

It was essential to post-test the questionnaire in order to evaluate whether the changes implemented were suitable, by testing with a group of young women comparable to members of the study sample population (Barter et al, 2015). During the discussion, care was taken to avoid the possibility of shaping the responses given, as the young women may wish to provide the answers/details they thought the researcher wanted to hear or responses/feedback that they perceived as socially desirable. This stage was crucial; in particular, when considering the perception that questionnaires on attitudes are more susceptible to bias and response errors (Miner et al, 2012). The timing of the completion of the questionnaire was piloted by Advisory Group two, as questionnaires taking more than 20-30 minutes to complete are problematic (Punch, 2003). This also ensured that the estimated timescale for completing the questionnaire outlined in the instructions was accurate.

Following the pilot process, arranging the fieldwork required planning and practical thinking, not only when negotiating school timetables, but also due to the length of available lesson time and the limited availability of appropriate space/rooms. The size of the school population and potential availability of a sample also required consideration. The value of the relationship with the school liaison link officer was crucial in raising awareness, participation and enthusiasm for this project.

4.3.5 Sampling and the Selection of Participants

When making sampling decisions, the research purpose, research question, resources and practical matter were considered, as it is acknowledged that, ‘Achieving an adequate sample can be a challenge in VAW research because the topic is sensitive, and both victim and perpetrators are stigmatized’ (Fontes, 2004, p.150). Evidence suggests that, although abuse/violence can be perpetrated by women and occurs within same sex relationships, the majority of violence perpetrated is by men against women (WHOa, 2005). Men perpetrate abuse of greater intensity and severity and are more likely to be repeat perpetrators (Ellis & Thiara, 2014; Barter et al, 2009; Barter et al, 2015), with patterns of abuse by men more persistent, severe and controlling (Hester, 2009). Also, women account for the majority of the most heavily abused group (Stanley, 2011; Hester, 2009; Chaplin, 2011). As Coy outlines, ‘Perpetrators of violence towards women and men are, in the vast majority of cases, men’ (Coy et al, 2009, p. 17), therefore, based on this evidence, a choice was made to focus the research on the attitudes and experiences of young women to create a ‘women only’ research space.

Despite a growing body of evidence exploring both teenage relationship abuse and young sexualities, there continues to be limited research on the continuum of abuse focusing on the voices of young women. The decision was undertaken to focus the research on young women aged 15-18 years old, as this particular age range is a period for developing ideas, attitudes, experiences and perceptions, in addition to the transition period to adulthood as outlined below;

...girls of this age have gone through the process of acquiring knowledge of what society will or will not tolerate in terms of unacceptable behaviour and what happens (or does not happen) when certain rules are broken or norms infringed (Burman et al, 2001, p.445).

US research reflects that younger adolescent girls are at lower risk of ‘dating violence’, attributed to their lower rates of ‘dating’ and sexual experiences (Silverman et al, 2004), whilst it is suggested that violence experienced by young women increases by the age of 16 years old (Women’s Aid, 2008). Evidence also suggests that the peak age for perpetrating domestic abuse is between 16 and 18 years old (Fox et al, 2013; Foshee et al 2009). As I wanted to capture a range of experiences, the research was framed with an emphasis on ‘healthy relationships’ which provided a wider context, rather than focusing specifically on abuse in the narrow sense.

Recruitment advertisement was phrased sensitively, without inclusion of any provocative images. In practice, the biggest determinant of participation was expedience of

‘gatekeeper’ response. Initially, I was concerned that the ‘gatekeepers’ may select certain young women that they may view as prone to reflect particular views. Particular schools did appear to suggest that they would automatically wish to select young women who were ‘looked after’ by the Local Authority. The appropriateness of this form of biased and judgemental selection criteria was openly discussed with these particular schools and swiftly addressed. This initial concern was later alleviated when the researcher was permitted by most schools to present the choice of participation to all the young women within the relevant age group.

The qualitative sample was selected and recruited from the quantitative cohort, with the initial findings used to assist in selecting the second stage sample. Barter et al (2009) tested numerous options for selecting an interview sample from the questionnaire stage, learning that, due to the ethical requirements of anonymity and confidentiality, locating a sub-sample directly from the quantitative stage was not practical and was an ‘unrealistic’ expectation of self-selection. Instead, the young women were asked, after completing the questionnaire, to place their names on a list in order to note whether they wished to participate, with a random sample then taken from this list of voluntary participants from the sampling frame. Therefore, the sample for the interviews was linked to the questionnaire sample, with also a ‘snowball’ element for participants who identified friends who may wish to participate. The sample size was constructed based on the research questions, aims and size of the project, as it is noted that there are ‘no rules’ with qualitative sample sizes (Patton as cited in Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.192), but a sufficient sample was required to position anecdotal evidence within a wider frame.

Sampling strategy summary table:-

Quantitative stage	Qualitative stage
<p>As several schools participated, the following sampling approach was adopted.</p> <p>a) Selecting Schools: Schools were separated by region, with a cross section of schools selected from each region.</p> <p>b) Selecting a sample: All young women who wanted to participate were offered the opportunity to participate until the target sample size was reached based on each school’s cohort population.</p>	<p>Following completion of the questionnaire, young women from the sampled schools between the ages of 15 and 18 were asked if they wished to participate. From those young women who had completed the questionnaire and who had agreed to be interviewed, a random sampling approach was adopted in order to select participants.</p> <p>The selection did not compromise the anonymity of participants, as there were two separate informed consent stages.</p>

Table 2

The aim was to gather a representative sample in order to make generalisations from the questionnaire findings back to the relevant population (Punch, 2003). As the intention was to evaluate the attitudes and experiences of young women across the population, when constructing a sampling strategy, consideration was given on how to identify a diverse and inclusive sample, in order to avoid sampling bias. The NCB guidelines outline a list of young people often least likely to access their rights (Shaw et al, 2011), which provided tips on how to access a representative sample. The benefit of using a ‘snowball’ element resulted in accessing participants who may be NEET (not in education, employment or training) and those in training or employment. A decision was undertaken to conduct the research primarily in schools, due to the benefits of consistent fieldwork conditions and the ability to influence the response rate with a readily available sample. In addition,

School[s] function to prepare students for the sexual division of labour in the home and the workplace. Furthermore, schools do not merely reflect the dominant sexual ideology of the wider society, but actively produce gender and heterosexual divisions (Mac an Ghail, 1994, p.8).

It is imperative that the sampling strategy did not exclude particular young women, especially when considering that the aim was to develop theory representative of a cross-section of female experiences. The sample included a cross-section of young women drawn from inner city, town and rural areas and included young women from a variety of backgrounds, including those living in isolated locations, and those accommodated by the local authority.

4.3.6 The Questionnaire Stage: Practice and Design

The researcher was present throughout the data collection process, with clarity offered on the instructions, a brief offered beforehand and a comprehensive de-brief delivered at the end to avoid and alleviate any confusion or distress. Prior to commencing the questionnaire stage, the young women were briefed on the research purpose and the availability of post-questionnaire support, not only to ensure their well-being, but also to encourage a higher response rate. All young women were advised that they could ask questions and should complete the questionnaire at their own pace. The young women were asked to complete the questionnaire individually and not to discuss their answer with other participants until the questionnaire process was completed. Participants were advised that participation was voluntary, which meant that they could elect to ‘opt out’ at any time during the fieldwork process and up to three months after. In line with this, parental consent for the questionnaires was on the basis of ‘opt out’ consent, with a consent form offered to each participant. As part of the initial brief, the young women were warned that some of the

questions were ‘sensitive’, that the purpose was to ask about their attitudes and views rather than their experiences, and that there were no right or wrong answers. The questionnaire was designed to commence with more general questions and conclude with the most sensitive and personal questions. The classification/demographic questions were carefully considered when designing the questionnaire, as placing these questions at the beginning of the questionnaire may have dissuaded participants from completing the process.

Following the completion of the questionnaire, a short debrief on ‘healthy relationships’ was delivered, focusing on the definition and understanding of ‘healthy relationships’ in order to explore a range of potential problematic behaviours. Participants were also provided with a ‘healthy relationship and respect’ leaflet and a list of support services available both locally and nationally, with the name of the particular high school liaison link highlighted regarding the signposting of any further issues/questions. A unique identifier code was placed on each questionnaire with the function of preserving confidentiality, but also to provide a link between young women from the same site/cohort.

As discussed earlier, a potential benefit of this research is its bilingual nature, with tools and information provided in the young women’s language choice. Offering an ‘active offer’ of language choice is well known as a necessary requirement in Wales, both within policy, practice and research (WAG, 2012). The questionnaire was translated into Welsh by the author, who is a native Welsh speaker, with each participant offered the opportunity to complete the questionnaire in English or Welsh. To verify the accuracy of the translated tool, the author sent a draft tool to one of the local authorities for translation and compared both translations for accuracy and inconsistencies in order to inform the final translated document. In addition, the tool was back-translated, with both translated tools checked again. During the questionnaire construction, as well as designing questions to address the research question, aims and objectives of the research, it was also important to develop questions appropriate to the Welsh context. Designing and translating the leaflets was time-consuming; however this time-tweaking, correcting and testing the information leaflets was imperative in order to ensure the key research information was disseminated in an age-appropriate manner.

Discussions were held with the relevant Heads of Education and the school link officers in order to identify young women who may have had difficulty with reading or writing, and therefore required additional support. Tools were adjusted to reflect literacy levels, cognitive development and ability (Shaw et al, 2011). Strange et al advise,

The primary concern is with ways of changing questionnaires so as to maximize the accuracy of, and reducing the bias in, the data collected. Attention to the length, layout, readability, language used, order of questions and content of questionnaires is advocated in order to improve the quality of the data obtained (2003, p.337).

Research indicates positive aspects of completing questionnaires in a classroom environment with young people by allowing question clarification to be explored in a 'safe' manner consistent with everyday classroom routines, assisting with any reading difficulties to the group as a whole (Carroll-Lind et al, 2006). Therefore, this practice assisted in addressing the varying literacy skills of participants.

When designing the questionnaire, a mixture of question formats was adopted, in order to capture the complexity of the topic, and make the questionnaire more appealing for full completion. In order to check the validity of the questionnaire during the piloting process, participants were asked to complete other scales, in order to ensure the design was both internally reliable and had construct validity. In order to ensure questionnaire validity, in addition to the advisory group feedback, further modifications were required based on statistical and theoretical measures. Statistical measures include the utilisation of corrected item total correlations and Cronbach's alphas. This method was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire as a measure of internal consistency. The total of the corrected items needed to be 0.20, with modifications, and the exclusion of items below this threshold.

4.3.7 The Interview Stage: Practice and Design

Questionnaires will not capture the nuanced nature of young women's everyday experiences or gather a comprehensive 'meaning' of GBV on a wider continuum. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to explore themes on their own terms; researchers are then able to explore/pursue unanticipated themes and connections. This stage of the fieldwork commenced in February 2015 with a sample of 25 interviewees (see section above on sample size and sampling strategy). The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to explore the meanings and motivations of individual behaviour and, more broadly, participants' 'constructions of reality' (Wincup & Noakes, 2004, p.75). Interviews lasting no more than one hour were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim anonymously, with the use of fictitious names for participants. Due to the sensitive nature of interview questions, the option of conducting more than one interview session was offered to participants (this offer was not taken up by any of the participants). Only the researcher listened to and transcribed the interview data; once the interviews were transcribed, the

accuracy of recording was checked further by listening to the interview again and comparing the recording with the transcription. Interviews are 'labour intensive'; in particular, the transcription stage. In order to re-evaluate the balance of power, young women were provided with the choice of reading their interview transcripts, and to approve the transcription.

Conducting the interviews in the appropriate private environment, free from interruptions, was crucial in order to safeguard confidentiality (Barter et al, 2009). The most appropriate venue was used within the school premises or, if required, an alternative suitable venue was identified. Consideration was given to potential scenarios of a young woman being in an intimate relationship with a co-student. Though suggestions were made to this effect by one school, I refused to undertake interviews in the sixth form common room, as this space did not provide the required privacy. The benefits of undertaking the interviews in the schools avoided the need to go to alternative venues, such as cafes or the young person's home, as both environments have potential limitations.

Active listening skills were adopted in order to ensure reflexive consideration of the interpretation of the young women's perspectives and observe their verbal cues/body language. A key strength of this method is that insights are not generalised to a wider population in the same way as survey results, as the subjective narrative of each participant is valued. The limitations of qualitative research has revolved around disquiet of the 'representativeness or generality' of the evidence gathered (Bryman, 2008, p.76); however, the detailed analysis of the evidence, and the 'unspoken details' (body language, emotions etc.) can provide a detailed picture of the perspectives of participants. This information was captured as I wrote notes throughout the fieldwork process.

When considering the several forms of interview set-up and discussion possible, the key aspect considered was the ethical dimension of interviewing, the age of participants and the degree of control required to shape the interview process. The semi-structured format is especially popular because it provides both structure and flexibility. This format allows and encourages participants to go 'off subject' and to define what is important to them about the topic (Bryman, 2008). This level of openness is in keeping with feminist methodology, of allowing participants to explain their wider meaning. An unstructured approach may have proven difficult in engaging the young women in a sensitive discussion, whereas a rigid, structured approach would have restricted the freedom to deviate from the interview schedule in order to probe further, as required. Liebling (2001) argues that empathy is essential in qualitative research, particularly the ability to

demonstrate openness and warmth. This advice was heeded, not only to ensure appropriate data collection, but to consider the well-being of participants.

Participants were asked to select their own pseudonyms for the interview as the intention was to place participants at ease from the start by building rapport through the use of 'icebreakers' and vignettes. The interview schedule was closely linked to the research question, sub-questions, objectives and themes identified in the questionnaire findings. It was designed in a supportive and non-judgemental manner, tested as part of the advisory group sessions, piloted and re-tested to ensure non-bias and age appropriate content. As part of the research design, interview questions asked in previous related research studies were considered (Schutt, 2006; Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011). Partially, the interview schedule was designed and tested to avoid asking leading questions (Oppenheim, 1992; Bryman, 2008; & Wincup & Noakes, 2004). Moreover, asking questions about past events, in particular traumatic or shameful experiences, can be problematic, primarily due to the accurate recollection of events, and tendencies to distort or suppress interpretation of memories (Oppenheim, 1992). In reverse to the questionnaire format, the interview questions began with a focus on demographic/personal questions, as the questions were generally non-threatening and explored information generally well known to them. The focus of the interview schedule was to explore the progression of the relationship and to identify the story of each relationship and experiences. The schedule explored the beginning and early stages of their relationship and the general courtship norms, followed by the unpicking of the nature of their relationship, the role of social media and relationships and their views on support for young women on intimate relationships as a whole. Key questions were reiterated at the end of the interview in order to provide enough opportunity to share their views when given more opportunity to disclose, or having weighed the benefits of disclosing, versus non-disclosure.

4.4 Navigating Ethical Pathways

A significant consideration throughout was the ethical implications of conducting this research (Punch, 1994) and the overarching aim to minimise harm to participants and ensure researcher and participant safety (WHOa, 2005) in line with key ethical principles (Beauchamp & Childress, 2012, Greig et al, 2013). As mentioned, reference was made to relevant ethical guidelines; for example, British Sociological Association, Social Research Association, University of Lincoln guidelines, the Code of Ethics for Social Work and WHO guidance on researching domestic violence (2005a). Putting aside ethical professional responsibilities, processes were implemented to warrant the best possible

preparation of research tools in order to safeguard the sample and to limit the possibility of distress or risk. During the literature review and research design stage, the intention was to anticipate potential ethical risks, as outlined within the research proposal and papers submitted to the University of Lincoln School of Social and Political Sciences Ethical Review Panel, with the research receiving full ethical approval.

Navigating ethical pathways refers to several layers of gatekeeping across the University, Heads of Education, Head Teachers and parents/carers/guardians. The role of gatekeepers is focused on permitting or refusing access to a population of participants within or linked to institutions under their authority, control or care. As part of negotiating access to participants, several stages were filtered, commencing with the Strategic Directors for both Councils, followed by a meeting with both heads of education, a presentation to the Head Teachers' meeting, agreeing access to particular schools via the Head Teacher, selecting advisory sites and finally commencing on the ethical layers of consent with participants and their parents/carers/guardians. The crucial stage in this 'filtering' process was the commitment of both Heads of Education and the head teachers who volunteered their participation for stage one of the research (the advisory groups). Not only did this assist in opening the gates to other schools, but their embrace of this project reflected their willingness to learn and to allow their pupils to experience new participation and learning styles. Once the advisory sites were agreed, I was allocated the Deputy Head as the link officer for both schools and invited to attend and present my research and the role of the advisory group as a potential opportunity for all young women in years 10 & 11. In order to secure the ongoing interest of both advisory sites, I illustrated the possible mutual benefits of my presence in the schools. Due to my previous professional background in social care and education, benefits to the schools potentially included the acceptance of my offer to conduct Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons with years eight & nine on healthy relationships and sexting, and facilitating A-level exam preparation workshops on sociology and social research methods. My role as a researcher was not compromised, as these additional activities were delivered to students outside my sample frame. The aim of this was twofold; firstly, negotiating and providing incentives to gatekeepers rather than participants; secondly, shifting the power dynamics in my favour. Both these aspects will be discussed further within this section.

Key ethical guidelines on researching with young people outline the benefits of grounding research from a young person's perspective by way of developing young-person-centred data collection tools in order to enhance the data quality (Shaw et al, 2011). Undoubtedly,

there were significant ethical implications to this study, with comprehensive consideration given to numerous ethical issues as part of the ethical approval process. The ethical issues primarily revolved around consent, confidentiality, the ‘gatekeeper’ role and safeguarding disclosures; issues not unique to this project, and identified in related research with children and young people (Lombard, 2014; Fox et al, 2013; Wood et al, 2011; Barter et al, 2009). A potential ‘societal’ benefit of this research is the provision of data to increase awareness of a ‘sensitive topic’ and explore views on the ‘meaning(s)’ and perception of GBV. When assessing what constitutes a ‘sensitive topic’, the Data Protection Act 2018 and ESRC provide guidance, which includes discussing participants’ sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, or their gender or ethnic status (ESRC, 2012). The exact meaning of ‘sensitive’ research is questionable. Lombard (2015) suggests that this could be influenced by several factors, e.g., violence, the young person, the young person talking about violence and a combination of all these factors. The principle of ‘doing no harm’ is balanced with the expected wider benefits of the research in providing an evidence base, as guided by World Health Organisation’s ethics guidelines (WHOa, 2005), empowering young women to participate rather than a paternalistic perception that automatically limits their capacity.

When presenting the project within schools, it was described as focusing on ‘healthy relationships’ in order to offer a broader focus on this topic. Framing the research as based on healthy relationships ensured that the dialogue was ‘open’ about the nature of relationships, rather than simply focused on negative aspects. Cautious research description was required in the community and research venues, in order to ensure that the research focus was not narrowly defined as concentrated on GBV. The need to convey information relating to the precise definition of the research and the sensitivity of the topic were balanced with the requirement to be open and honest with gatekeepers and participants. The extent of information provision is regarded as a ‘delicate balance’, as sufficient information is required to ensure informed consent, but not to the extent of leading or dissuading research participation (Wiles et al, 2005). Evidence suggests that many women find it beneficial to participate in research and tell their story if approached in a sensitive manner; with disclosure rates of violence dependent on the wording of questions (WHOb, 2005).

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the words ‘violence’, ‘rape’, ‘domestic violence’ or ‘intimate violence/abuse’ were not directly used within the questionnaire or any

accompanying research leaflets. In addition, and in line with previous related research (Barter & Renold, 2000; Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011), the use of the word 'violence' was judged as 'loaded' when framing an overall description of this research project. The word 'violence' is rarely used by young people in their everyday discourse. 'Violence' as a term tends to be changeable and contradictory, including what is seen as problematic or acceptable behaviour (Sundaram, 2016). With a range of competing discourses defining and conceptualising it, using such a term implies that we share a common understanding of its meaning, but its meaning differs for everyone, in particular young people (Burman & Cartmel, 2005). The terminology adopted is pertinent when considering a continuum of abuse (Kelly, 1988). Automatically perceiving young women collectively as victims of abuse or violence may impact on their identity. Adopting broader terminology not only assisted in balancing a sensitive and open approach to the research, but emphasised that there were no 'right or wrong' answers; just their 'everyday' perspectives. This provided young women with the space to shape their conceptualisation and attitudes towards particular behaviour patterns, which offered them a measure of power and autonomy.

Informed consent relates to the participants' rights to understand the research they are going to take part in (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Carroll-Lind et al (2006) describes a three-stage process, offering children/young people, parents/carers/guardians and schools the option to decline participation at each stage. Researchers have advocated the use of 'passive consent' in order to avoid the conflict of gaining children's/young peoples' views through adults, to provide validity to their perspectives, and bypass ethical hurdles (ibid). Within a related study (Barter, 2009) 'opt out' parental consent/or 'passive parental consent' forms were used for the questionnaire stage, which significantly impacted on pupil participation rates, as 'The initial participation rate with opt-in parental consent of 31 per cent increased to 83 per cent with opt out consent' (Barter et al, 2009, p.16). The research by Barter et al (2009) was led by the NSPCC, an agency with vast knowledge and experience of researching 'sensitive topics'; on this basis and considering the *Gillick*¹⁹ judgement, a decision was made to use 'opt out' parental/carer/guardian consent option for the questionnaire stage. My own experience from social work practice with children and vulnerable adults and other research experience guided me to make this decision.

¹⁹ *Gillick v West Norfolk & Wisbeck Area Health Authority [1986] AC 112 House of Lords*:- states that 'competent' young people below the age of 16 may consent to participate in research; however, the concept of 'competency' and 'sufficient understanding' is a subjective judgement of a young person's autonomy.

Therefore, a parent/carer/guardian was given the opportunity to provide their 'opt out' consent with the provision of an envelope and a particular time limit to return the 'opt out' consent form to the school. Due to the nature and potential practical difficulties of applying the *Gillick* ruling, a decision was made to maintain 'opt in' parental position for young women for the interviewing stage. Essentially, the *Gillick Fraser Guidelines* was used to assess whether young women had the maturity to make their own decisions and understand the implications of their decisions. If young women were competent enough to give consent, then their consent or refusal to consent was the factor primarily considered, even if the individuals in *locus parentis* disagreed and wanted their daughters to participate. *Gillick* competence focuses on the subjectivity of a young person's competence.

The paramount principle was the receipt of active, informed and recorded consent from participants. This extended to, but was not exhaustive to the purpose, content and outcome of the research. Formal consent was obtained through the completion of a consent form, with two copies completed for both parties, including consent to publish findings. It was necessary to approach relevant 'gatekeepers' to request access to potential participants within an educational or organisational setting. Working with 'gatekeepers' may have presented several challenges, due to their power to grant or refuse access to their institution, as this research was dependent on the 'goodwill' and effective joint working with 'gatekeepers', both local education authorities agreed to 'opt out' parental consent for all research participants in stage one and two, with all participating schools concurring with the standpoint of the heads of education. However, despite the additional 'gatekeeper' role, consent was discussed directly with potential participants and their parents/carers/guardians. To gain 'valid consent', a decision needs to be gathered directly from young people and not 'gatekeepers' (Shaw et al, 2011). There was also a possibility of young people being overly encouraged to participate by gatekeepers (Israel & Hay, 2012). Fundamentally, participants were fairly treated and offered 'free choice' to participate without the fear of any perceived consequences if selecting not to participate.

Research participants were provided with sufficient information to make an informed decision in a voluntary manner, free from duress, including clear advice on their rights to withdraw consent at any time (DoH, 2001, RCN, 2011). Participants were advised of their right to withdraw during the fieldwork process at anytime up to three months after data collection. The right to withdraw from the research was revisited at several intervals during the fieldwork processes and incorporated as a key statement in the consent form. Ensuring that 'informed consent' is a continuous process requires a clear record of consent

(BSA, Section 25). Parents/carers/guardians were informed that they would not be able to 'sit in' on their child's interview or access the completed questionnaire or interview notes, due to the confidentiality agreement with their child. The arrangements were explained within the consent form and a blank copy of the questionnaire provided to parents/carers/guardians on request, prior to interview.

Interview questions were arranged in sections so that, at the beginning of a particularly sensitive section, participants were asked whether they were happy to continue and understand the sensitive nature of the questions. Therefore, 'decision points' were included as part of the data collection tool design. Participants were also advised that they may skip questions or terminate the interview at any time, and were pre-warned of sensitive questions, with key questions reiterated at the end in order to provide ample opportunity to share views. If participants had become distressed during the interview, the intention was to ask if they felt able to continue, wanted a break or to withdraw from the study. Young women vary in their understanding, resilience and levels of unmet needs. Fontes suggests that,

...most women and girls in these circumstances [VAW] can give informed consent, whereas some may suffer from severe disorientation or mental impairment and cannot. Researchers need to differentiate between those who can and those who cannot and also build in enough clear decisions points to maximize each woman's ability to give and withdraw her consent (Fontes, 2004, p. 145).

Fundamentally, participants were offered 'free choice' to participate without the fear of any perceived consequences of selecting non-participation or withdrawing participation, as consent was advocated as a continuous and active process. As this research was *with* young women, the notion of 'passive' parental consent for stages one and two appeared to be the rational choice to negotiate access in an age-appropriate manner and position participants within the ethical hierarchal gatekeeping framework. In relation to this research, this approach endeavoured to socially position the young women as superior 'right holders' to their parents/carers/guardians and to me, the researcher.

Anonymity refers to the capacity to identify research participants by name or any other identifiable information. Each participant was provided with the opportunity to select her choice of pseudonym. Confidentiality relates to the responsibility not to disclose information shared during the research process. The limits of confidentiality relating to safeguarding matters and the duty to report any concerns of the infliction of harm to participants or others was explicitly outlined as part of the consent process. Essentially,

absolute anonymity or confidentiality could not be guaranteed. If a concern had arisen, the researcher would have spoken to the participant and encouraged her to seek help; however, where there was an immediate risk of severe harm it would have then been necessary to breach confidentiality without talking to the participant. If a child protection concern arose, consideration was given to whether immediate action was proportional or whether further enquiries were necessary; for example, whether the young person is 'known' to services. Care and consideration was required, as potential harm to participants from inappropriate disclosure of personal information gathered may range from embarrassment to violence/death (Lee, 1993). As a result, contact was established with the local social care safeguarding team prior to commencing fieldwork, in order to agree a child protection protocol and thresholds for referring concerns, ensuring clear communication in order to avoid inappropriate referrals. A clear and holistic approach to thresholds has previously proved useful,

In situations where a family met any of these thresholds the case would be considered as a whole, taking into account responses to other interview questions, and judged for its seriousness. This is important as respondents may tick one item in error and then be highlighted as a concern (Berry, 2009, p.95).

Data protection matters such as data storage was also outlined within the information leaflet for participants. Questionnaires were securely stored during the research process, with the retention period for storing the research documents established as a period of six years as per the Data Protection Act 2018 and to allow for the relevant data to be used for future research purposes if required. Participants were provided with an identifier number as part of a participant coding system, with the master copy kept separate and locked within a secure cabinet at the University of Lincoln, ensuring that there was no personal identifiable information on the questionnaires. All the data gathered was saved on an encrypted external hard drive, which was password protected. The consent forms and any other confidential paper documents were stored in a locked cabinet, only accessible to the researcher in order to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

No incentives, vouchers or rewards were offered as a form of enticement to participate, in order to avoid imposing a certain level of pressure on participants that may feel coercive (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). Paying participants would have undermined the principle of informed consent by essentially 'dangling' financial incentives to participants with limited access to personal financial sources (Seddon, 2005). Research payment or incentives may be regarded as a reward and a method of encouraging participation; however, the merit of providing incentives for younger participants is problematic when considering the power

dynamics and their general economic disadvantage. Whilst it is important not to take young people's participation for granted, encouraging participation can be achieved outside the realms of financial incentives. For example, simply providing young people with a voice and an audience to receive and value their views can be empowering. Highlighting this type of benefit can evade the cycle of perpetuating the expectation of financial reward for any form of project/research participation. Furthermore, this type of benefit should be reinforced if the research topic is sensitive.

Particular consideration was given to preparing for potential ethical dilemmas and maintaining ethical principles. Recent related studies faced similar ethical dilemmas and principles (Barter et al 2009, Wood et al 2011, Fox et al 2013), with previous lessons learnt adopted as part of this ethical framework. Following this and a comprehensive review of related literature, the intention was to strengthen ethical practice here by ensuring clear participant guidance and information, robust procedures and agreements with 'gatekeepers'. At the end of the interview, participants were asked whether this type of research was beneficial, in order to inform an overall evaluation of the impact of the research. Also, the information was useful when considering the potential gains of further related work and in order to learn lessons to inform future research and improve practice.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed and some of the ethical and practical issues encountered and problems solved. The 'mixing' of data was achieved via the connection of quantitative data and emerging themes in the personal interviews with young women. The interviews provided internal validity for the statistical patterns uncovered by the questionnaire, whilst conveying additional information about experiences unobtainable in questionnaires.

Excluding young women from participating in research on GBV due to concerns of causing distress is paternalistic and fails to provide this cohort with the opportunity to express their views through research. It also limits the opportunity to learn from their experiences. The reality of engaging young people in research involves navigating institutional and familial approval pathways and applying data collection methods that both appeal to the target group and meet ethical requirements. Consequently, closely examining ethical issues sheds new light on informed consent, confidentiality and harm when focusing on the role of young women in research; essentially, how to protect their interests, while allowing their voices to be heard. The next chapter will focus on the analysis of the quantitative data.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the analysis of the quantitative data. This stage of the research commenced with a sample of 220 questionnaires. In some schools I gained access to the whole year group to ask whether they wished to participate in the research, whereas in other schools, due to timetable challenges or external activities, I only gained access to one or two classes. As a result, the exact response rate is difficult to gauge. The purposive sample was gathered based primarily on the young women who wished to participate, and the size and location of the schools within the participating Local Authority areas. Access was agreed to seven schools and a youth justice/youth offending service in North Wales, which were all mixed gender settings. Together they represented a good cross section in relation to class, age and educational achievement. Due to the ‘hidden’ nature and the sensitivity of this topic it was not possible to gather a representative sample of those young people having experienced domestic violence and abuse. This was suitable to the aims of this study as the focus of the questionnaire was to gather attitudes, rather than evaluate prevalence rate or experiences. As explained later in this chapter, in keeping with the limited ethnic diversity in Wales, the sample was primarily young women of white/UK origin.

A paper and pen self-completion questionnaire was chosen in favour of a web-based questionnaire, due to ethical concerns and in order to maintain influence over the completion of the questionnaire. Primarily, this was to ensure that I could offer practical assistance to the young women when they were completing the questionnaire, and also to enable me to identify any participants who may require additional support. Whilst I was present during the completion of all the questionnaires, as outlined in chapter four, the questionnaire was anonymous. There were benefits of privacy and anonymity of undertaking the quantitative stage first, but there were also limitations of not having the opportunity to build human rapport at this initial stage (Morris et al, 2012). To a degree, this limitation was reduced by my presence at the start of this research stage, as participants could put a ‘face to the name’ and freely chat to me.

The attitudinal questionnaire consisted of 12 pages, comprising four parts, including two vignettes²⁰. The opening page provided a brief outline of the research and the questionnaire

²⁰ For each scale, item analysis was conducted to measure internal consistency and item correlation. Any item that impacted on the internal consistency of the scale was removed:-

instructions, followed by part one, which asked about the attitudes towards being a boy and a girl, and their broad attitudes towards everyday gendered norms. Part two explored attitudes towards what's 'OK' and 'not OK' in an intimate relationship, evaluating a spectrum of attitudes on the patterns of abusive behaviour within intimate relationships. Part three asked about healthy relationships, knowledge and opinions about various support services and what the participants required as support. Finally, part four gathered demographic data. The questionnaire design varied, with questions which had forced choice answers, Likert Scales, open-ended questions and vignettes, allowing for a broader exploration of their attitudes and views. Two statement scales were created; one focused on attitudes towards gender norms (part one) and the other focused on what was regarded as 'OK and not OK' in a relationship (part two). Statement scales were also designed as part of both vignettes.

The notion of a 'boyfriend' was altered in the process of the translation of the research tools from English to Welsh as the term 'boyfriend' translates into the gendered neutral term of 'cariad'. In Welsh, *cariad* as a word conceptualises 'love', 'boyfriend/girlfriend' and 'sweetheart' in a positive and a much more romantic manner in comparison to 'boyfriend/girlfriend'. Also, *cariad* is gender-fluid as it relates equally to boys and girls, but also has a definite focus on intimate/love relationships in comparison to girlfriend/boyfriend which can relate to an intimate relationship or friendship. Therefore, to ensure that this conceptualisation was made clear, care was taken when translating the questionnaire from English to Welsh and when providing participants with instructions on completing the questionnaire.

5.2 Quantitative Design & Analysis.

A 'mixed methods' approach was adopted specifically to ensure the triangulation of the data gathered (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002), with the questionnaire intending to provide a general understanding of the trends and patterns of attitudes across the cohorts of young women. The aim of the attitudinal questionnaire was to investigate sexist attitudes (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Lacasse & Mendelson, 2007; McCarry, 2010) and the potential link between gender norms/stereotypes and the attitudes towards

The 'gendered attitudes' scale consisted of one item positively measuring and five items negatively measuring gendered attitudes.

Scale 2: What's OK and not OK in young intimate relationships:

The 'What's OK and not OK' in your intimate relationships scale consisted of two items positively measuring and 28 items negatively measuring gendered attitudes.

Scale 3: Vignette one:

The scale consisted of Nia/Marc/Catrin scale had one item positively measuring and seven items negatively measuring gendered attitudes.

Scale 4: Vignette two:

The Sian and Carys scale consisted of two items positively measuring and 10 items negatively measuring gendered attitudes.

young intimate relationships. Exploring these attitudes assisted in identifying beliefs that sustain abusive behaviour patterns within young intimate relationships, in order to provide an understanding of the contributory factors maintaining abusive behaviour patterns. Focusing on the attitudes of participants on abuse in different contexts (e.g. with the use of vignettes) was pertinent when assessing ‘everyday’ abuse on a continuum, in order to evaluate the relevance of gender norms. As Reinharz explains, ‘we cannot understand the *meaning* of behaviour without knowing the attitudes behind it’ (1992, p.85).

Establishing a clear framework for the questionnaire was fundamental. In order to achieve this aim, the advice of Punch (2003) was followed. The questionnaire was checked against the research questions to provide a list of each variable, the data required to operationalise the research and the key elements that required answering. The requirement of measuring each variable was evaluated, e.g., whether a single or multiple-item question was required; for example, the question *how many women/girls do you think suffer abuse?* It was felt that offering specific options would be a better measurement and easier to analyse than an open question, as otherwise the range in answers could be significant.

The available related research tools and scales are primarily adult-centric; for example, the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979)²¹, with only a few scales developed for young people (see: CADRI tool developed by Woolfe et al, 2001), or indeed focused on measuring healthy relationships, rather than physical harm/abuse within intimate relationships. This is of significance; as previously acknowledged, teenage intimate relationships differ from adult intimate relationships in terms of the degree of relationship experience, seriousness of commitment, length of relationship and level of intimacy (Woolfe et al, 2001). Furthermore, US research outlines the challenges of using attitudinal scales with college-age young women, due to the lack of age-appropriate scales to measure their attitudes towards gendered norms and patterns of abuse within their intimate relationships (Price et al, 1999; Woolfe et al, 2001). Scales designed in an ‘age-appropriate’ manner should focus on questioning the nature of younger relationships, which tend to be less established relationships. The language adopted for these scales is also important, as illustrated within the methodology chapter, in particular with the pre- and post-testing of the questionnaire by the advisory group. Each scale was designed in partnership with the advisory group, with several key changes adopted; for example, the formality/language of particular questions, in particular with the Welsh translation.

Several related validated questionnaires were assessed and used as guidance in order to

²¹ The Conflict Tactic Scale is a tool with 80 items that measures patterns of family violence (Straus, 1979).

inform the questionnaire design, not only in order to improve validity and reliability, but also in order to develop a range of age-appropriate measures with the available validated scales. Some modified questions of related questionnaires (see Burton and Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Fox et al, 2013; Ringrose et al, 2012; survey.net.ac.uk) were used to shape initial ideas on how to formulate questions on such a sensitive topic. The use of pre-tested questions as a guide was useful but, as the questionnaire design evolved, the majority of the questions and statements finally implemented were designed specifically for this study. As a replicable validated scale or questionnaire was unavailable, the originally designed questionnaire required validating on a similar population group to the research sample (see section 8.3 for a detailed discussion on the limitations of the questionnaire).

When researching the design of questionnaires, I decided to use Likert scales as part of the format, as the goal was to measure the intensity of feelings about the area in question (Bryman, 2008). The Likert scale is essentially a multiple indicator or multiple item measure of a set of attitudes relating to a particular area. The aim of using Likert or attitude scales was to gather participants' positive and negative attitudes towards gendered norms and young intimate relationships. The advantage of using a table of statements within a Likert scale in order to measure concepts avoided the reliance on a single indicator, as the use of multiple indicators offsets the possibility of misclassifying attitudes/perceptions. The design focused on developing tables that contained a series of simple statements/items rather than questions. The statements focused on situational rather than personal factors, as the intention was to establish their attitudes, rather than their experiences, and as individual factors were explored as part of the semi-structured interviews. Statements were divided into pro and anti-abuse attitudes in order to ensure a counterbalanced perspective and were gathered in a non-biased manner in order to eliminate the following; 'problem with unbalanced scales is that they make it impossible to distinguish acquiescence from the attitude that is supposed to be measured' (Johns, 2010, p.10).

It was felt that a seven-point Likert scale may become confusing for the participants, a view confirmed by the advisory group, so a five-point scale was adopted instead. Care was taken when drafting the wording of the questionnaire instructions in order to ensure that they were simple and clear; in particular, with the Likert scale instructions, as participants needed to be clear that their answers should reflect their degree of agreement with a statement, rather than the degree of 'appropriateness' of their answers. Each question was

followed by a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A decision was made to include a *'don't know'* answer option, rather than not to include a 'neutral' response category, as it would avoid 'forcing' participants to make a choice and assist in separating the scoring of those participants with stronger views, providing a useful measurement of attitude intensity.

With regard to attitudes, participants completed several tables in order to indicate their attitude towards gender norms and what's 'OK' and 'not OK' in relationships. These statements assisted in providing a measure of their beliefs on what was permissible in relationships and if particular actions were justified in specific circumstances. There were item statements which were expressed in a positive and a negative manner; therefore each table had 'mixed' items. The intention was to also assess the correlation between the attitudes of participants to other variables, such as background, in order to deduce attitudinal patterns in relation to individual characteristics. In the questionnaire, young peoples' attitudes were assessed in relation to male- and female-perpetrated abuse. The addition of questions to elicit attitudes concerning female-perpetuated abuse was deliberate, as the variation of question style and phrasing was to counterbalance the tendency of participants to respond uniformly, without processing the question content, avoiding response bias. Participants had the opportunity to provide additional narrative details within the open questions if they wished, with the closed questions providing numerical data. The use of a mixture of question styles can appeal to young people and give a voice to all participants beyond what can be understood with the use of only a structured survey measure (Miner et al, 2012).

The quantitative analysis was assisted by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with the questionnaire variables numerically coded in order to assist with this process. The use of Likert scales assisted with the process of data analysis, as coded answers were allocated a numerical score. Data entry and cleansing was undertaken by adopting a process of initially proof-reading all the questionnaires, coding responses, eliminating unclear answers, multiple answers and noting missing data. Each questionnaire was individually inputted into the SPSS and allocated a code linked to the participant's school. Missing data entries were coded with a number not associated with a possible data entry/answer/true figure in order to ensure that it was only read as a missing data entry, e.g., 99. The questionnaire was coded in a manner that included assigning numbers to the created categories, including the pre-coding of closed questions and post-coding of open questions. Care was taken to ensure that there was no overlapping with the coding, but

also that closed questions were coded in a manner that enhanced comparability between questions. As part of the coding process, each variable was classified as:-

- Ratio,
- Ordinal,
- Nominal,
- Dichotomous.

The coding and analysis of data was partly a strategic decision undertaken by the researcher; however, there is an ethical obligation to interpret the data in a transparent manner. The overall scales were scored on the basis of strongly disagreed coded as one, whilst strongly agreed was coded as five. The scale was reversed for those statements requiring a positive response. Based on the questionnaire coding, the overall questionnaire score was calculated so that a low score reflected attitudes less accepting of traditional gendered norms and abusive behaviour patterns. Despite the challenge of reverse coding and balancing items, ‘mixing’ statements does assist to reduce bias and improve reliability by assisting in gaining considered answers and identifying consistent and inconsistent responses. The reverse coding assisted in ensuring that the summated, or mean, was accurate to the attitudes reflected. Table items were evaluated individually, in order to identify any inconsistencies and to evaluate broader trends within the questionnaire as a whole, e.g., the attitudes towards the use of social media. Despite the benefit of evaluating the questionnaire score, the limitation of questionnaires as a whole is the difficulty in quantifying results, due to these pre-determined options, with the rationale for particular selections left unexplored. A diverse design to the questionnaire was implemented in order to capture the wider spectrum of issues by covering more general/multiple aspects of the concept of a healthy/unhealthy relationship. The researcher heeded advice, and ensured the use of ‘open questions’ was minimal (Bryman, 2008; Robson, 2002; Oppenheim, 1966). As explained in detail in the next chapter, in order to enhance the validity of the findings and counterbalance this limitation, semi-structured interviews were also used, so as to avoid the over-reliance on the questionnaire.

The data analysis commenced with the evaluation of the sample/demographic descriptive statistical data. Following this stage, various frequency tables were formatted in order to establish any patterns and the distribution of values in the data, and the mean, mode and median were calculated for several variables. As part of the analysis, frequency tables were formulated in order to provide percentages for particular categories for the variable in question. Visual aids were designed in the form of tables, charts and graphs to assist in

identifying trends and anomalies. Descriptive statistics were used to provide a summary of the data prior to further testing and the process of evaluating causal and actual relationships in the data, as the aim was to evaluate attitudes which could be measured through this form of quantitative analysis.

Firstly, I will report on the descriptive statistics for the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. Following this, there will be an analysis of the attitude statements and the themes emerging from the data. The focus will then be on the analysis of the attitudes towards both vignettes. A key theme, in particular, social media, will be explored in detail, with the discussion finalised with the analysis of the questions focused on healthy relationships and support services. Association will be drawn between socio-demographic characteristics and specific variables, with the patterns and anomalies emerging during the data analysis explored throughout this chapter.

5.3 The Questionnaire Sample: The Demographic Data

The ‘classification questions’ are of importance in stratifying the sample, and essential in assisting in comparing responses of sub groups within the sample. As this was a regional study in North Wales, the sampling composition focused on young women living in this particular area. It should be acknowledged that the attitudes and perspectives of young women on abusive behaviour and healthy relationships may differ depending on their intersectional needs, such as social class, ethnicity or sexuality. Outlined below is a table focusing on the approximate composition of the schools in the area, followed by a comparative picture to the wider Welsh perspective and the demographic of the sample surveyed.

School Code	Education Provision	Range of Population	Ethnicity	Social Status	Welsh Language
1	11-16 years old	400-600	Less than 0.5% are from minority ethnic groups	¼ of the area has objective 1 region status 7.6% entitled to free meals.	Yes- 98% bilingual (Type A)
2	11-16 years old	400-600	2.5% pupils are from ethnic minority groups	Located within an objective 1 region 13.9% entitled to free meals.	Yes- 98% bilingual, 70% of pupils are from first language Welsh homes (Type A)
3	11-18 years old	600-800	1.7% are from ethnic minority groups	19% of pupils live in the 20% most underprivileged areas in Wales.	Yes- 67% from Welsh language homes (Type B)

				19.4% entitled to free meals.	
4	11-18 years old	600-800	1.2% are from ethnic minority groups	14.5% of pupils are entitled to free meals	Yes- 34% from Welsh language homes (Type B)
5	11-16 years old	300-500	2.7 % from ethnic minority groups	10.4% of pupils are entitled to free meals	Yes- 40% from Welsh language homes, but over 84% of the pupils speak Welsh (Type A)
6	11-18 years old	1,000-1,200	4.2% are from ethnic minority groups	11.1% of pupils are entitled to free meals	Yes- 33% from Welsh language homes, with over 90% of pupils welsh speakers (Type B)
7	11-16 years old	400-600	3.4% of pupils are from ethnic minority groups	10.8% of pupils are entitled to school meals	Yes (Type A)

Table 3

(Data from the most recent Estyn inspection reports for each school and WalesOnline data, based on 2014/15 data).

Participants ranged in age from 15-18 years old, with the majority aged 15 years old (50.9%), followed by 23.6% aged 16 years old, 21.3% aged 17 years old and only 4.2% aged 18 years old. In total, the majority of participants were from Year 10 (32.3 %), followed by an equal split between Years 11 and 12 (31.8%), with the lowest participation from Year 13 (10.6%) and only .5% of participants were from the Youth Justice Services/not in school/education (NEET) (see Table 3).

Age	Number	Percentage	Year Group	Number	Percentage
15	110	50.9%	Year 10	70	32.3%
16	51	23.6%	Year 11	69	31.8%
17	46	21.3%	Year 12	54	25%
18	9	4.2%	Year 13	23	10.6%
			NEET	1	.5%
Total	216 Missing data: 4	100%		217 Missing data: 4	100%

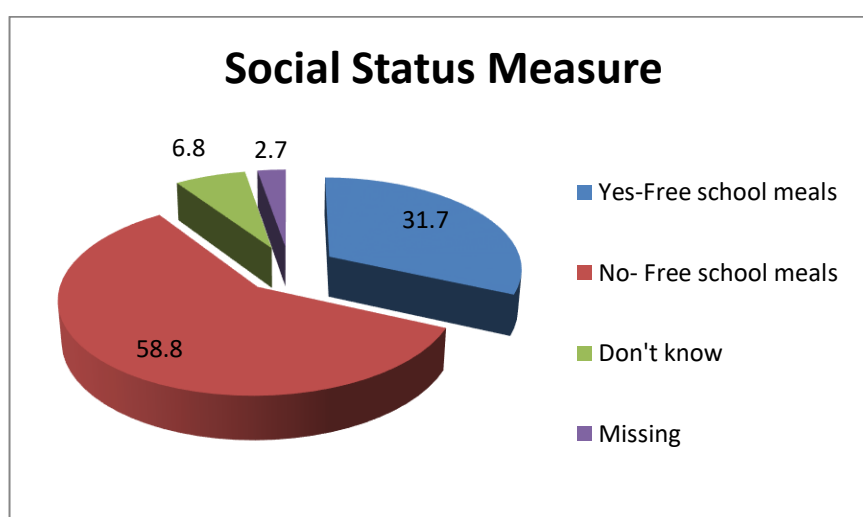
Table 4

It should also be noted that the age profile of participants varied across schools; for

example, the age profile within particular schools were primarily focused on 15-16 year old students, whereas in other schools, participants were primarily 17-18 year old students. This was evident for two reasons. Firstly, four of the schools surveyed did not offer post-16 education, therefore limiting the age range of a portion of the sample within these settings. Secondly, two of the schools with post-16 education allowed me to spend a substantial amount of time within their A level common room, allowing ease of access to the older participants within these settings. This resulted in a high proportion of 17-18 years selecting to participate, with over 53% of this age group from one school.

The split of participants across the local authority areas was virtually even (50.9% and 49.1%). However, consideration should be given to the fact that the population of one county is just under double the other, with the split of schools equating to four from one county and three from the other. Most of the young women lived with both their parents (68.5%), with 24% living with one parent. Small percentages lived on their own (.5%), with a partner (.9%), with their own children (.9%) or with their friends (.5%). Whereas none of the young women lived in local authority-based residential care (this is a type of provision currently being de-commissioned by both local authority areas), 3.2% of participants lived with foster carers (equating to seven participants). During the fieldwork period, across both areas surveyed, there were approximately 195 children/young people in foster care (StatsWales, 2014), which equated to just under 4.5% of children/young people in foster care in Wales. Therefore, nearly 4% of the 'Looked After' population for both participating areas was surveyed. However, when evaluating the comparative data further, a different picture emerged as, within the fieldwork period, there were only 15 young women aged between 16 and 17 in foster care across both areas, with a further 40 young women between the ages of 10 and 15. So, during this period, there were approximately 20 young women in foster care in this area, of which seven were surveyed. It raised the question whether particular schools regarded this as an issue for 'Looked After' children/young people, as one school was asked to refrain from purely selecting particular pupils they regarded as vulnerable or facing relationship issues. It appeared that they were attempting to restrict the sample, rather than universally offering the choice of participation to all young women within the required age range. The other schools embraced the notion of openly offering participation to all the young women within the sample cohort, and further analysis indicated that the sample of 'Looked After' young women surveyed was split across the schools (three schools with one 'Looked After' participant and two schools with two 'Looked After' participants).

Research indicates a prevalent connection between social class and educational achievement, with literacy difficulties resulting in a disproportionate degree of data loss from lower social class students (Strange et al, 2003). In order to address this potential issue, key issues required defining, including the definition of ‘social class’ and how this would be measured here. Due to the fluid definition of ‘social class’, exploring an exact definition in a questionnaire may be unreliable. The deprivation status was defined by the percentage of students within the schools who were eligible for free school meals, a measure commonly accepted (Barter et al, 2009, Fox et al, 2013). This was the measure also adopted for this study. At the time of this research, families were eligible to receive free schools meals if they have a child attending a state school and the parent/carer works under 16 hours per week and their income is under £16,190 (WAG, 2014). Pie Chart 1 outlines the split in eligibility of participants to receive free school meals:-



Pie Chart 1

From those surveyed 58.8% noted that they are ineligible to receive free schools meals, whilst 31.7% of the sample is eligible to receive free school meals. Figures in Wales illustrate that around 74% of those families eligible for free schools meals do not access this provision (WAG, 2014). Equally, research in England indicates that a high proportion of families on low income elect not to access this provision (Lord et al, 2013). Whereas this measure provides a form of benchmark for the sample, 6.8% ‘did not know’ if they were eligible to receive free school meals and 2.7% elected not to answer, illustrating just under 10% of missing data. Adopting a specific measure of social status is a challenge. This suggests that a higher percentage of those surveyed live in poverty; in particular, as the evidence suggests that Wales has the highest rate of child poverty in the UK (WAG, 2016).

Of those participants who provided data about their ethnicity only 2.7% failed to answer, 89% regarded themselves as white/UK, 5.4 % as mixed/multi ethnic, 1.4% as Asian/British Asian, .9 % as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British and .5% as within the 'other' group. The survey participants reflected the ethnic composition and the lack of diversity in Wales, as the sample was primarily young women of white/UK origin. Indeed, Wales is the least ethnically diverse area across England and Wales, with over 95% of citizens recorded as identifying themselves as White/UK (ONS, 2012). Welsh identity, despite not being a regular option on diversity monitoring forms, was selected by 4.3% of the population, in comparison to 1.0% Scottish and 0.3% Irish. However, within this sample, the split of language in the family home was separated equally between English (49.3%) and Welsh (49.3%), with only .9% noting that they spoke another language other than English or Welsh at home. This split is surprising when considering that over 65% and 57% of the population are first language Welsh speakers across both areas surveyed, in comparison to a Welsh average of 19% (StatsWales, 2011). Therefore, the area surveyed is traditionally regarded as the most predominantly Welsh speaking area of Wales. This was later reflected in the interviews, with nearly three quarters of the sample electing to conduct their interviews through the medium of Welsh.

Only .5% of the sample stated that they were not in education, training or employment (NEET), specifically as the sample was accessed through schools. Overall, Welsh figures reflect that in 2014 there has been an reduction in the percentage and number of young people known to be NEET across Year 11, 12 and 13 cohorts (Career Wales, 2014). Participants outlined several education/training/employment/family aims on their exit from school. The majority of participants (65%) stated that they wished to remain in full-time education, with 29.5% selecting to enter full-time paid employment and 6.9% electing to enter training. From those surveyed, 7.4% stated that they wanted to start a family, a figure higher than shown in previous research (Burman & Cartmel, 2005). The annual survey of school leavers undertaken by Careers Wales (2014) provides a useful snapshot of pupil destinations on their exit from schools. This survey reported on the destinations of 63,516 pupils from secondary schools across Wales. It includes pupils who have reached statutory leaving age, Year 11, and pupils leaving school in Years 12 and 13, with young women accounting for 50.5% (32,054) of the pupils. As identified here, continuing in full-time education is overwhelmingly the most popular choice of destination for pupils Years 11, 12 and 13. However, the figure identified (65%) of young women wishing to remain in full-time education is lower than the national average of 89.7% (year 11), 92.8% (year 12)

and 81.2% (year 13). A higher percentage of young women (29.5%) noted that they were intending to enter the labour market in order to undertake full-time employment, in comparison to the national average of 8.1% across this age group (ibid).

Research reflects a degree of confusion regarding demographic questions asking participants about their ‘sexual orientation’ (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Fox et al, 2013). As a result, considerable reflection was given to the wording of this question, which was amended several times (following discussions with the advisory groups). The possible option of having an ‘open ended’ question was also discussed with the advisory groups and gatekeepers. Finally, it was decided to include the following question:-

People are different in their sexual attraction to other people. Which best describes your feelings, are you most attracted to:-

With the option of selecting boys/men, girls/women, both, not sure and other. The data analysis revealed that 90% of participants identified as heterosexual, 4.5% as attracted to both genders, 1.4% preferred girls/young women and four participants selected not to respond, reflecting much lower figures of missing data than previous research (Burman & Cartmel, 2005). This is in comparison to a Welsh average of 95.2% of over 16 year-olds stating that they are heterosexual, 1.2% identifying as gay/lesbian/bisexual, whilst just under 5% selected the ‘other’ option or preferring not to answer. However, the average for the area surveyed was slightly higher than the Welsh average, with an average of 96-97% of young people identifying as heterosexual (StatsWales, 2014). It should also be noted that Welsh statistics indicate that three times as many females as males identify as gay/bisexual, which may, in part, explain the higher percentage revealed here (StatsWales, 2011).

Sixty six percent of the sample stated that they had been in a relationship or had ‘gone out’ with someone, with 29.7% noting that they were currently ‘going out’ with someone (63 participants). The number of partners equated as followed:-

Number of partners/boyfriends/girlfriends	Frequency	Percentage
1	55	34.4%
2	48	30%
3	15	9.4%
4	7	4.4%
5	4	2.5%
More than 5	7	4.4%
0	23	14.4%

Don't know	1	.6%
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Table 5

To finalise this section, Table 6 outlines the key socio-demographic of participants:-

Table : 5 (Sample n=220)	
Participants Characteristics	
Mean Age	16.5 years old
Year Group	Year 10 (32.3%)
Education	65% want to remain in full-time education
Living Arrangement	68.5 are living with both parents
Welsh Language	Welsh language (49.3%) English language (49.3%)
Ethnicity	89% White/UK
Sexuality	90% Heterosexual
Social Status	31.7% eligible to receive free school meals
Relationship Experience	66% have been in a relationship, most have had one partner (34.4%) with 29.7% currently in a relationship

Table 6

To summarise, from those surveyed 66% replied that they had relationship experience, which is lower than the rate of previous related research which sampled both young women and young men, and which estimated 88% of young people in some form of intimate partner relationship (Barter et al, 2009). Table 6 illustrates the mean age of participants as 16.5 years old, which would reflect the sampling frame which prioritised older teens, as both US and UK-based research suggests that abuse within younger intimate relationships emerges between the ages of 15-16 years old (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999), due to the increased opportunity of experiencing some form of intimate relationship (Barter et al, 2009). The majority of the sample identified as heterosexual (90%), which aligns to previous research findings (ibid). From those surveyed, 65% want to remain in education, whilst 68.5% continue to live with both parents, which again aligns to other school-based

studies (ibid). From those surveyed, 31.7% were eligible to receive free schools meals, which is higher than the Welsh average of 18.4% of pupils of compulsory school age in local authority-maintained schools known to be eligible for free school meals in 2016 (WAG, 2016). This illustrates that a higher-than-expected proportion of those surveyed and those electing to participate in the research are eligible for free school meals. As discussed, the limited ethnic diversity of the sample is in keeping with the all-Wales perspective and other UK-based research (Wood et al, 2011). Whilst the proportion of those identifying as English speakers was higher than expected, this may reflect that participants preferred to write in English, as a higher proportion elected to conduct their interview in Welsh (see chapter six for further discussion on this point).

5.4 Attitudes Towards Being a Boy and a Girl

In order to understand the nature of young people's intimate relationships, it is necessary to understand the social and gendered context of their 'everyday' lives. How young women conceptualise gender and its subsequent impact on their attitudes towards GBV is key to understanding their consideration of what 'counts' as abuse. The aim was to evaluate their social construction of gender by gathering their attitudes on social stereotypes, specifically their views on traditional roles, and whether they considered the 'doing of gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Analysing young women's attitudes can assist us to understand gendered 'scripts', the social stereotypes perpetuating these 'scripts' and the reinforcement of these 'scripts' by young people. Table 7 outlines the results of asking participants to comment on particular statements questioning gendered norms.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>Girls should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers than having a professional career</i>	.9%	8.7%	7.8%	52.5%	30.1%
<i>Boys can stay out later than girls. You always have to know where a girls is, she is more vulnerable</i>	.9%	6.4%	8.3%	45.9%	38.6%
<i>Boys are better leaders than girls</i>	1.4%	4.5%	5.9%	33.2%	55%
<i>On a date, boys should be expected to pay for</i>	11.8	26.4	10%	39.5%	12.3%

<i>everything</i>	%	%			
<i>It's important for boys to talk about their feelings, even if others laugh</i>	34.1%	55%	5.5%	4.1%	1.4%
<i>Girls should care more about their appearance than boys</i>	.9%	10%	16.4%	49.5%	33.2%

Table 7 Note: The results for each statement may not add to 100% due to missing data.

Overall, the response of the sample was consistent in challenging social norms focused on the breadwinner/professional male role and the wife/caring female role. They illustrated attitudes challenging social stereotypes of young women as ‘good wives’, vulnerable and passive. This challenged the normative belief of women constructed with a dual role: the biological role as child-bearers and the social role as the family member most responsible for undertaking caring tasks (Stanley & Wise, 2002). The first three statements all reflect responses rejecting established attitudes towards social stereotypes, with the disagreement levels for each statement each over 80% (83%, 84.5% and 88%), reflecting a consistent disagreement with these beliefs. This level of disagreement reflects a progressive approach to traditional social norms that may be due to the creation of a space for a ‘women only’ survey of attitudes. This contributes towards an overall sense of a shift away from the ethos of attitudes focused on traditional views. This may be due to the absence of masculinities and the fact that the young women felt at ease to express their views without the ridicule of their male peers. The results demonstrate young women’s lack of power to share their actual attitudes and views within a mixed gender space, an issue reiterated in later chapters of this thesis. This result is higher than previous related research (Burman & Cartmel 2005; Burton and Kitzinger, 1998), with the difference potentially attributed to the ‘women only’ space of this research and also to the fact that previous research was conducted several years ago now.

Whilst there was a general disagreement that young women should care more about their appearance than young men, just over 16% of participants responded ‘don’t know’ for this question, reflecting a degree of uncertainty on the gendered expectations of physical appearance. However, when questioned on their attitudes towards paying on a date, over half of the sample believed that *boys should be expected to pay for everything*. Therefore, despite demonstrating a belief that young women could be equal leaders with men, from those surveyed 38.2% strongly agree/agreed that men should pay on a date. Not only does this indicate an attitude towards the financial power women pose in relationships, but also

demonstrates the actual belief of this power imbalance and their need to be ‘cared for’. This form of financial expectation relates to norms focused on men as the instigators of the progression of intimate relationships, therefore illustrating the power imbalances at the initial stage of ‘dating’, including the sense that young men/men do the ‘asking out’, whilst women acquiesce, are expected through their appearance to attract male attention and be submissive during the ‘date’. This illustrates the contradictory view of modern norms focused on equality, and the traditional norms focused on ‘courtship scripts’ (Lamont, 2014).

There was an overwhelming sense (nearly 90% response) that young men should talk about their feelings, even if others may laugh. These attitudes serve to challenge the naturalised established gender norms focused on the gendered expression of feelings and emotions, which challenged the reinforced and expected male performance not to be expressive. This aligned to what young women stated they found appealing in a boyfriend; in particular, around the need to be honest about feelings.

5.5 What’s Most Appealing in a Boyfriend/Girlfriend?

Participants were asked to select three items from the list below as an indicator of what they perceived as the most appealing characteristic of a boyfriend and girlfriend. The aim was to identify and compare what they perceived as the most appealing traits for both genders in their role as a boyfriend/girlfriend.

STATEMENT	BOYFRIEND	GIRLFRIEND
Having a good personality	78.6%	76.7%
Wearing revealing clothing	3.7%	4%
Sexually inexperienced	.9%	1.3%
Having a lot of money	4.2%	4%
Being a good listener	32.1%	36%
Being sexually experienced	7%	4%
Knowing what they want	8.8%	8%
A slim, toned body	6%	10%
Intelligent	20.5%	20.7%
Not being too emotional	2.8%	8%
Being tough	2.3%	2.7%
Honest about feelings	42.3%	56.7%
Being flirtatious	2.3%	5.3%

Having a good sense of humour	50.7%	33.8%
A caring personality	39.4%	38.4%
Being eager to please	4.7%	4.7%

Table 8

As Table 8 illustrates, the three most popular responses for both genders were:-

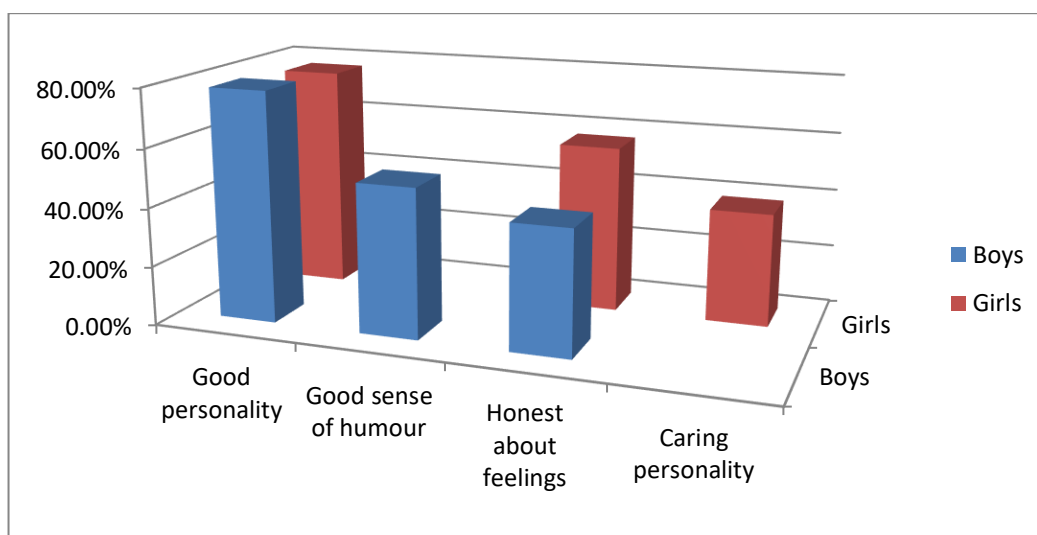
Boyfriends:

1. Having a good personality,
2. Having a good sense of humour,
3. Honest about feelings.

Girlfriends:

1. Having a good personality,
2. Honest about feelings,
3. A caring personality

The most popular responses are visualised in the chart below:-



Bar Chart 1

Whilst the key appealing features of having a good personality and being honest about feelings was the same for both genders, men were seen as appealing with a good sense of

humour, whereas young women as girlfriends were seen as appealing with a caring personality. Overall, the appealing characteristics for both genders from the participants' perspective were similar, whilst research reflects that men attribute greater importance to physical attractiveness and thinness than women (Smith et al, 1990).

5.6 Young Women's Attitudes on Naming Abuse

Following on from the exploration of gendered norms, participants were asked to explore their attitudes towards 'what's OK and not OK in an intimate relationship'. The key aim within this section was to explore how they 'named' violence and abuse and, to some degree, which actions and behaviours they would tolerate, justify and define as abusive. Defining, conceptualising and deconstructing the abuse and violence suffered by women within their intimate relationships historically has been complex. The violence and abuse of women can take several forms and be understood subjectively, with different signs, symptoms and behaviour acknowledged or ignored as abusive. A myriad of factors contribute to this challenge, including gendered attitudes, beliefs and a lack of acceptance of particular behaviour as 'everyday sexism' (Bates, 2014). The lack of understanding of the gendered symmetry of violence/abuse (Kimmel, 2002), and the influence of wider structural power inequalities, further confuse the issue. The formulation of the statements in this table focused on exploring the concept of violence and abuse by conceptualising a myriad of behaviours on a 'continuum of abuse' (Kelly, 1988). The range of statements challenged behaviours from the gendered expectation of 'pleasing your boyfriend'. In a sense, the intention was to question participants on a range of behaviours that elicited their attitudes to be analysed. The questionnaire design focused on unpicking their 'naming' of abuse, but also on exploring their knowledge (*how may girls/women suffer abuse?*) of abuse, and their understanding of wider explanatory discourses and myths of GBV (*Why do you think boys/men are abusive?*).

The second statement table explored their understanding of attitudes towards '*what's OK and not OK in intimate relationship*'. Table 9 illustrates the findings for each statement, with the percentage of agreement/disagreement with each statement highlighted below. This table consisted of two items positively measuring, and 28 items negatively measuring, gendered attitudes. The statements were randomly arranged, primarily in order to ensure that participants reflected on their answers for each statement. Statements were reversed, enabling participants to explore their attitudes regarding the justification of particular behaviours and actions. In order to facilitate the analysis of the data, the statements were thematically grouped and coded as follows:-

Theme One: Gendered Expectations of Relationship Norms***Theme Two: Gendered Expectations Around Sexual Activity******Theme Three: Social Media******Theme Four: Gay/Lesbian Relationships******Theme Five: Abuse and Coercive Control******Theme Six: Physical Violence and Abuse******Theme Seven: Women/Girls as Perpetrators***

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>THEME One: Gendered expectations of relationship norms</i>					
<i>1. Relationships work best when girlfriends please their boyfriends</i>	.5%	4.7%	2%	22.8%	70%
<i>2. Boyfriends should let girlfriends have their own way all the time</i>	2.7%	6.4%	7.7%	58.2%	25%
<i>3. Girlfriends should buy boyfriends gifts all the time</i>	.5%	1%	9%	46%	43.5%
<i>4. It's OK for boyfriends to cheat when in a relationship, but girlfriends should always be faithful</i>	.5%	1.5%	1.5%	10.5%	86%
<i>THEME Two: Gendered expectations around sexual activity</i>					
<i>1. It's OK for boyfriends to expect that their girlfriends will kiss them all the time</i>	4.1%	20.1%	15.5%	48%	12.3%
<i>2. Boyfriends should always start sexual activity</i>	2.3%	9.6%	23.4%	37.2%	27.5%
<i>3. Girlfriends should always be sexually available to their boyfriends</i>	2%	4%	5%	40%	49%
<i>4. It's ok for boys to 'sleep around'</i>	1.4%	3.2%	4%	13.6%	77.8%
<i>5. Girls who 'sleep around' are 'slags'</i>	14%	30.8%	17.6%	19.5%	18.1%

THEME Three: Social Media					
1. Girlfriends should be available to answer texts and Facebook messages all the time, but boyfriends can do as they please	.9%	2.7%	5.4%	22.2%	68.8%
2. Rating the appearance of girls on social media is just a bit of fun	1%	8%	21.5%	31.5%	38%
Theme Four: Gay/Lesbian Relationships					
1. Abuse in gay relationships is not as serious as abuse in boyfriend/girlfriend relationships	1%	3%	7.7%	11.8%	76.5%
Theme Five: Abuse and Coercive Control					
There is never a reason for boyfriends to threaten their girlfriends	61%	23%	6%	7%	3%
Boyfriends should not damage their girlfriend's belongings	57%	30.6%	1.9%	3.7%	6.8%
Boyfriends sometimes cannot help but swear at their girlfriends	4.1%	47.2%	20.5%	20.9%	7.3%
Girlfriends should not see their friends if it bothers their boyfriends	.5%	1.4%	4.5%	24.1%	69.5%
It's ok for boyfriends to use private information to make girlfriends do something	0	0	4.1%	18.2%	77.7%
Boyfriends who text and phone their girlfriends all day are just being caring	7.7%	23.6%	30%	31.4%	7.3%
It's ok for boyfriends put pressure on girlfriends to have sex, but not to physically force them	.5%	3.7%	5.9%	26.9%	63%
It's ok for boyfriends to take charge of what their girlfriends spend their money on	1%	5%	7%	40.5%	46.5%
Theme Six: Physical Violence and Abuse					
Boyfriends who slap once deserve a second chance	1%	5.9%	11.4%	32.4%	49.3%
It's OK for boyfriends to slap girlfriends if they won't stop arguing	1%	1%	1%	16%	81%
Girlfriends who make boyfriends jealous on purpose deserve to be slapped	1%	7.2%	6.3%	36.2%	49.3%
It's OK for boyfriends to slap their girlfriends if they get drunk	0	1.8%	3.2%	27%	68%

<i>Groping/touching without asking is harmless</i>	3.6%	7.3%	15%	33.6%	40.5%
<i>It's ok for boyfriends to be abusive if they say 'sorry' afterwards</i>	.5%	0	4%	18%	77.5%
Theme Seven: Women/Girls as Perpetrators					
<i>If girlfriends shout at their boyfriends it doesn't really hurt them</i>	1%	8%	15.5%	49%	26.5%
<i>Sometimes girlfriends have to threaten their boyfriends to make them listen</i>	1.8%	14%	18.6%	30.3%	35.3%
<i>It's OK for girlfriends to slap boyfriends if they have cheated</i>	9%	17%	12%	27%	35%
<i>Pushing or kicking is a good way for girlfriends to get back at boyfriends</i>	0	3%	8%	37%	52%

Table 9

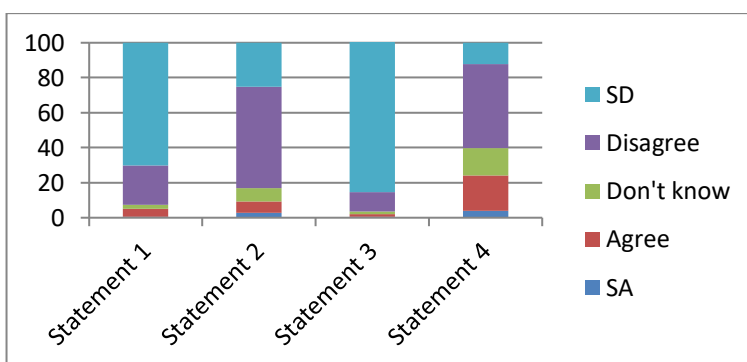
Theme One: Gendered Expectations of Relationship Norms

Statement One: Relationships work best when girlfriends please their boyfriends

Statement Two: Boyfriends should let girlfriends have their own way all the time

Statement Three: Girlfriends should buy boyfriends gifts all the time

Statement Four: It's OK for boyfriends to cheat when in a relationship, but girlfriends should always be faithful



Bar Chart 2

Theme one focuses on gendered norms within relationships, exploring their attitudes towards particular expectations and their perception of what's 'OK' and 'not OK' within intimate relationships. Participants noted that it was 'not OK' for it to be expected that girlfriends 'please their boyfriends' to ensure that their relationship 'works', with less than

5% agreement with this statement. An overwhelming 97% disagreed with the statement that it is ‘OK’ for boyfriends to ‘cheat’ whilst young women should ‘always be faithful’, with a high level of disagreement of overt statements around ‘pleasing’ and faithfulness. When exploring ideas around their role in buying ‘gifts all the time’ or having ‘their own way’, their answers shifted primarily from the ‘strongly disagree’ to the ‘disagree’ category. Despite this, their responses demonstrated attitudes challenging traditional gendered norms, as illustrated by the previous discussion on the first table on gendered norms in section 5.4 of this chapter.

Theme Two: Gendered Expectations Around Sexual Activity

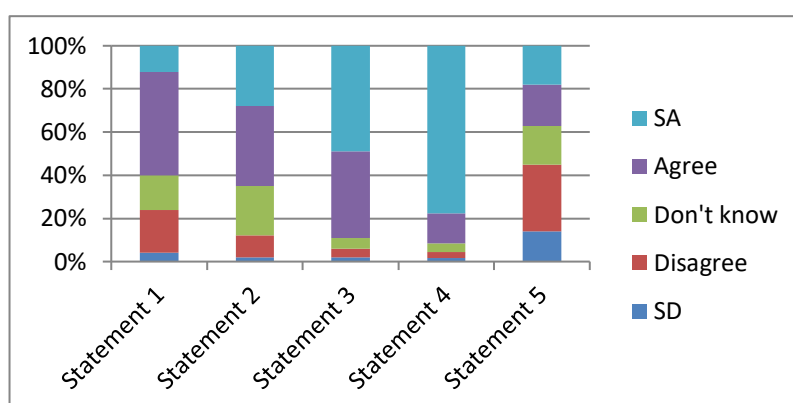
Statement One: It’s OK for boyfriends to expect that their girlfriends will kiss them all the time

Statement Two: Boyfriends should always start sexual activity

Statement Three: Girlfriends should always be sexually available to their boyfriends

Statement Four: It’s OK for boys to ‘sleep around’

Statement Five: Girls who ‘sleep around’ are ‘slags’



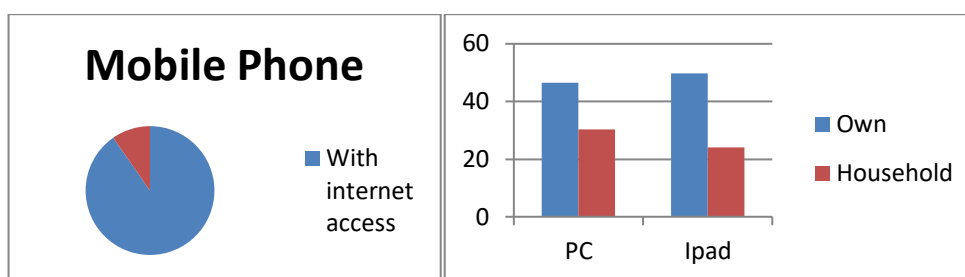
Bar Chart 3

In comparison to the attitudes on gendered norms, the response to this theme was mixed. The percentage of responses in the ‘strongly disagree’ category was lower, with the exception of the response to the statement asking if ‘it’s OK for boys to ‘sleep around’ as over 90% disagreed that this was acceptable. Whereas their judgment on whether or not they expected a boyfriend to be faithful was clear, their reaction to whether ‘girls who ‘sleep around’ are ‘slags’ was unclear. From those who responded outside the ‘don’t know’ category, their responses were evenly separated between those who agreed and those who disagreed with this notion of a ‘slag’. This struggle with the concept of a ‘slag’ and indeed ‘sluts’ was further explored in the interviews and is discussed in detail in later chapters. The deconstruction of female sexuality is complex, due to contradictory

constructions of femininity that promote sexual allure whilst also asserting control over female sexuality. This dichotomy of a slag/angel and the gendered ‘sexual double standards’ is a key theme explored throughout the interviews, and appears as a challenging dilemma for participants from their attitudinal understanding and experiences. Overt sexual behaviour for the young women was aligned to being a ‘slag/slut’ and despite the acknowledgment that this was problematic and an unfair label, this remained mostly unchallenged and perpetuated by the young women themselves. The ‘doing’ of sex for young women ignites a web of controversy and dilemma, often placing them in an impossible position. Despite this notion of the ‘slag’ as the overtly sexualised woman, 65% of participants disagreed that young men should be the main instigator of sexual activity. However, 25% agreed that young women should not instigate sexual activity and that therefore it should be young men who are focused on being ‘up for sex’. This raised an interesting question of when the label of ‘slut/slag’ is applied and whether sexual active behaviour outside the relationship arena is conceptualised differently. The response to the statement that *Girlfriends should always be sexually available to their boyfriends*, included 90% disagreement with this statement, with only 5% agreeing with this view (5% noted ‘don’t know’), illustrating their attitudes towards consent.

Theme Three: Social Media

There is an increasingly blurred line between the ‘online’ and ‘offline’ context of all relationships but, in particular, intimate relationships. Rapid developments in social media technologies further perpetuates this trend, with the use and ownership of various social media tools necessary to facilitate the dominant digital social communication of everyday life. Throughout all stages of this research, the importance of social media was evident across this age group. For example, as part of one of the icebreaker exercises during the advisory group sessions, the young women were asked to select three items to take with them to a desert island, the overwhelming majority selected to take with them their mobile phone/iPad, charger and Wi-Fi access. From those surveyed, 90.3% owned a mobile phone with internet access, again reaffirming the importance of continuous access to the internet, with the majority of young women without internet access on their mobile phone in the lower end of the sample age range, with only five young women aged 17-18 years old without internet access on their mobile phone. The most popular social media tool was their own mobile phone, followed by the iPad and the PC, with young women gaining personal and household access to devices.

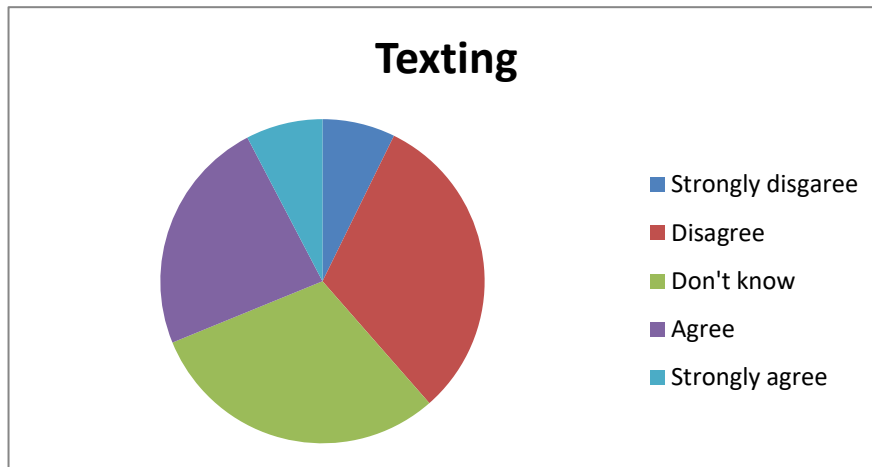


Pie Chart 2

Bar Chart 4

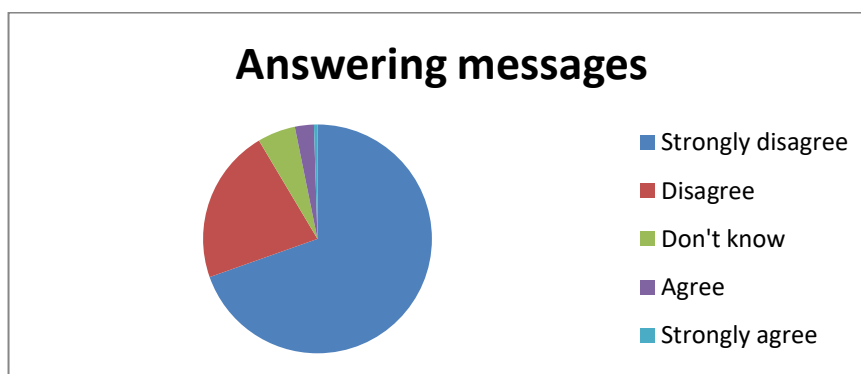
Participants valued their ‘online’ internet access so as to maintain their ‘offline’ relationships and friendships. The dominance of social media sites was highlighted with their prevalent use, with 83.3% accessing Facebook and 75% using Snapchat. Other sites were also favourites; for example, Twitter, WhatsApp and Tumblr. However, despite this visible presence of social media, only 16.6% of the sample stated that they used webcams when communicating online. Despite this low percentage, during the planning stage, several schools noted that they had encountered several cases of the inappropriate use of webcams which had caused child protection concerns. For example, one school reported concerns that a young woman in Year 12 had been exposing herself online through the use of a webcam to groups of older men. The notion of social media communication and sexting as risky behaviour was evident in the concerns articulated across the schools; in particular, the non-consensual circulation of pictures, and the creation of these without consent, and that people may select to create false social media personas. The terms frequently used by participants to describe “sexting” was interchangeable and complex; primarily focused on keywords, such as sending “nudies” or “nudes”, within the culture of sexual bullying online.

The first statement focused on social media asked young women to respond to the question:- *Boyfriends who text and phone their girlfriends all day are just being caring.* As Pie Chart 3 illustrates, the highest percentage of participants disagreed with this statement (31.4%), followed by 30% selecting ‘don’t know’. The polar end of the scale was similar, with 7.3% strongly disagreeing, whilst 7.7% strongly agreed with this statement. However, 23.6% agreed with this statement, demonstrating that just under a quarter of participants observed this behaviour as caring. This demonstrates attitudes accepting of behaviour that does not explicitly appear to be verbally or physically abusive, illustrating the confusion between caring and potentially controlling behaviour, reiterating messages from previous research (Barter et al, 2009).



Pie Chart 3

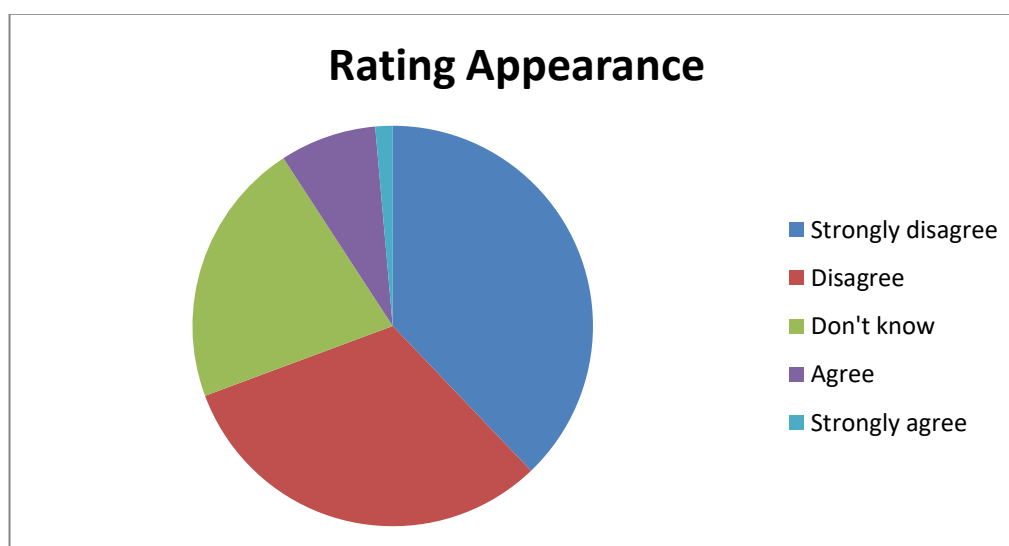
The next statement explored the link between gender roles and the use of social media as both a communication and surveillance tool. The statement asked whether *Girlfriends should be available to answer texts and Facebook messages all the time, but boyfriends can do as they please*. Pie Chart 4 illustrates the findings that a high percentage (92%) of the sample strongly disagreed/disagreed with this statement. Overall, just over 3% of participants agreed with this statement. Not only does this illustrate an attitude of rejecting the view that girlfriends should be constantly available, but further illustrates the response of participants towards statements challenging their perceived equal role within relationships, primarily that they should always be available whilst boys/young men enjoyed freedom.



Pie Chart 4

The next statement explored attitudes towards 'lad culture', which is defined as "being manifest as 'overt sexism' " (Sundaram & Jackson, 2015, p.2). The concept of 'lad culture' or 'laddism' has been described as a form of masculinity, which illustrates behaviour traits focused on sexism, competitiveness and misogyny that has significant socio-cultural power, whilst impacting on identity and experience (Phipps & Young,

2015). The statement enquired whether, *Rating the appearance of girls on social media is just a bit of fun*. The statement was phrased to question whether this behaviour was acceptable or justified if framed as ‘just for a laugh’, or worded here as a ‘bit of fun’. Just under 70% of participants strongly disagreed/disagreed with this statement, with less than 10% reflecting some form of agreement. However, just under a quarter of participants (21.4%) reflected that they ‘didn’t know’ and were therefore unsure of their opinion either on this form of behaviour or whether or not it could be ‘just a bit of fun’. This degree of ambivalence illustrates the potential confusion between their roles, the pressure of the system of ‘rating’ as popularity currency, the monitoring of their appearance and the increasing prevalence of practices focused on posting and circulating sexualised pictures. This form of behaviour is also often linked to popularity, acceptance and exposure. This mirrors social norms that men display humour, whilst women are expected to laugh and enjoy these jokes irrespective of their content, as women are seen to have a ‘sense of humour’ if they respond to and appreciate it, rather than using humour themselves. This matter will be explored further as part of the qualitative analysis, in particular the link to gendered double standards and the consequences of negative exposure.



Pie Chart 5

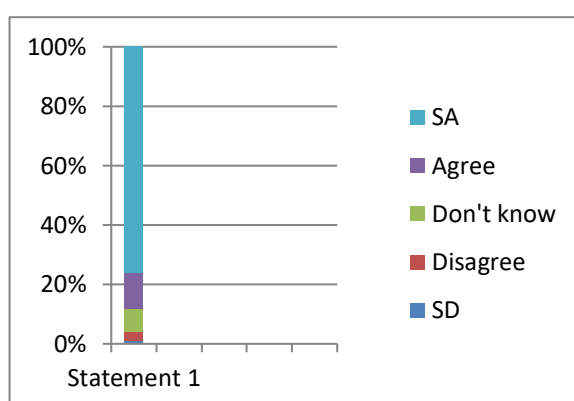
Participants disagreed with the belief that young women should be ‘available’ more than their boyfriends to answer text and Facebook messages. To a lesser extent, participants disagreed with the acceptability of rating a young woman’s appearance on social media; which illustrates a degree of uncertainty of attitudes on the acceptability of ‘laddish’.

Finally, when asked whether they felt that further information or support on how social

media shows sex and relationships was required, only 25% responded that this would be useful, whilst 53.2% noted that this was not necessary and 21.8% replied ‘don’t know’. Analysis of the qualitative data later will illustrate the full complexity of this behaviour, which was described in contradictory terms by participants as desired, unwanted, coercive, sexual and accidental. The experiences described within the qualitative interviews around ‘sexting’ and ‘nudies’ were primarily focused on sexual inclusion/exclusion, consent and control. Indeed, within particular schools the presence of coercive social media groups was evident and problematic. For example, social media “laddish” groups established to share sexualised banter and rate the appearance of young women within their school. One particular group was labelled as “the lads”, a trend observed by the researcher and further reiterated by both teacher and participants across the schools, sometimes packaged differently, but nonetheless equally problematic and sexist. This raised further questions to be explored during the interviews and within the discussion on prevention in chapter seven.

Theme Four: Gay/Lesbian Relationships

Statement One: Abuse in gay relationships is not as serious as abuse in boyfriend/girlfriend relationships



Bar Chart 5

Just fewer than 90% responded that abuse experienced within same sex relationships was as serious as abuse within heterosexual relationships (with only 4% agreement with this statement). This illustrates that participants across all age ranges were able to draw upon non-traditional attitudes on intimate relationships and sexual identities. This signals that participants acknowledge that abuse can occur in any relationship, and that same sex relationships are not automatically more egalitarian than heterosexual relationships. This also illustrates particular attitudes towards the nature of abuse with same sex relationship, despite the void on this topic within the school curriculum. This theme will be explored further in section 5.8 as part of the discussion of the vignette analysis; in particular, the focus on issues specifically impacting on same sex relationships, for example, social

stigma.

Theme Five: Abuse & Coercive Control

Statement One: There is never a reason for boyfriends to threaten their girlfriends

Statement Two: Boyfriends should not damage their girlfriend's belongings

Statement Three: Boyfriends sometimes cannot help but swear at their girlfriends

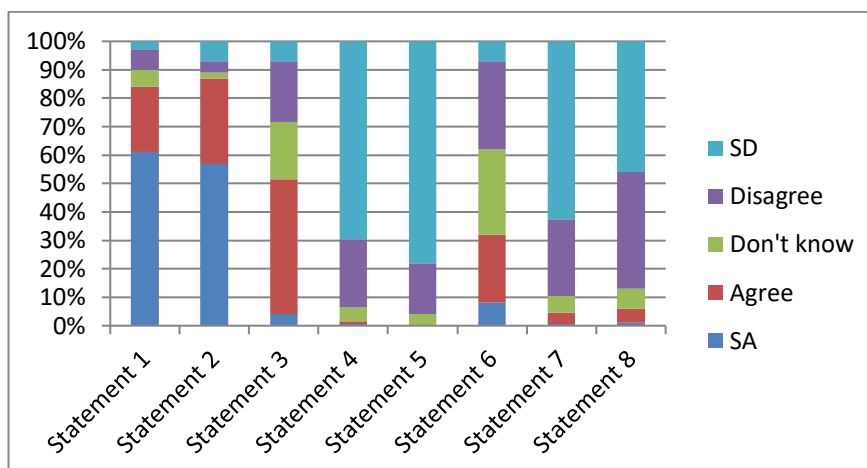
Statement Four: Girlfriends should not see their friends if it bothers their boyfriends

Statement Five: It's OK for boyfriends to use private information to make girlfriends do something

Statement Six: Boyfriends who text and phone their girlfriends all day are just being caring

Statement Seven: It's OK for boyfriends put pressure on girlfriends to have sex, but not to physically force them

Statement Eight: It's OK for boyfriends to take charge of what their girlfriends spend their money on



Bar Chart 6

This theme was grouped with eight statements challenging the attitudes towards patterns of behaviour and the particular justifications for these behaviours. From the analysis of this data, it is possible to draw out some conclusions regarding their attitudes towards overtly abusive behaviour and coercive control. Over 82.3% of participants agreed that there was *'never a reason for a boyfriend to threaten their girlfriends'*, with only 10.5% agreeing with this statement. This overarching attitude condemning the abuse of young women was further echoed in the response as 90% of participants agreed that *'boyfriends should not damage their girlfriend's belongings'*. There was recognition that threatening behaviour as a whole was unacceptable, including the wider spectrum of abuse beyond direct violence. Despite this acknowledgement, over half of participants agreed that *'sometimes boyfriends cannot help but swear at their girlfriends'*. This indicates that threatening behaviour and behaviour focusing on damaging property was regarded as unacceptable, whilst verbal

abuse was perceived as justifiable, with less than 30% of participants disagreeing with this notion.

Overwhelmingly, not a single participant agreed that it was ‘*OK for boyfriends to use private information to make girlfriends do something*’. Other forms of controlling behaviour, such as selecting friends, sexual coercion and financial control were overwhelmingly regarded as ‘not OK’. Just over 30% of participants agreed that a boyfriend who texted and phoned all day was ‘just being caring’, with 30% noting that they ‘didn’t know’, illuminating some of the challenges of unpicking the nuanced nature of controlling behaviour. This was further illustrated when participants were asked to respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to whether they saw particular behaviours as abusive.

Social media behaviour option	Abusive: Yes	Abusive: No
<i>Sending sexual images without asking</i>	75%	25%
<i>Checking mobile/email/Facebook without permission</i>	61.6%	38.4%

Table 10

When asked whether the use or surveillance of someone’s social media use, identity and presence without consent was abusive, 61.6% saw this form of behaviour as abusive.

Theme Six: Physical Violence & Abuse

Statement One: Boyfriends who slap once deserve a second chance

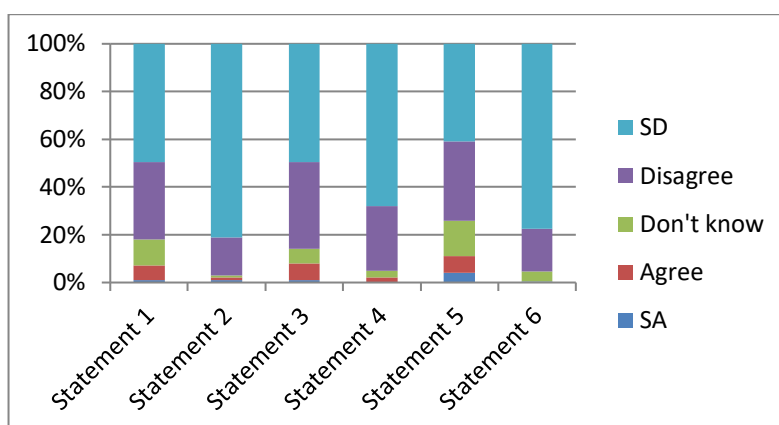
Statement Two: It’s OK for boyfriends to slap girlfriends if they won’t stop arguing

Statement Three: Girlfriends who make boyfriends jealous on purpose deserve to be slapped

Statement Four: It’s OK for boyfriends to slap their girlfriends if they get drunk

Statement Five: Groping/touching without asking is harmless

Statement Six: It’s OK for boyfriends to be abusive if they say ‘sorry’ afterwards



Bar Chart 7

The several forms of justifications offered in response to violent behaviour, mainly the act of ‘slapping’, were overwhelmingly rejected. Whereas this gave a clear indication of the unacceptability of various excuses, from retaliation, jealousy, intoxication and apologising after the event, the idea of whether these particular attitudes operationalised into their everyday relationships was a key theme explored further in the interviews; in particular, as the questionnaire responses offered a firm rejection of these forms of justifications. In keeping with this notion of a continuum of abuse, unwanted groping/touching was regarded as harmful by 75% of the participants.

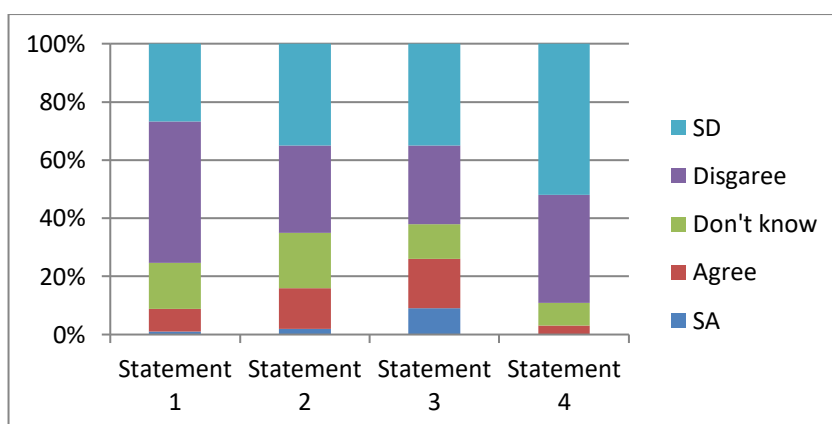
Theme Seven: Women/Girls as Perpetrators

Statement One: If girlfriends shout at their boyfriends it doesn't really hurt them

Statement Two: Sometimes girlfriends have to threaten their boyfriends to make them listen

Statement Three: It's OK for girlfriends to slap boyfriends if they have cheated

Statement Four: Pushing or kicking is a good way for girlfriends to get back at boyfriends



Bar Chart 8

In the questionnaire, attitudes to both male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated violence and abuse was explored, with the aim of facilitating reflections on their attitudes. Particular features of the data are worthy of further discussion here. Participants provided a firmer response to physical violence as an explicit form of ‘real violence’. The various forms of violence and abuse were equally regarded as unacceptable when perpetrated by young women towards their boyfriends. Shouting, threatening, pushing and kicking were regarded as unacceptable forms of behaviour, irrespective of the suggestion that this did not really ‘hurt’ boys. However, when faced with the notion that a girlfriend had ‘slapped’ a boyfriend in response to his cheating behaviour, the overall rejection of this as a justification was less clear.

To summarise, this table of statements demonstrates the responses of the participants when asked to identify or label particular acts as abusive. Participants overwhelmingly agreed and ‘named’ physically abusive behaviour as explicit forms of relationship abuse. Percentages of over 80% were given for every form of behaviour which was directly or overtly physically abusive and violent; for example, hitting/punching and pushing. Bullying and threatening behaviour were also overwhelmingly regarded as abusive. However, outlining an attitude that identifies ‘bullying’ and ‘threatening behaviour’ as abusive is a different matter from acknowledging and having the power to identify and challenge this within a relationship. This was a key theme identified for further discussion during the interview stage. As illustrated, coercive controlling behaviour focused on ‘being tough’, name calling, dictating clothing, keeping money, checking mobile/email/Facebook and groping were regarded as less abusive than physical violent acts. When faced with a myriad of abusive behaviours, the implicit and controlling acts were viewed as secondary to physical acts of harm, which generally indicated the hierarchy of abuse structured by participants, and which become more visible when participants are asked to ‘name’ abuse across a continuum of behaviour. For example, a lower response was noted here for ‘breaking belongings’ as an abusive behaviour.

Hitting / Punching	98.2%	Lying	38.4%
Pushing	84.4%	Demanding sex	88.5%

Sending sexual images without asking	75%	Dictating clothing	45%
Name Calling	68.8%	Being Tough	66.5%
Making threats	88.5%	Flirting with someone else	19.7%
Groping without asking	64.2%	Breaking belongings	71.1%
Keeping Money	47.2%	Cheating	50.9%
Asking for sex	21.6%	Checking mobile/email/FB	61.5%
Bullying	90.4%		

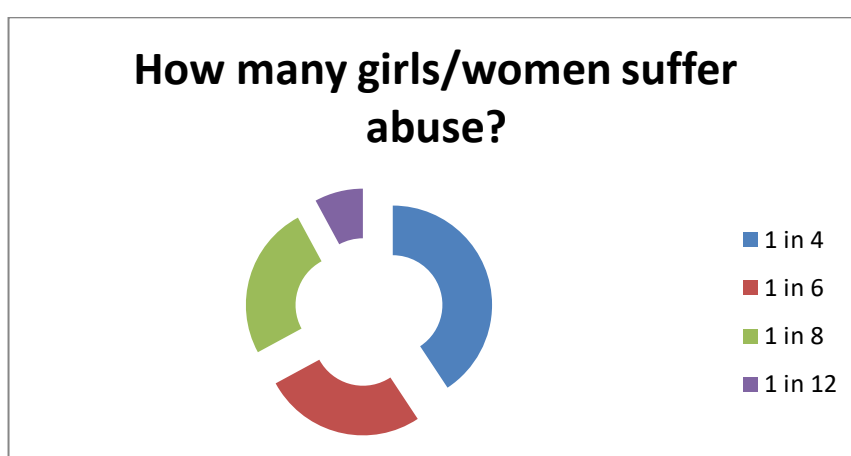
Table 11

The analysis of these statements demonstrated key lines of inquiry to be explored further during the qualitative interviews in order to establish whether these values were operationalised into participants' everyday experiences.

5.7 Knowledge and Understanding

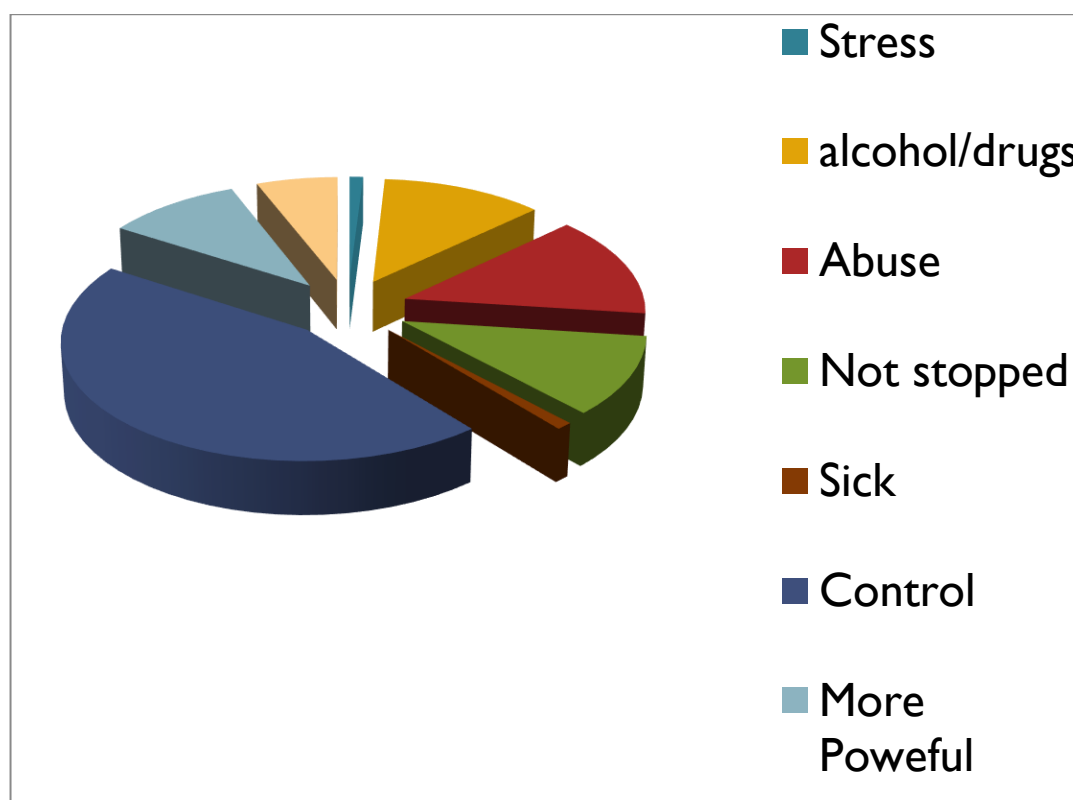
As part of this questionnaire, I wanted to identify the participants' knowledge of the prevalence rate of the violence and abuse of women; in particular, as evidence reflects that men are more likely to be the victims of street violence or violence within public spaces, whereas women are more likely to be the victims of abuse and harm within their own family (WHO, 2005 & Newburn, 2017). Indeed, on a global perspective, women are regarded as the group most at risk of suffering violence and abuse (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Whereas the nature and patterns of women's subjugation could not be explored, their perceptions about the prevalence of abuse could be gathered. Pie Chart 6 illustrates the response when participants were asked to estimate how many girls/women they thought suffered abuse, 41% of participants believed it was one in four, 26% believed it to be one in six, closely followed by 25% who thought it was one in eight, whilst only 8% estimated the figure to be one in 12. Therefore, their perception of the prevalence of domestic violence and abuse was in keeping with national figures (ONS, 2016). This was in contrast

to previous research, which indicated that young people's estimates of domestic violence and abuse tended to be lower than national figures, but that the estimates offered by young women was higher than that offered by young men (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005). This may explain why the results from this research more accurately reflect national figures, as those surveyed were only young women. Young women often feel inhibited by their peers and pressurised within mixed gender groups to respond in a manner that does not appear to present them as a 'prude' or 'over-sensitive' (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998, p. 2). Estimates across the age range was consistent, with some differences gathered on school level, which may reflect different awareness and learning across areas and schools.



Pie Chart 6

In order to contribute to the analysis of the situational context of GBV, participants were also asked to indicate their beliefs on why young women/women are abused by young men/men. This was so as to evaluate their attitude towards several explanatory frameworks of GBV, including individual pathology, family dysfunction and feminist approaches (Miller & Wellford, 1997). The aim of this question was to evaluate their views on specific behaviour patterns as an explanation for GBV, and explore whether participants aligned their understanding of men's violence and abuse of women with a particular explanatory framework. As illustrated by Pie Chart 6, in keeping with key feminist perspectives, over half of the sample agreed with the ethos that young men are abusive due to wider structural issues around power and control.



Pie Chart 7

As I wanted to focus on analysing young women's main explanation of GBV, I asked them only to select one option from a selected list. Despite the degree of alignment of half the sample with the acknowledgment of structural issue, such as power and control as a key factor in GBV, the remainder of the sample selected individual behaviour traits as an explanation for GBV; for example, substance misuse, stress, previous history of abuse, not being able to stop and the potential that the perpetrator is 'sick'. The selection of individual behaviour traits as justification for abusive behaviour is to a much lesser degree than that in previous research, which was focused on gathering the attitudes of young men and women (Burman & Cartmel, 2005). However, this does illustrate that half of the sample selected several individual behavioural traits to explain and essentially justify GBV.

5.8 Vignette Analysis

The questionnaire contained two vignettes and various statements in order to measure the participants' response to the issues described in the vignettes. Vignettes were adopted as a question format in order to capture the normative standards of participants' attitudes in a situational manner.

Vignette One: Marc and Nia's Story

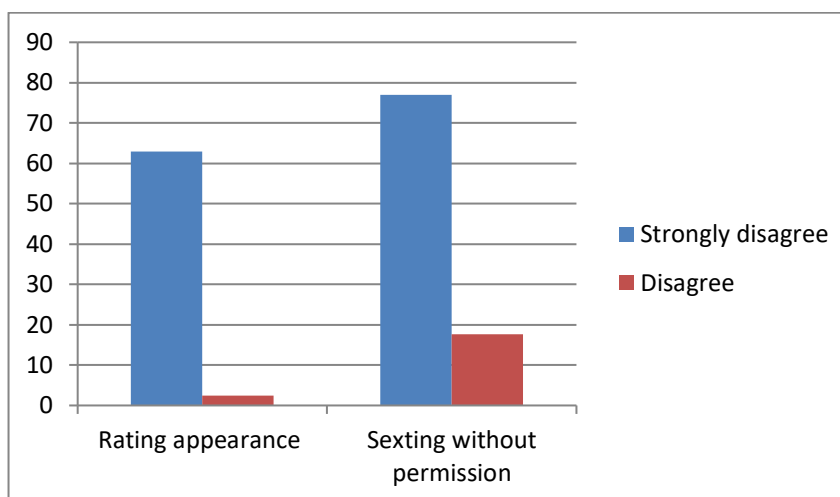
Marc and Nia's story focused on a young woman's relationship with an older boyfriend who demonstrates controlling and abusive behaviour. The story was written in two stages; firstly, from Nia's perspective and secondly, from Catrin's perspective as an observer and Nia's friend. So as to evaluate participants' response to this story, there were two Likert scales; one with eight items and the other with six items. There was also a multiple choice question asking participants to select whether Catrin should intervene in Nia and Marc's relationship and, if so, who she could ask for help.

Within the first set of questions for this vignette, seven of the statements were worded in a way that challenged the acceptability of controlling behaviour within an intimate relationship. There was also one statement that required reverse-coding, as a positive response indicated a healthy attitude towards intimate relationships. Overwhelmingly, participants disagreed (94.5%) with the 'romantic' notion that it's 'sweet' that Marc tells Nia daily how much he loves her, which appeared to challenge the social stereotype of women as passive and romantic. This was further reinforced by the 70.9% who disagreed that it was 'good' to spend all your time with your boyfriend or that Marc had the 'right' to know what 'Nia was doing all the time'. These attitudes were re-affirmed by a positive statement asking whether it was 'OK' to spend time away from your boyfriend. The vast majority agreed (93.7%).

The participants within this research disagreed (79.2%) that Nia should dress to please Marc and should therefore 'change her outfit' if it caused him upset. The results revealed that 72% disagree (with only 12% agreeing and the remainder of the sample answering 'don't know') that Nia provoked Marc's behaviour by wearing a revealing outfit, a figure substantially less than shown in previous research (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005). The response to this question here further complements the response that Nia should not dress to please Marc. There were also two statements questioning attitudes towards particular excuses as explanations for controlling behaviour. Just over 70% of participants disagreed that Nia should listen to Marc and act maturely if she wants an older boyfriend. However, just under 20% noted that they 'didn't know' how to respond to this statement and therefore opted for the neutral category, indicating a degree of confusion regarding the expected relationship role when dating older boyfriend.

Within this vignette, a statement was included in order to question their attitudes to sexting; *Sexting private photos without permission is ok as it's just fun*. Again, the statement was phrased to question whether this form of behaviour could be acceptable or

justified as ‘just fun’. In response, a high percentage noted their disagreement with this form of sexting trend (94.5% disagreeing). In the context of the vignette, participants responded more decisively, with only 3.2% selecting ‘don’t know’. They were also decisive about the unacceptability of sexting without permission, in comparison to the trend of rating female appearance, as the bar chart illustrates. It is questionable whether this was due to their acceptance of one form of behaviour over the other, or whether they felt more inclined to respond to vignettes as ‘pretend’ scenarios.



Bar Chart 9

The second table for this vignette focused on Marc’s direct behaviour and Catrin’s role as an observer. The response to the statements gathering the attitudes of participants on Marc’s behaviour illustrated that they believed that ‘grabbing’ Nia and calling her a ‘bloody tart’ was unacceptable, and could not be seen as ‘harmless’ or ‘no big deal’. Within the second part of the story, 96% agreed that not all of Nia’s time should be spent with Marc, and neither should she stop seeing Catrin to please him. Participants agreed with the notion that Catrin was not being ‘nosy’, with over 80% responding positively by stating they believed it would be a ‘good idea’ for Nia to talk to a ‘sympathetic adult’. On the whole, participants illustrated attitudes that were sympathetic to Nia’s position, and supported her independence outside her intimate relationship by primarily rejecting established justifications to excuse abusive behaviour. Encouragingly, there is evidence to suggest that participants valued the availability of support; in particular, ‘informal’ or ‘private’ support.

Vignette Two: Carys and Sian’s Story

The design of questionnaires when researching domestic violence and abuse has been focused on approaches which measure either prevalence of, or attitudes towards, violence

and abuse in heterosexual relationships. As a result, the decision was made to design a bespoke vignette which focused on exploring issues within a young gay/lesbian relationship. This vignette focused on a young woman's relationship with an older girlfriend who demonstrates controlling and physically abusive behaviour. The story is written from Carys's perspective and also includes Carys's friend, Darren, in whom she confides. In order to evaluate the response of participants to this story, there was one table with 12 items, with the statements worded in such a manner that a degree of disagreement with the statement would indicate a view aligned with challenging controlling and physically abusive behaviour within an intimate relationship. There are three statements that required reverse-coding, as a positive response indicated a healthy attitude towards intimate relationships.

Same-sex relationships have specific issues that may impact on the nature of these relationships; for example, social stigma (Halpern et al, 2004), with a greater tendency for female sexuality to be used in a negative way against women than against men (Donovan et al, 2006). The first statement questioned whether Carys '*should just tell her family about her relationship with Sian*', with over 78% agreeing that she should do so. There is limited research available to examine the threats of outing among young people's intimate relationships, with estimation that 4% of gay and lesbian young people had received such threats (Freedner et al, 2002). Due to the stigma associated with both same-sex relationships and domestic abuse, it is presumed that, in reality, this figure is higher. There is also a fear among young people within same sex relationships of 'double disclosure' of sexuality and domestic violence and abuse (Pentaraki, 2017). On reflection, this statement was drafted in an ambiguous manner, as agreeing with this statement could be both sympathetic and unsympathetic with Carys's situation. Agreeing that Carys should tell her family could indicate that they felt it was not a "big deal" and that she should not be ashamed of being in a gay relationship. It could also be a sign of participants' lack of understanding of the challenges/barriers faced by young people within gay relationships and/or abusive relationships, demonstrating issues focused on power linked to the potential discrimination and social exclusion, as a result of her sexuality.

Similar to Vignette one, there was a statement focusing on justifications or excuses offered as explanations for controlling or physically abusive behaviour. The response to the statement, *Carys should make sure that she doesn't provoke Sian by flirting with other girls*, was that, interestingly, 38% of the young women agreed with this statement, with over 26% noting that they 'didn't know'. As a result, only 35.4% of participants disagreed

with this statement, in comparison with over 70% disagreeing that Nia had provoked Marc's behaviour. Findings such as this demonstrate the need to examine how young women draw on 'dominant' and 'traditional' frameworks so as to understand (hetero)sexuality and the nature of domestic abuse within relationships. In particular, as lesbian relationships in comparison to heterosexual relationships are often conceptualised as egalitarian (Hester 2010), which can be problematic, as evidence illustrates the prevalence of domestic abuse within same-sex relationships (Donovan et al, 2006).

The use of social media as a coercive tool was further explored within this vignette, which questioned whether social media could be used in an exploitative manner. When asked to respond to the statement, *It's not OK for Sian to post comments and change her status on Facebook without Carys's permission*, a higher percentage responded that sending sexual images without permission was 'not ok' within the context of this vignette (94.5%), in comparison to illustrating attitudes more accepting of this behaviour in an early statement. This may also reflect that participants empathised and responded differently to situational abuse framed within a story, with characters that they may be able to relate to.

Over 62% of participants agreed that the issues in this relationship were not to do with Carys's inability to act 'maturely', which was similar to the response to the age gap in Nia and Marc's relationship, aligning their attitude with the notion that age, in particular a younger age, does not cause or excuse abusive behaviour. It was important to evaluate this issue, as evidence indicates a higher risk of abuse within first lesbian relationships (Ristock, 2002), due to a lack of experience and confidence in identifying acceptable behaviour. This is reiterated in UK-based research, reflecting that those within younger same-sex relationships tend to under-report the abuse suffered (Donovan et al, 2006). Two statements evaluated the seriousness of Sian's behaviour by questioning the respondents' attitudes towards the notion that the story described '*just two girls fighting*', that Sian's behaviour could be construed as '*caring*' and that *arguing, getting physical and shouting is just part of being in an intimate relationship*. These statements focused on questioning their attitudes towards social stereotypes; in particular, that women are passive, romantic and non-violent. Responses to these three items corresponded, with over 80% of the sample disagreeing with these statements, indicating beliefs that physical and verbal abuse within intimate relationships was unacceptable. The attitudes analysed as part of this research reflect a higher proportion of attitudes questioning and disagreeing with the possibility of accepting or justifying abusive behaviour. This may illustrate the impact of conducting research focused on gathering the perspectives of young women, reducing the

influence of young men and changing the atmosphere within the research environment. In particular, as discussed in later chapters, several young women disclosed during the interviews the presence of sexist banter within their classrooms. Aligned to the findings of Vignette One, participants felt that a friend, Darren in this story, should offer support, as over 70% felt he would not be interfering if he offered support to Carys (with only 15% agreeing, with the remainder answering ‘don’t know’). The importance of accessing support was again reinforced, as nearly 90% of participants agreed that ‘*Darren should talk to Carys and try to help her*’. The findings suggest a general agreement to access ‘informal’ or ‘private’ support.

Undoubtedly, understanding the nature of the relationship between pro-abuse attitudes and abusive behaviour is crucial. Understanding this link will enable us to gauge whether attitudes reflect the idea of abusive behaviour on a continuum of interlinked ‘everyday experiences’. Overall, the attitudes to both vignettes revealed ‘healthy’ beliefs that questioned the acceptability of abuse within heterosexual and same sex relationships.

5.9 Beliefs Around Healthy/Unhealthy Relationships

Table 12 illustrates the top three words adopted by the sample to describe an ‘unhealthy relationship’, which were focused on specific behaviours:- Jealous, selfish and controlling.

Supported	Respectful	3. Jealous
Poor communication	Passionate	Caring
Possessive	2. Selfish	1. Controlling
Equal	Compromise	Listening

Table 12

Table 13 illustrates the top three words adopted by the sample to describe a ‘healthy relationship’, which were specific behaviour of supported, respectful and caring.

2. Supported	1. Respectful	Jealous
Poor communication	Passionate	3. Caring
Possessive	Selfish	Controlling
Equal	Compromise	Listening

Table 13

Not only did this form of ranking provide the context and understanding of what was important and valued in relationships, it also provided key themes to explore further during the qualitative stage. The selected positive aspects of a 'healthy relationship' provided a useful foil for the chosen aspects of an 'unhealthy relationship'. This clearly illustrated the polar perspectives towards relationship forms, and the understanding of the ingredients required for both. Despite a useful 'starting point' for prevention work on 'healthy relationships', whether young women have the tools to operationalise their beliefs as part of their intimate relationship requires further exploration. However, this does indicate that young women have suitable knowledge, understanding and attitudes of the requirements of a healthy relationship. This may be in part due to the increased publication and awareness of *This is abuse* and *DISRESPECT NOBODY*, two Home Office campaigns targeted at tackling domestic violence and abuse within teenage relationships.

5.10 Messages for prevention & early intervention

Schools are the ideal socialisation sites for shaping and deterring potential harmful behaviour on a universal platform. The young women voiced their wish to have preventative and early intervention programmes integrated into their school education and to have the opportunity to talk and be listened to. Only 37.4% of participants noted that they believed that there was enough information available on 'healthy relationships'. This understanding of a lack of information was expanded to other related topics, such as how social media shows sex and relationships and the meaning of consent in relationships. This is particularly pertinent when considering the messages from related research, which indicates that young people are confused about the concept of sexual consent (Burman & Cartmel, 2005). A high proportion of the sample noted that they were aware of the availability of support services on a local and national basis. This demonstrates that support services are visible, but need to tailor and target intervention to address the evolving needs of our younger generation. Also, knowing about services may not imply a willingness to discuss them.

Topic	Yes	No	Don't know
How social media shows sex and relationships	25%	53.2%	21.8%
What consent means in a relationship	36.1%	48.1%	15.7%
Support services available	52.6%	32.6%	14.9%

Table 14

Young people stress the importance of peer relationships and support when experiencing forms of abuse. Participants were questioned on who they regarded as the 'sympathetic adult' to confide in regarding relationship concerns. Parents and professional organisations were ranked the highest (23%), followed by youth workers (16%) and then teachers (11%), with friends and talking directly with the perpetrator receiving equal responses (10%) and lastly, talking to the perpetrator's friend (7%). This theme of parents as a key protective factor, in particular the role of fathers, was a key emerging theme within the qualitative interviews (see chapter six and seven for further discussion). The questionnaire findings highlight the importance of incorporating parents/carers as part of the solution; in particular, prevention and early intervention with young people, which will be discussed in detail in chapter seven.

5.11 Chapter Summary

This regional research had some limitations as the results are not necessarily unique to this particular sample; however, due to the limited diversity in ethnicity of the sample, not all the results can be generalised beyond this group. Despite attempts to access pupils within the Pupil Referral Unit and a wider cohort from the Youth Justice Service (only one young woman selected to participate), the research primarily focused on a population of school students, predominantly white/UK and heterosexual. This questionnaire drew its sample from schools in a particular area of Wales, and although it provides a snapshot of the attitudes towards young intimate relationships within this area, these results are not generalisable, given the nature of the schools and the area. However, despite these limitations, this research contributes to the literature and prevailing debates on the nature of teenage intimate relationships and the themes of gendered expectations and social

norms, sexism, the influence of social media, young people's understanding of abuse within their intimate relationships and their ideas of a healthy relationship. In doing so, this research extends our knowledge of young women's attitudes towards gender, social norms and intimate relationships.

Creating the space for a 'women-only' questionnaire on attitudes towards young intimate relationships provided an overall sense of a shift away from the ethos of attitudes accepting of particular violence and abuse in specific circumstances. This may be due to the absence of masculinities and the fact that the young women felt at ease to express their views without ridicule by their male peers. This also may explain why the research findings presented here are contradictory to previous findings and the justifications of abuse previously observed (Burton & Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Fox et al, 2013). This raises two key points. Firstly, the potential benefits of targeted support and prevention for young women only and secondly, the question of whether these attitudes are operationalised into their everyday relationships. The relationship between attitudes and behaviour, specifically young women's ability and power to operationalise their attitudes and beliefs as part of their own intimate relationships, was explored further during the qualitative stage. This demonstrates the benefit of undertaking a 'mixed method' study, not only to triangulate the data, but also to explore the relationship between the two data sets (attitudes and experiences). Further discussion on the limitations and reflections on the research process are outlined in section 8.3.

CHAPTER SIX: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the key findings from the data analysis and investigates the nature and patterns of behaviour in teenage intimate relationships, from the perspectives of young women who were interviewed for this research. Semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim and the data anonymised. Participants were asked to select their own pseudonyms for the interview, as the intention was to place participants at ease from the start by building rapport through the use of 'icebreakers' and vignettes. Vignettes were not utilised as independent tools, but as part of the interview process in order to assist with 'setting the scene' in a non-threatening manner (Shaw et al, 2011).

The completion of verbatim interview transcriptions was time consuming; however, conducting this task allowed the development of a relationship with the data, which enriched the subsequent process of establishing and building themes from data gathered. The interview schedule closely linked to the research questions, objectives and the themes identified from the findings of the questionnaire (see chapter five). In reverse to the questionnaire format, the interview questions began with a focus on demographic questions, as the questions were generally non-threatening and explored information well-known to them, for example, their age, where they live etc. The focus of the research was on the young women's experiences of their intimate relationships as a whole, rather than concentrating on abuse, harm or violence per se.

In order to gain a sense of what was important for the participants in a partner, the discussion started with an emphasis on what they saw as attractive and desirable in a boyfriend/girlfriend. The interview schedule explored the progression of their intimate relationships, in order to identify the story of each relationship. Interviews explored the beginning of their relationship and the course of it, followed by a discussion on the nature of their relationships, the role of social media within relationships and their views on support and information available on relationships for young women. Open-ended questions were used to allow participants the space to describe their experiences of established intimate relationships, 'going out' with someone and also 'going on dates'.

This thesis is about listening to and hearing the voices of young women, with the data analysis focusing on the reflexive philosophical feminist perspective of 'giving a voice' to young women. However, the young women were much more than research participants, as I endeavoured to spend time in the participating schools, to understand their everyday education environment, to get to know the young women, their likes, dislikes, how they

dressed; and how they formed friendships, which assisted me in understanding their perspectives on their intimate relationships. Active listening skills were adopted, including a focus on noting the verbal cues and body language observed during each interview; for example, the emotions reflected and the tone of voice. As reflected upon in chapter four, from the advisory group stage, I wrote notes in my research journal, which assisted with the reflexive process of analysing the data in a way that kept me close to the young women. The more time I spent scrutinising the young women's perspectives of their intimate relationships, the more attentive I became to their stories as a whole, as opposed to specific themes or extracts selected (see Appendix four: participant pen pictures).

I was mindful of my power as the researcher to select sections of individual narratives in the re-presentation of participants' voices. I immersed myself in the data by listening, re-listening, transcribing and translating the interview transcripts in order to identify key themes and meaning(s) and my selections are intended to convey the voices of the young women interviewed. In order to conduct the analysis, I familiarised myself with the data by undertaking all the transcription and translation work, reading all the transcripts several times to assist in the identification of patterns and overlaps between participants. Interview transcripts were individually analysed, with a focus on adopting a systematic approach based on symbolic interactionism principles of locating epiphanies that illustrate when personal concerns become public issues (Denzin, 1989), and in connecting personal and interactional experiences to structural issues (Denzin, 2008). Each interview transcript was analysed and coded with reference to the research questions, the identification of key words, themes, events/epiphanies which shaped their meaning(s) (Denzin, 2008), with a focus on the patterns of interactions and the consequences of these interactions within the intimate relationships. A list of key themes were identified for each participant, which was then cross-referenced to produce a recurrent themes table for the whole sample.

During the qualitative data analysis, the context of what is said can often be lost (Bryman, 2008) due to the broad and elusive definition of 'experiences', with the meaning(s) of words often illustrated by the actual choice of words, gestures, tone of voice, body language and emotional expressions. Therefore, Kelly's method (1988) of 'emotional expression bracketing' was utilised to code particular emotions or change in the tone of voice, which essentially is a method for coding the unspoken aspects of interviews. For example, emotional expression and tone of voice were coded with a note in brackets written in bold at the end of the relevant passage. The purpose of this was to ensure that the exact meaning(s) of particular words or expressions were not 'lost in transcription'.

These codes were cross-referenced with the research journal, as notes were taken both during and after each interview, with changes in body language specifically noted in the research journal. It's not an exact science, but adding this layer to the data analysis assisted in provided context to each individual interview.

In order to provide a sense of the relationship experiences of the sample group, across the sample, 60% (15) of the young women interviewed had direct experience of being in an intimate relationship. For many of the young women, the relationship they were describing was their first intimate relationship, with none of the relationships involving child-rearing/parenting or co-habitation. One relationship involved a step-parenting role and staying over at the boyfriend's home during the weekends, as he was older and had his own home. Based on my recollection of relationship experience within my own peer group, I anticipated that the duration of most of the relationships would be within the timescale of a couple of months (Carver et al, 2003). However, the data revealed that over half of the relationships discussed had lasted longer than a few months, with several of the relationships lasting beyond one year. This does link to the age of the sample, as the majority of the young women with direct relationship experience were over the age of 16 years old (13 of the 15 young women), which aligns to research which reflects that relationship experience and average relationship duration develops with age (Meier & Allen, 2009). All the relationships were described as heterosexual. The remaining 40% of the sample (ten young women) reflected on their peer or family intimate relationships (primarily siblings) and the vignettes. Despite the limited relationship experience of this portion of the sample, these young women drew upon their observations of their peers, their experiences of gender norms and their wider experiences of harassment/'catcalling' within their school and wider public spaces. As illustrated later, the young women with no or limited relationship experience were generally more reflective of their self and their relationship expectations.

The impact of a spectrum of abuse on young women was a key thread across the interviews. For many young women this can mean experiencing abuse online, offline or on the street, as well as within an intimate relationship. The participants demonstrated a high level of 'everyday' contact with harassment and abuse, with evidence of incidences escalating into violent and abusive behaviour. In addition, the majority of participants knew of someone in their family, peer group or the wider community who had suffered harassment, abuse or violence.

6.2 THEME ONE: Gender & Relationships

This section focuses on the theme of gender and relationships, specifically the construction of gender in intimate relationships. Gendered meanings were explored by invoking discourses around biology, sex, gender and identity. When considering the definition of gender, feminist scholars have rejected essentialism for its reliance on simplistic, dualistic categories of gender. Gender is seen as a social construct, an everyday issue that permeates all levels of society. The majority of the young women demonstrated similar relationship narratives, illustrating the dominance of gendered expectations; however, there were also dissenting voices, as explained later in this section. Despite the presence of dissenting voices, even here there continued to be limited power in challenging the prescriptive female role and the culture around it. Drawing on their narratives, I reflect how participants justified and naturalised the presence of gendered norms within their intimate relationships.

6.2.1 Young Women's Aspirations for their Intimate Relationships

There was a sense that attraction was measured by the ability to be in and have an intimate relationship; a measure of their heterosexual performance. The young women interviewed revealed the pressure to conform to the perceived ideal image of attractiveness, reinforced by their peers and the online community. There were examples of the young women adapting their appearance and personalities to attract a boyfriend and to maintain their intimate relationship. The young women described how they adopted Goffman's techniques of 'impression management' to stage and maintain their performance as this 'ideal girlfriend'. Goffman (1959) conceptualised 'impression management' as a desire to manipulate our presentation of self to others as part of our social interactions. For example, Chloe described how she wanted the 'ideal relationship', which she described as 'going out for meals together'. This illusion of the 'ideal relationship' was shattered in front of her friends when she invited her boyfriend to join them on a trip to the cinema and Pizza Hut. He had 'sulked' and refused to talk to anyone;

What made you feel that he didn't want to be there? (Interviewer)

His body language, he was really quiet and sulked. When I was with my friends, he was more comfortable one to one. He would not talk to me and he argued with me about little things. When I was with my friends, he was more big headed and showing off, different person really. He made me feel uncomfortable a bit. (Chloe).

Chloe portrayed how she felt uncomfortable and embarrassed due to her boyfriend's behaviour in front of her friends, as he explicitly demonstrated his behaviour both verbally

and through non-verbal gestures, jeopardising the image she desired to project to her friends and the ‘scene’ she wanted to present to others. The signs of Chloe’s embarrassment impacted further on her ‘character’ and her image of the ‘ideal relationship’, influencing the reality of the performance and lifting the presented ‘ideal mask’ of their relationship, as her friends were given a full glimpse behind the scene of Chloe’s performance and their relationship, enabling them to formulate a ‘bad impression’ of her boyfriend.

When articulating their opinion, the foremost focus was on mutual trust and ‘*no lying, I hate being lied to*’ (Bonnie), with all the respondents commenting on its importance as the foundation of a healthy relationship. There was also a sense of the need to ‘*feel close and be there for each other*’ (Chloe) and the need to be able to rely on each other. This was aligned to the notion of the importance of honesty, being able to ‘*be yourself*’ (Becky), feel comfortable with each other and have a general feeling of a ‘*strong bond*’ (Aleysa), loving and being loved. Within the young women’s accounts there was a focus on honesty and communicating effectively, ‘*tell everything*’ (Lowri) to your partner and a general need for respect. There was also a sense of the importance of attraction and gaining enjoyment and pleasure from intimate relationships, not only in a physical or sexual manner, but also in the sense of mutual belonging, partnership and the security of ‘*being there for each other*’ (Chloe). Importance was also placed on being attractive to the opposite sex, in particular having the perceived attractive body image of what they thought men found attractive in women, for example, “*big boobs, shapely bum and a slender waist*” (Glesni). Generally, the ‘Barbie’ description was linked to the perceived ideal physical appearance preferred by young men, reinforcing the stereotype of the representation of the female body as groomed and slim (Smith et al, 1990). The wants and desires as part of sexual attraction and relationship desires were framed in a gendered manner. Young men were again described as hyper-sexual, with their focus on the female body and looks. This was further perpetuated by the notion that young women were judged on their body image; in particular, whether they were fat, which drove their desire to “*look better for their boyfriends*” (Mali). However, young men were expected to conform to the body image of being strong and masculine; “*it’s a bit weird if a boy is shorter than me*” (Glesni), and that young men should not demonstrate their body insecurities. Desire and pleasure are discussed further in Theme Two, which explores the issue of sexual double standards.

On the whole, intimate relationships were seen as challenging, but also with the potential to improve a person, due to the apparent requirement to be selfless and prioritise your

intimate partner. Within this discussion, the emerging picture was that of young women as selfless and passive. The overall importance was placed on being happy and gaining ‘*something*’ positive from a relationship. However, what this ‘*something*’ looked like was unclear. Their general beliefs were focused on the importance of being with a partner that added to, rather than deducted from your life. Despite this, several of the young women’s narratives revealed the opposite. Primarily they drew upon traditional dominant discourses of (hetero)sexuality by positioning themselves as focused on wanting commitment and love from intimate relationships, in particular the concept of becoming a couple and conforming to relationship expectations focused on romantic ideals and the need to ‘*feel special*’ (*Collette*) and ‘*be together*’ (*Julie*). It also became apparent that their agency was limited through the dominance of these normative discourses and the notion of their role as passive and secondary to their boyfriends.

6.2.2 Gender Norms and Relationship Roles

Participants reflected a belief that they should feel ‘lucky’ to be in an intimate relationship, with a sense of loss and embarrassment if this aim had not been achieved. There was a general sense of ‘success’ when a young woman was ‘selected’ to undertake the ‘girlfriend role’ and should therefore settle for a boy willing to be part of a relationship. This reinforced the belief that young women valued relationships more than young men, as it is the role of young men to do the asking and for the young women to accept their offer. It can be argued that such a sense of gratefulness as well as the impression of a relationship in defining success can result in young women remaining in unhealthy relationships. In comparison, young men were described as having a sense of entitlement, which placed them in a position of power, as the young women generally felt fortunate when they committed to an intimate relationship. This perceived ‘luck’ was expanded further when there was a sense that their social position within their peer group was improved, resulting in party invitations and inclusion in the conversations about sex and relationships. The absence of an intimate relationship was conceptualised as a void, which resulted in a natural exclusion from the conversation (*Claire*) and had a knock-on effect on their popularity and visibility (*Becky*). This was also seen as a measure of individual maturity and preparation for adulthood. Conversely, this increased participation often came at a price, as several narratives illustrated that increased attendance at parties or social events often led to arguments, jealousy and close surveillance by their boyfriends. The pressure to gain relationship experience and avoid exclusion from peer conversations was unavoidable, due to its overwhelming presence in all forms of online and offline spaces. This was in sharp contrast to the automatic entitlement of young men to attend parties,

social gathering and maintain a much more explicit online presence on social media sites.

Boyfriends often questioned why their girlfriends wanted or needed to spend time with their friends, as it was perceived that it should be enough that they now had a boyfriend, which they saw as a full-time emotional commitment. The young women themselves would limit the time they spent with their friends once they entered a relationship. However, there were dissenting voices illustrating the belief that young women should not be *'too clingy'* (Donna) within a mature relationship, as it is important to allocate time for friends and family, not just boyfriends. The agenda was often set by their boyfriends, with the implications of going against this routine often resulting in arguments, verbal abuse, increased controlling behaviour and the general sense that he was *'in a mood'*, which was mentioned by several young women (Michelle, Elen, Lowri, Rhiannon). When young men got *'in a mood'*, the young women became compliant by modifying their behaviour in response to the increased demands of their boyfriends. The young women described how they constantly had to negotiate their behaviour and social space, both on and offline.

When the young women become jealous, rather than becoming controlling, they would often respond by providing a greater degree of freedom and would make additional allowances, for example, they would consciously not ask their boyfriends about pictures posted on Facebook of them with another young women. This general response to be passive and less questioning was due to the anxiety of *'not being wanted'* (Alyesha). The young women demonstrated a fear of being *'dropped'* if they acted upon their jealousy and insecurities. Again, this demonstrates Goffman's *'impression management'* and the emotion work of staging their performance to maintain their position as the *'ideal'* girlfriend rather than demonstrate the insecurity of a *'nagging'* girlfriend. Participants ridiculed their gendered position in order to justify inappropriate male behaviour by describing normative female traits as *"girls can get crazy and weird"* (Becky) or going *"into psycho girlfriend mode"* (Aleysha). These references were in relation to the acceptability of male jealousy, which was described as a positive trait, illustrating care, attention and the perceived male competitive streak. Female jealousy was described as unattractive and unjustified, whilst male requests around time management, *'dropping'* your friends and shaping your life around their needs was justified and mostly accepted; for example;

"They tend to not fit in [friends]. Like, I feel really bad because I'm always making excuses, like, I can't see you, but I think, with uni coming up, we're going to be drifting apart anyway, so I think this is the process for me to be drifting apart from them, kind of thing. Like, I always... I know it's quite mean,

but I always make excuses. Like, I would actually rather just be with him than be with my friends because I tend to... because I think it's a lot more effort being with my friends at the moment, because they're quite hyperactive and things, but it is nice just to have a chilled night in, kind of thing, so I do tend to not sort of fit them in".

Their explanation of jealous behaviour was gender-specific and naturalised, with young men constructed as competitive and protective, whilst they described their own emotions as irrational.

Across the narratives there was a general lack of reflection on the discrepancy between their perception of a healthy relationship and their actual relationship experiences. This was illustrated by the efforts that went into the management of their emotions, which was normalised; specifically, how they were required to hide their real emotions to avoid rejection, again reflecting complex emotion work. The relationship roles conceptualised by the young women utilised traditional binaries of women as caring and emotional, whilst men were seen as stable and cool. The young women implicitly subscribed to this categorisation and drew upon biological gender narratives; for example, '*Girls are more open and emotional ...Boys are less emotional; they tend to keep it together a bit more*' (Becky). Here 'emotions' equate to rationality and young men's perceived ability to '*keep it together*' as they removed emotions from their prescribed role, whilst young women were '*open*' and therefore '*emotional*'. Indeed, young women were described as '*caring*' and '*emotional*', whilst in contrast young men were described dominant and quick to '*get in a mood*'. The common excuse offered for their partners' limited emotional response was due to '*boys being boys*' (Bonnie), and the general concern for the young men's emotion. For example, Michelle's view that '*his mood*' was '*fair enough*' as he had waited to have sex with her, reflecting a view that young men are more typically aligned to the notion of a dating script focused on achieving sexual aspirations. It was expected that young women had to do the work to sustain a close relationship.

Emotion work was also visible within young women's management and negotiation of their own emotions and those of the young men. That is, they would lower their expectations, rather than challenge behaviour contrary to their ideal perception of a healthy relationship. Therefore, they did not lower their expectations because they felt that their ideal image was misguided, but rather to avoid rejection, due to the fear of "*not being wanted*" (Alysha). This suggested that young women regarded their intimate relationship opportunities as limited and not to be wasted. These adopted reactive relationships scripts reflect that young men receive greater benefits from young intimate relationships, as young

women manage their own emotions to respond to their intimate relationship in a socially desirable manner.

Several participants described the ‘open’ and ‘trusting’ nature of young women; in particular, their need to discuss their feelings, problems and relationship quandaries, reflecting their attribution of their behaviour to innate biology. There was also a sense that young women lose their inhibitions and talk more openly about their emotions in particular circumstances, “*We [girls] mostly talk about our feelings when we are drunk and we push the confidence level*” (Becky), whilst “*Boys are less emotional, tend to keep it together a bit more*” (Becky). This stereotype of how young men and young women feel, and ultimately how ‘emotional’ they act, was identified as a factor influencing their gender performance. It appeared that framing their intimate relationships within these traditional scripts re-affirmed their expectations, essentially providing a degree of stability. The perception of the ‘openness’ of young women and the restraint of ‘*keep[ing] it together*’ of young men was generally seen as complementary within a relationship. The implications are that these forms of hegemonic expectations reproduce the acceptable level of emotion that can be expressed by both genders. Some of the young women drew upon internalised gendered stereotypes, in order to reproduce, rather than challenge, damaging norms that often underpinned abusive behaviour within their intimate relationships. The implications of these statements is that participants referred to essentialist notions of young men’s natural desire to be dominant, controlling and sexual. The focus was on sexual conquests, with the aim of boasting and “*be[ing] big-headed about things they had done[sexual]*” and describe; “*I did this and that with her*” (Lowri). This boasting trait again was naturalised as a male desire, with young women described as “*not want[ing] to say*” (Lowri) and being more private about their sexual relationships and desires. The young women reported different gendered patterns of talking about intimacy, with young men perceived as talking openly about sex, whilst young women talked about their desires to be wanted. Even within long-term relationships it was implied that the boundary around secrecy and privacy changed with time, “*After a while he didn’t seem to care who he told [that they had sex]. He told his friends*” (Chloe).

The young women within this research wanted a relationship with older boys, at least two years older, with young men noted in contrast as preferring girls younger than themselves. Their preferences mirror the patterns of young intimate relationships documented in Barter et al (2009). Several participants described the ideal relationship as the image exemplified by romantic films.

Girls are more focused on romantic films and lots of films say that this is the expectations and this is what happens in society. Boys don't really watch films, they don't like them, they like stuff more like video games and things that aren't true, whilst girls get a fixed view on what's OK and expected in relationships (Chloe)

Whilst the depictions within video games was seen as unrealistic, in contrast, the ideals within romantic films were normalised and related more to reality. Chloe articulates a key difference between films and video games, that girls are more aligned to the reality of relationships and learn the expected norms from romantic film. She describes that girls get a 'fixed view' of what's deemed as 'OK' in relationships from the 'romance' of films, which she felt was the 'truth' of relationship expectations. There was a general sense that being 'soppy' was good, but that this was a female attribute,

Just tell me how he feels, which is nice, because guys don't normally like to do that a lot but, yeah, he likes telling me what he's feeling. And I'm not as soppy as he is. So it's sort of like, normally the girl is quite soppy, but I'm not as soppy, but I will... when I'm feeling like it, I'll share. (Becky).

Becky described how her boyfriend's behaviour is different, 'which is nice' and demonstrates how he is open to share his emotions and relinquish a degree of his power as part of this role reversal. Even though Becky's relationship did not follow the 'emotional' expectations she describes, she does not question this norm, rather she draws on essential beliefs that 'normally the girl is quite soppy' to reinforce this norm.

Participants described the expectation by both parties that young men would pay for 'stuff' on their first date; in particular, the expected norm of paying for dinner, which reflects the view that a good date is measured by the fulfilment of the expectation that the man pays to maintain this control. Most of the young women stated that they did not go on more formal/structured dates until their relationships were more established and had therefore progressed beyond the 'cop off' and flirtation stage to the 'exclusivity' stage. However, there were dissenting voices illustrating that they felt it was only fair to 'split the bill' or 'go Dutch'. There was an implication that "girls shouldn't expect to be treated" (Chloe), illustrating a view that both blames and distances herself from the perceptions of 'girls'.

"We shared the bill. He offered initially that he would pay, he brought his card and I brought money. I felt that we should share it. He paid with his card and then I gave him money. That was really important as I wanted to share things as you should do in a relationship. I didn't want to feel as if I was being treated" (Chloe).

Despite the fact that the bill was shared, Chloe described that she gave him the money

afterwards, portraying that at the point of payment he performed his masculine role in front of the restaurant staff by performing and ‘managing the impression’ of himself as the sole financial provider. The requirement of ‘fairness’ was seen as a need to be fair towards their male counterparts rather than the fairness of promoting their equal position. There was also a sense that women wanted men to pay for them.

“Do you think that young women and young men play different roles within an intimate relationship?(Interviewer)

“Definitely, because I think guys like to be more masculine and they like to pay for things and girls tend to just, oh, if you want to pay for things, pay for it, kind of thing. But, in mine, he does do a lot of the paying, but I will, I’ll try and contribute, but he’ll go, no, I prefer to pay myself. But, yeah, I think there is a bit of a difference, because girls tend to look after the guys more because they tend to need looking after, but guys tend to do more of the, like, sort of masculine side of things”.(Becky)

Becky described how within their relationship their gendered roles are performed, specifically the need for women to be caregivers and males to be the provider. Becky positions the adoption of a masculine role in a complementary manner or as a foil to her perceived need of women to ‘look after’ or care for ‘guys’.

Across the relationship narratives, the meaning attached to this payment expectation was focused on chivalry; however, this changed as the relationship progressed with a greater financial expectation then placed on young women. Some narratives offered a degree of resistance to discourses of heteronormative relationships, with dissenting voices questioning the undue pressure on young men to pay. These dissenting voices, primarily from those young women with limited direct relationship experience, focused on the importance of establishing egalitarian relationships.

6.2.3 Relationship Progression and Courtship Norms

There was evidence of engagement in established courtship rituals, which appeared re-shaped by the ever-dominant presence of social media. Indeed, courtship rituals as a whole appeared to take place on a virtual platform, with the use of TINDER²², Facebook, Snapchat and messaging (both instant and text messages) prevalent and taking precedence over face-to-face contact. The first question in the interview schedule focused on how participants defined an intimate relationship, and whether they were ‘going out’ with anyone at the moment. Despite the consensus that an intimate relationship equated to ‘going out’, there was no consensus on when a relationship became intimate and when it

²² Tinder is a location-based dating app that allows users to communicate with each other.

was 'going out'. Three interesting themes emerged: firstly, the challenge of defining 'going out'; secondly, the use of similar language when defining 'going out' and thirdly, the urgency to discuss their intimate relationships with reference to sex rather than in light of the progression of their relationship and the stages of 'going out'. That is, the importance of their intimate relationships was measured with reference to sexual intimacy, which was seen as a key component to the definition of the seriousness of a relationship. There was a general ambiguity as to what actually constituted sexual intimacy, with particular behaviours outside this definition (kissing, touching), while other actions were conceptualised as 'sex' (intercourse). It also appeared that the degree of intimacy, emotions and the regularity of sex factored in whether the sexual contact could be defined as part of an intimate relationship.

The formation of a 'couple' and a 'relationship' was based on its length, publicity and social identity of both individuals as a 'couple'. Intimate relationships were automatically assumed by the participants to be within the framework of heterosexuality. Ultimately, the narratives revealed the young men as formulating the pace, boundaries and expectations of the relationship. However, coercion also played a key role, with young women describing circumstances of overt and explicitly sexual coercion. Sexual pressure was expressed as intensifying with age, in particular for young men, with this pressure often excused and nominated as the factor influencing the male sexual priority within intimate relationships. Young men were described as having to 'live up' to the expectation to want to have sex, to want to have it all the time; with the possibility of leaving school as a virgin ridiculed by their peers.

'I know boys who are desperate to lose their virginity.. I have a male friend who is desperate to lose his virginity and he has said that he wants to lose it before he leaves school. His friends have slept with more than one girl; society puts more pressure on boys to have sex' (Grug)

The desperation and pressure to have sex was normalised as the expected masculine role, while this perceived male sexual drive was not seen as having the potential to translate into manipulation, pressure or sexual coercion. The pressure on young men to perform was also visible, as there was a sense of the gendered and heteronormative expectation, "you're gay if you don't have an interest in sex" (Chloe).

The 'check and balance' on relationship status and progression was gendered, primarily that the young women checked the status; specifically, if the relationship was established and monogamous, as this was a "typical girl thing" (Alyesha). This status check was carefully planned, as "boys feel trapped in relationships as they're laid back...I don't like

to nag him [the guy she is meeting up with to have sex], *it's kinda annoying*" (Glesni). Additionally, this was packaged in a manner which further drew on traditional gendered discourses by explicitly noting that boys and girls played a different role in intimate relationships, with young men wanting and needing the freedom to go out more. There was a 'mixed' response initially to the planning of activities within relationships, with a few explicit answers that their boyfriends led on the planning front as "*he likes planning, so he decides*" (Becky). Becky frames the role of planning their activities within a narrative of choice as individual decisions, rather than a gendered or naturalised issue. This reveals, that young men tend to control progression within their intimate relationships; specifically, due to the interpersonal power differences between men and women.

On the surface it appeared that boys were more 'laid back' and therefore activities were negotiable, when unpicking further it became apparent that this negotiable space was limited by "*his mood*" ('his mood' is a theme discussed further in section 6.4.2). Glesni also described that; "*Sometimes I want more, but he's made it clear that he doesn't want more. He decides what we do*". The 'more' for Glesni here referred to her wish to have a relationship with an older young man she had been 'seeing'. Following her separation from her older boyfriend, a few months later Glesni began seeing her older ex-boyfriend again and described how a pattern had been established that he would ring her when he wanted sex. Her friends were unaware that she started to 'see' this particular young man again, which essentially meant that he would phone her when he wanted to meet up to have sex. She would subsequently see him at parties where he would ignore her and she felt as if she became '*invisible*'. This pattern was accepted, despite her wish to have a stable relationship beyond casual sex, with his behaviour excused by Glesni as "*boys find it negative to stick with one girl*", and that stereotypically "*boys are 'not bothered'*". There was a general overall sense that "*boys were more laid back*", with girls seen as the drivers to progress relations towards an established relationship status. As a result, Glesni accepted the routine of being used for casual sex, despite her wish to rekindle a stable relationship with her ex-boyfriend. This illustrates how young people's choices are limited by their gender, lack of autonomy and power within their intimate relationships.

Delyth described how the progression of her relationship was dictated by her boyfriend, with his request that their relationship remained 'secret', as he had previously been in a relationship with her friend. This led to verbal arguments and her reaction needed to be '*reserved*' to prevent the situation becoming '*nasty*', but despite her reservation she would receive a barrage of abusive text messages. This was in direct response to her efforts of

establishing a public status to their relationship. Delyth described that she was not in a position to challenge his behaviour until he calmed down, often days after the initial argument. Despite this, she justified his actions, as he was being considerate and caring towards her friend's position as his ex-girlfriend, despite her feelings of being placed as '*second best*'. This position was validated when she discovered that he had been seeing his ex-girlfriend, her friend, which ruined her friendship.

Mostly, the young women indicated that the progression of their relationship was largely controlled by their boyfriends. Furthermore, as indicated from the above discussion, this behaviour was located within a framework of justification and naturalisation of the male role, rather than as controlling behaviour. Young women did not express any desire to take more of an active role in determining the progress of their intimate relationships. This was because seeming to be keen could have negative implications, such as rejection; '*they won't want you*' (Alysha) or '*being used for sex*' (Michelle). Young men's desire for an exclusive relationship or any degree of commitment was seen as ambivalent, to say the least. When a degree of commitment was offered, this often crossed the boundary to become controlling and oppressive. There were examples of more balanced relationships; "*we spend time together, but it tends to be around friends and our sporty stuff*" (Claire).

In several relationships, the pace of progression appeared linked to the desire and ability of the young men to have sex with their girlfriends/prospective girlfriends. This often resulted in shame, disappointment and potential significant consequences for the young women, as illustrated in further detail in section 6.4.1. There was a general essentialist belief that young men naturally take the lead regarding particular relationship developments, so that they can 'do gender' and perform their masculine role. There were also evident social sanctions for non-conformation with the expected gendered scripts, such as the process of 'unfriending' or being 'uninviting' from social events. Most of the peer discussion surrounded young men, relationship and sex, and those not engaging in this behaviour were excluded. As Claire describes: "*You want to be part of the conversation; you don't have anything to talk about if you haven't had sex. We are a group of 12 friends; 10 of the 12 have had sex and half of our group are in a relationship*". The direct consequence of non-conforming was also linked to control, rejection and the feeling of 'being left on the shelf'. There was evidence across the interviews of a degree of discussion and negotiation around the timing of first sexual contact. In all cases, discussions on first sexual contact were initiated by boyfriends, with their timetable and outcomes prioritised.

Those young women who had no, or limited, experience of intimate relationships reflected on and appeared critical of those who conformed to expected gendered norms. The younger women within the sample who did not have relationship experience appeared more reflective than those within their year group who did in fact have relationship experience. They also appeared less tolerant of the non-consensual circulation of social media images and unwanted rating of body parts. Collette commented, “*Personally, I wouldn’t have a relationship with a boy who mails pictures. It’s more about pictures these days*”. Julie was discouraged from entering an intimate relationship after witnessing her sister’s relationship. Her sister, who is older, was in a long-term relationship and had two children. They had moved to another part of the UK and she suffered significant verbal, emotional and physical abuse, resulting in formal court proceedings. Julie described how he would get angry really fast and was frequently angry with them as a family; in particular, when they spoke Welsh. He would refuse to allow her to return home and isolated her from her family and friends. She described how their family had significant concerns about her sister, but continued to be unaware of the full extent of the abuse she suffered, and had felt powerless to intervene. Julie acknowledged the abuse suffered by her sister and felt that witnessing the impact of this abuse on her sister and her family as a whole has made her wary of having an intimate relationship in the future. As such, Julie described her limited relationship experience, and reiterates Glesni’s view that ‘*Boys find it negative that they have to stick with one girl*’.

6.2.4 The Idea of ‘Love’

Love was seen as an important aspect of young people’s intimate relationships, which was generally seen as part of a romantic relationship rather than linked to infatuation, passion or commitment. When discussing their wishes for their relationships, love and their desire to be loved featured heavily as part of their narrative. Collette explained that her ideal person would be “*somebody that makes me feel loved, cares for me and makes me feel special*”, with Becky stating that she felt that “*honesty and love*” were required together as within a relationship you needed to “*actually love someone*”. The feeling of being loved in a relationship was associated with happiness, feeling good, being cared for and ‘belonging’.

Some of the young women held idealistic notions of ‘love’. For example, Bella explained that when she first met a boy she had been talking to via social media, they hugged and they both then said that they ‘loved’ each other. She explained that they repeated this when they met on the second occasion and that her boyfriend initiated the ‘hug’ which she

felt was 'cute'. Glain explained that some of her friends in school just want a boyfriend/girlfriend and as a result do not think about 'true love' as they think about being in a relationship as a popularity thing. Jennifer explained that whilst her boyfriend said 'I love you' he didn't generally show affection,

How does he show affection, then? (Interviewer)

He's not really like that; he doesn't really show how... he's not really a loving person, really. He says he loves you and stuff, but he doesn't really show it; he's not a very clingy person. (Jennifer).

The notion of 'love' was also linked to the progression of relationships, which was associated with exclusivity and a long-term, committed relationship. There was also a sense that saying 'I love you' is important and should not be used flippantly.

What do you think is the key thing that makes the 'kind of' seeing someone to a relationship difference? What's the key difference between both? (Interviewer)

It's when they say, I love you. I think that's a big thing. I think it's overused these days. Like, people say, oh, I love you, I love you too, but I think your feelings mean something (Aleysha)

So if you guys were to tell each other in the next few weeks now, that you loved each other, would that then promote it to the status of a relationship? (Interviewer)

I don't know. I think it's all really early stages. We've not got... we do know each other, but we don't know each other as much as I want to. (Aleysha)

So it's time, as well. (Interviewer)

Bonnie described how she had embraced her boyfriend's life, fallen in love with him, his daughter and his dog.

So if he does show affection at any time, would it be cuddling or kissing or...? (Interviewer)

Yeah. No-one else has ever meant that much to me, either. And I've never fallen in love with somebody's dog before. And do you know what, after him, as well; I'm not going for a boy with a dog. I'm not doing that again. No. (Bonnie).

Bonnie goes on to explain how she felt when she argued with her boyfriend and they separated for a couple of weeks and how much she missed his dog!

Horrible. It was really horrible, okay? Because then he was like, oh, yeah, you can still see the dog and that, okay, and my mate, he was watching so I went there to see the dog, yeah, and then, okay, he turns up on the cob and I was like, oh, my God, what are you doing here? I'm like pissed off with him, like, why have you turned up here? And he was looking proper cute in his jeans that I love him wearing and

everything, and it was like, oh, this is horrible, yeah. The boy I love standing, like, right there. And I was like, I can't do anything. It's like ahhh. It's okay. It's all good now.

The idea of love was also discussed when some of the young women were discussing prevention education. Bonnie explains what she would advise those young women who are in an unhealthy relationship, but believe that they love their boyfriend;

I don't know, I'd just talk to the kids and that, yeah. And then just basically tell them what's not right and what's not normal and that. Just like, if this ever happens, the signs of stuff, and if them signs are there you've just got to... it doesn't matter how much you think you love him, just got to kick him, or you're just going to stay with him and it's going to be really, really, really bad and you're just going to be like....

The importance of leaving an unhealthy relationship was highlighted irrespective of any feelings of love; however, this did not necessarily translate into practice when participants described their intimate relationship experiences, as illustrated in the discussion in themes two and three of this chapter.

6.3 THEME TWO: The Double Standards of Sexuality

The findings discussed within this section develop this theme by exploring the role of these harmful norms in perpetuating the idea of a sexual 'double standard'. This theme explores young women's narratives about their sexuality and the dominant perceptions about gendered sexually-appropriate behaviours.

6.3.1 Sexual Double Standards: Sluts, Slags, Whores, Harlots

Pervasive 'double standards' exist in relation to girls' and boys' sexual activity, which function as a dichotomy for young women of angelic femininity and the stigmatised sexual slut/slag/whore; illustrating the precarious nature of their sexual reputation, in sharp contrast to young men's laddish/sexual hero role. Claire described that,

'It's easier for boys to sleep around. They get called a 'lad', girls get called 'sluts'. Girls get a 'bad name'- slag. But she's not like that [her friend], she was really into this guy, she was called a slag by the boys in our year and in the year above [after Claire's friend had slept with her boyfriend]'

There was also a general distaste if young men went to extremes and demonstrated overt 'vulgar' or sexual behaviour. Elen explained that her boyfriend's 'vulgar behaviour' translated into his routine reference of her as a "slag or harlot", which would be on a daily basis, in particular when they argued or he became jealous. She used language (vulgar) that minimises his behaviour of using words to verbally abuse, degrade and humiliate her,

which she did not recognise as abusive behaviour, despite the fact that she was reflecting on their relationship which had ended due to his abusive behaviour.

Glesni describes that, *'Boys and girls play a different role in relationships cos boys want to go out more and they feel trapped in relationships'*. Across the young women's narratives there was a general reinforcement of the male sexual drive discourse, that men have an inherent and natural sex drive, whilst they generally described themselves as passive and lacking desire. Whilst the young women wanted a relationship, the relationships described functioned as a 'means to an end' for the young men, specifically their desire to have sex. Ceri describes her view that boys have *'more pressure to 'do things' [have sex] rather than being in a relationship. The sexual experience is more important for boys (Ceri)*. When the advances of a boyfriend are openly rejected and he has to follow her, the judgement continues to fall on the girlfriend as illustrated;

'One boy acts like a chauffeur and follows her [his girlfriend] around. She treats him badly when he tries to show affection, she physically pushes him away when he tries to put his hands round her waist. He is like a dog following her. When they separated after a week, she was talking to someone else' (Glain).

Glain judges this young woman for demonstrating assertive behaviour and emotional distance within her relationship.

The 'doing' of sex for young women ignites a web of controversy and dilemma, often placing them in an impossible position. The young women demonstrated both a challenging and condoning attitude towards the double morality of the differential labelling of young women's and men's expected sexual behaviours. Social norms of gender and respectability limit the role of young women, in particular around their sexual desires. This also places young men in an impossible pressurised position of the 'laddish' sexual predator always wanting and available to have sex. Aleysha described the dilemma, *'If you don't have sex with them, they won't want you'*, she described that she had been open to have sex and now felt that *'she didn't respect herself then'*, but that *'When you say 'no', they say 'fuck off then if you're not going to do that'* and went on to note that she now realises that *'sex means a lot, but for some boys it's not, it's just a shag'*. This dilemma has far-reaching concerns for young people's well-being. The 'emotional bracketing' coding in the transcripts reflect that Aleysha was 'matter of fact' when discussing her experiences, with her tone of voice becoming harsh and her body language closed as she normalised this form of behaviour. Young women's sexual role is limited by the ingrained notion of young women as sexual beings synonymous with being a slut/slag/whore. As

Glain described,

So, if a girl has a boyfriend she's called a slut? (Interviewer)

Yes, and when she doesn't have one. I was walking with my friends and then the said- 'look at these big sluts'. (Glain)

When you were walking on the street? (Interviewer)

When they are alone, it's OK; when boys are in a big group- they call us slut. (Glain)

When does it happen? (Interviewer)

Every Friday cos there lots on the street, they'll say, look at the little slut, the minger. I just think, OK, if that's what you want to say! (Glain)

Will they say anything about the body? (Interviewer)

Yes, but people think I'm thin, so I'm OK. People don't really say anything about me cos they have respect for me-yes! Well, hopefully! (Glain)

Why do you think you have this respect? (Interviewer)

Cos I haven't done anything not to have it. I'm never out, well I am, but I don't drink. I have a job; I work hard and I'm nice with everyone. There's lots of people they hate each other. I hate some people but I'm still nice to them. (Glain)

So, you think that's important to get respect. Who are these boys? (Interviewer)

They are about year or two less than me; they say sluts, minger and other words just out of the blue. (Glain)

This example demonstrates that sexual harassment is driven by cultural stereotypes about gender and sexuality that reinforce imbalanced power relationships. For the young women, the name-calling was also a norm within their intimate relationships;

My friends didn't like him cos he would call me names like 'slag'. He would call me a 'slag' and I would swear at him. The arguments would start when he would come up to me and accuse me of things, but I would argue back. He would try to show that I was the 'bad one'- 'why have you said that we have done this and that' or 'why are you meeting with the lads' (Lowri).

This verbal abuse was naturalised as part of the jealous male role, was often played out within public spaces, primarily the school, and often attempted to discredit the perceived actions of their girlfriends. Elen described that her long-term boyfriend would '*call me a 'slag/harlot'I felt low, I lost my confidence, I didn't know how to finish things*'. Often, the emotional and verbal abuse escalated further, with the threat of physical harm evident, and resulted in a negative impact on the young women's well-being.

Young women portray themselves in a sexualised manner on social media, which often

results in negative consequences. A Year nine pupil in one school sent a video clip of herself masturbating via Facebook to another pupil; she has not intended that this video would then be shared with her peers and across her local community. As this video was sent via Facebook rather than Snapchat, the clip was saved and subsequently circulated to the whole school community without her consent. As a result, she was labelled a ‘slag’ in the school and indeed across the community and ostracised; described as now ‘having no-one’. Only one research participant empathised with her position by realising that this had ‘affected her’ as ‘*the girls in year 10 are like cats...they won’t let it go, they are worse than the boys*’ (Mair). Therefore, she was judged harshly by the majority of her female peers for acting contrary to the expected norms and expressing her female desires. The version(s) of this story shaped the moral and sexual landscape of the school for the pupils, shaping all social aspects of student conversations. This was explicitly exposed when she was the only young woman in her year group not to participate in the questionnaire stage of this research. Interestingly, these observations were also shared by participants who did not have any previous or current intimate relationship experience.

“A year nine girl sent a video of herself via Facebook, someone saved it and then circulated the video, she was masturbating in the video. She was called a ‘slut’, she was upset, but also bragging about it....No one cares if a boy does that [masturbating] cos a video of a boy masturbating was also sent round the school, he didn’t come to school for a week and then it was forgotten, but with this girl it went on for a long time” (Julie)

Alexis described another event:-

“There have been a couple of incidents in the school regarding inappropriate photos. There was a Year 9 incident and a big argument in the hallway. A girl from year 9 had photos of a year 11 girl on her phone. People shouted and had a go at the year 9 girl. The teachers’ didn’t interfere for quite a long time. The girls were called slags. It wouldn’t have lasted for such a long time if it was a boy, in particular a well respected boy”.

And yet another version by Mair:-

“A year 10 girl shared photos with everyone, everyone turned against her and called her a slag, she has no one, she sits on her own. She does with people, but they aren’t real with her. I would say that this has affected her. Everything’s forgotten with boys.”.

There was a sense of panic around this young woman’s overt sexual action, resulting in her stigmatization by her peers and the wider community. Indeed, the moral debate and the panic had arisen from the knowledge that she masturbated and dared to explore sexual pleasure. Conversely, similar behaviour by a young man was described as ‘ancient history’

and he was then a 'bit of a legend'. The labels of 'slag', 'slut' or 'whore' were endured as a form of misery by this young woman and exercised through the social mechanisms of reputation. She was still unable to redeem herself months after the incident, indeed the incident was still a 'hot topic' at the end of my fieldwork, nearly a year after the incident. This young woman was subjected to these labels as a symbol of shame, with this shame prolonged by rumours, bravados and mythical stories of overt female sexuality, with the sharing of this rumour used as a form of social currency (Marwick & Boyd, 2014) to build the recognition of some at the expense of this young woman, due to her 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1963) and behaviour contrary to social norms and presumed 'natural' sexual passivity in women. As a result of how she was seen and located by 'others' (as an outsider), she was ostracised, not only by her peers, but also by the wider community. This illustrates how shame and embarrassment promote self-control through a social hierarchy, focused on rewarding those who align their behaviour with gendered social norms.

This young woman's behaviour and identity attracted moral opposition, as her behaviour was contrary to the ritual order of social interaction (Goffman, 1959). Managing this stigmatisation required emotion work. This story symbolised the young woman as a shameful figure, to be ridiculed and avoided, with the similar incident of the young man used as a foil to illustrate her desperate position. The young man's sexual exploits were accepted as a 'joke' and a positive demonstration of his sexuality. Whilst his actions were naturalised (*boys will be boys*), her actions were seen as shameful. The power of these rumours and insults increased as the social consequences of such labelling became apparent, highlighting the risk for young women when demonstrating their sexual desires. I would argue that her shaming was a reaction to her action of demonstration of sexual power, rather than the sexual act itself, and the subsequent attempts of her peers to control her power to limit her 'doing' of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The teachers played a distant or invisible role in both stories, despite their visibility in the formation of the school's sexual culture. This example provides insight into rumour-spreading as form of sexualised bullying, the gatekeeping of gender norms and how they contribute to the constructions of femininity and sexuality when young women demonstrate what is perceived as unacceptable sexual behaviour.

Gender differences are partly attributed to the persistence of a gendered double standard in dominant discourses of social media and young relationships. For example, it is young women who continue to be shamed and judged for engaging in sexting practices in circumstances where sexting is misused or misjudged. The role of gossip functioned as a

tool for controlling behaviour and providing these young women with negative feedback on her behaviour. As this example illustrates, the violation of established gendered norms of sexuality resulted in social control through punishment in the form of isolation and bullying. There is a continued pressure on young women be sexually active in order to please young men, and only within particular scenarios, either the ‘slut’ of the threesome or as part of a long term intimate relationship, with the ‘slag’ label ‘stamped on’ for several reasons. Even this latter scenario was often questioned; “*Girls call other girls ‘slags’ as well just because she’s slept with someone, when’s she’s not a slag, even if she’s in a relationship*” (Grug). However, young women also monitor the behaviour of their peers to reinforce their own status, as Mair described how she was often the unwilling bystander to rumour spreading as the girls are “*much worse than the boys*”. Mair felt that this ‘*watchful eye*’ is to form the distinction between those who are subtle/get it right and those who are sexual/get it wrong. Young women who are ‘up for sex’ were branded with a myriad of derogatory labels in an aim to underline the consequences of stepping outside their expected role. Even the female sex role within relationships was demonstrated as a target of criticism, essentially reflecting the sexual power of young men and the submissive role of young women as sexual beings. The young women who wanted sex, or demonstrated their overt sexual desires outside the remit of a relationship, were also shamed into hiding their desires, which is in sharp contrast to the ‘laddish’ Facebook pages, which were used to humiliate young women, circulate photos and stories and rate young women based on their physical appearance. The young women who did participate in sex or demonstrated a desire for sex were often openly humiliated.

The available gendered script is static and places expectations on young people to conform to particular unrealistic sexual ideals. The pressures of conforming to masculine expectations was acknowledged and often illustrated to justify their boyfriend’s behaviours, ‘*They want to show they’re cool, and don’t want to be left out with their mates*’ (Lowri). Young men were described as purely having a sexual motive, and wanting to know if young women “*are good in bed*” or “*if you will do certain things [sexual]*” (Glain), and the general expectation that “*women need to do more sexually [sex acts]*” (Jennifer). In Jennifer’s case, she had been with her boyfriend for over a year and explained that their relationship had become acrimonious, describing that there was “*quite a lot of arguing...everything builds up...if he’s in a mood*”. She described that a key trigger for their arguments was his open discussion with his friends about their sex life, the influence of porn on their relationship and, in particular, his request to have a threesome,

which made her feel that “*basically, I’ve got to do what makes him happy*”. This all demonstrated his power to degrade and humiliate her, but also illustrated her growing understanding of this unhealthy practice and her growing willingness to challenge his behaviour.

Jennifer described that her boyfriend ‘*sees how girls are in these films [porn films] and is influenced by it. They get paid, I’m not and I’m not doing everything. Boys naturally want threesomes, why?*’. Jennifer explained the pressure she felt to please her boyfriend by doing ‘*more sexually*’, which he then discussed in the school common room with his friends. Her boyfriend’s wish to have a threesome is naturalised and excused as part of his biological sexual desire. The emotion work for Jennifer was apparent; specifically, how she attempted to hide her disgust and indeed her choice not to have a threesome with her boyfriend. She felt trapped by her limited negotiation space and the apparent demand to prioritise her boyfriend’s desires, which he openly discussed with their peers. Her initial unwanted feelings of disgust had been ‘managed’ and suppressed during the course of this relationship. However, she was now revealing her wish to end this relationship and therefore felt more able to evoke her true feelings, which had increased her arguments with her boyfriend. Despite this increase in arguments, Jennifer was continuing to challenge her boyfriend’s demands and was working to prioritise her desires. By doing so, she also could not envisage a future for this relationship. Jennifer on the one hand describes how she maintains her girlfriend role within the ‘open’ common room chat about her sex life, whilst on a private level has begun to challenge her boyfriend’s lack of respect for her privacy. Goffman’s (1963) concept of the performance of the self, specifically how characters play a role to satisfy the audience, assists in understanding Jennifer’s performance and demonstration of her relationships in front of their peers, despite the fact that she could voice her concerns and feelings with a close friend, and during the research interview, she lacked the space and power to challenge his behaviour in front of their peers. For the time being, she is maintaining her ‘facework’ (Goffman, 1955).

Jennifer distanced herself from the women portrayed in these films ‘*as they get paid*’, while naturalising his apparent sexual desire to have a threesome. She also separates herself from sex workers who are paid to feign desire and sexual pleasure to conform to male expectations. She expressed her concerns regarding the influence of pornography on her boyfriend’s expectations; implicit in this is the recognition of porn as a tool to satisfy male needs and the submission of women. She linked her boyfriend’s consumption of porn to her belief that boys/young men want threesomes, or sex with multiple partners at the

same time. She was concerned about the influence of porn on her boyfriend and their relationship status; in particular, the portrayal of women and the connotations of this objectification on his expectations on her, due to this portrayal of sex. Jennifer reflected that she felt the influence of porn was shameful and degrading, basically emulating acts that she would not want to do. This aligns research that more young men than young women want to intentionally access and emulate pornography (Martellozzo et al., 2016), as they feel less shame towards it and do not acknowledge that it is degrading to women (Johansson & Hammaren, 2007).

In summary, this discussion contributes to the existing debates on the dominant discourses about female sexuality, which ultimately contributes to the structural foundation that supports the existence of harmful behaviour within young intimate relationships. This exploration of this theme has demonstrated the limited power young women have with reference to their sexuality within their intimate relationships.

6.4 THEME THREE: The Nature and Patterns of Abuse

This theme explores the ways in which the participants constructed and understood the abuse and violence they witnessed and experienced. The discussion focuses on identifying the context in which young women recounted experiences of abuse within their intimate relationships, with particular attention given to the role of social media and coercive control, rather than a binary focus on whether abuse is justified or seen as unacceptable behaviour.

The interview data indicated that the most common form of abuse experienced by the sample group was emotional harm. For this purpose, emotional abuse is defined as including a continuum of behaviour perceived as abusive and harmful, as well as verbal abuse and threatening and controlling behaviour. As with similar research, some young women described mutually-occurring emotional abuse (Barter et al, 2009; Barter et al, 2015). However, the nature and impact of the emotional abuse perpetrated and experienced by young women was different and more severe than their boyfriends'. Whilst there are examples within this research of emotional abuse mutually occurring, in contrast to previous research (Barter et al, 2009) which illustrated that emotional abuse by young women was perpetrated without being a response to their boyfriend's violence or abuse, the young women within this research primarily spoke of their emotional and verbal abuse as reactive to their boyfriends' behaviour. Therefore, young men were primarily the instigators of emotional harm within the context of their intimate relationship. Though these conclusions are drawn based on interviews with young women, research

demonstrates that young men overestimate the degree of abuse they experience as part of their intimate relationships (Barter et al, 2009; Lavoie et al, 2000). This could have been due to the nature of this sample, as young women are the group most at risk of this form of abuse, and the fact that the focus of this research was on creating a female-only space to discuss experiences.

6.4.1 Gender Norms, Sexualisation and Coercion

Schools conform to established and reinforced gender stereotypes, through sexist attitudes and traditional curriculum content. Participants described negotiating their identity within educational settings which actively restricted their identity, behaviour, physical choice and liberty. For example, as my research diary reflects, one school promoted the use of separate gyms, segregated by gender, and gym lessons for boys and girls, which went to the extent of essentially excluding all young women from cross country as they would not want to take part or '*ruin their hair*'. Not only does this assume that the primary focus for young women is their appearance, it also labels young women as one generic group. The concept of 'schooling sexualities' (Epstein & Johnson, 1998) is central here, as schools are sexualised spaces where identities are (re)produced (Nayak & Kehily, 2008) and typically driven by heteronormative and peer socialisation, negotiated through various cultural, educational and leisure forums.

The young women's narratives revealed a pattern of disparaging remarks and harassment which further served to control their behaviour, along with the message that 'subtly' performing their feminine role was the solution to avoiding judgement and abuse as '*image and peer pressure is a chain*' (Glain). For example, Glain described the harassment experienced by her and her friends, including catcalling and insults focused on body image; '*If you're thin you're OK, if you're not, they call you a pig*' and insults based on appearance, in particular '*orange makeup*' [foundation makeup]. The wearing of certain make-up was seen as overt sexual behaviour, outside the boundaries of what was judged as decent femininity. Glain and Grug described the norm of teachers monitoring make-up and attending classrooms with a wet wipe to remove make-up judged as outside the school or accepted standards. Their physicality was associated with sexuality, with dress standards and make-up monitored, ensuring that young women remained 'subtle' and that any effort to appear attractive remained 'invisible'. This requirement of subtlety transferred to their narratives of how their appearance and behaviours required restraint in order to avoid overtly presenting their sexuality, which may cause shock, offence or perceived sexual availability. As a result, throughout the interview Glain reiterated how she managed her

behaviour and appearance to maintain her respect, '*I have respect because I haven't done anything*'. Therefore, she restricted her behaviour and felt fearful of engaging in any form of sexual contact outside the remit of a well-established and long-standing intimate relationship. Basically, Glain wanted to explicitly demonstrate her role as a 'good girl', that she placed limits on her behaviour and was comfortable being 'subtle' and conforming to traditional scripts. Glain adopted her own strategy to regulate her behaviour in order to ensure passivity, inhibit asserting herself sexually and deny her sexual agency. Narratives revealed that some of the young women lost respect for themselves and felt that they lost respect from young men following sex, '*I didn't respect myself then... sex means a lot, but for some boys it's not, it's just a shag*' (Aleysha). There is a suggestion that respect is related to sexual actions and peer judgement, illustrating the continued pressure on young women to be vigilant of themselves and others.

Ultimately, young women learn to restrict themselves, specifically with regard to their physical appearance and sexual choices. The narratives illustrated their limited choices and dilemma, either of becoming sexually restrained or overtly sexually active; both polar extremes. There were also examples of young women who selected to be sexually active within their relationships; however, this information was often well established within their peer group. How this information was conceptualised and shared was at the mercy of their peer group or close friends. Their perceived available space was to be passive and preserve their appearance, and essentially their reputation, in a 'subtle' manner; to become invisible and avoid the label of slut/slag, or to openly share their photos, information and sexual experiences. This notion of abstinence was cloaked as being 'subtle', as sexuality and sex were conceptualised as 'dirty' and unhealthy. Those who did select to be 'subtle' were mostly those not actively within relationships, not engaging in social media discussions or invited to attend social events.

There was a sense of urgency in the way the young women sought out acceptance and advice about their sexual actions from me as an independent researcher. My research diary entry highlights a sense of an urgent need for the majority of participants to discuss their sexual experiences on a one-to-one basis within the confidential context of a research interview; in particular, their first sexual experience. In part, this illustrated a lack of space for young women to talk freely and ask advice about their sexuality and sex without the fear of judgement and repercussions. The dichotomy of presenting their body in a 'subtle' manner to avoid judgement and the need to be attractive/desirable, served as a barrier to seeking adult guidance. This also often occurred within the context of unwanted male

attention and harassment. The ethical obligation to preserve their privacy made this a safe place to discuss their experiences and views. Young women modified their behaviour to avoid judgement, whilst they described how young men navigated a position of pressure to overtly expose their sexualised actions. As illustrated by Bonnie, Delyth and Jennifer, ‘Boys are ‘bang, bang, all about sex’ (Bonnie), ‘Guys are legends for having sex, it’s like-let’s see how many girls we can sleep with’ (Jennifer), ‘Girls tend to talk about arguments and boys are more laid back and talk more about who they have slept with, boys are more reserved’ (Delyth). Collette and Lowri describe the gendered pressure and expectations, ‘There’s more pressure on boys to ‘get in there’ cos they just want to ‘do it’ and lose their virginity’ (Collette, 16 years old) and ‘There’s more pressure on girls to have sex. If girls say ‘no’ it causes arguments and if girls continue to say ‘no’, they will breakup with you and find someone’ (Lowri). Whilst young women should remain ‘subtle’, it was seen as a normative expectation that young men would be ‘up for’ sex all the time and would modify their behaviour to ‘get it’.

Participants reflected the importance of privacy of their sexual choices and the repercussions of judgement when information was openly disclosed. Young women are faced with an impossible task of avoiding judgement at both ends of the spectrum, whether they participate in or withdraw from sexual activities.

There were rumours that we’d slept together on New Year’s Eve, he had told a friend. It’s now being shouted across the classroom, the boys do it to me to challenge me, I just laugh it off. It makes me angry, but I try to laugh it off. My friends were shocked. He made the first move, I backed off, but he tried again. We had previously discussed it and said that it would happen, so I thought ‘fair enough’ (Michelle)

Michelle was pressurised to have sex with a young man she wanted a relationship with, and when she thought ‘fair enough’ and had sex with him. He later refused to establish a relationship with her. Michelle’s experience of losing her virginity illustrates limited female agency. The knowledge of their sexual relations was shared around the school, which resulted in derogatory remarks shouted across the classroom, “I just laugh it off. It makes me angry, but I try to laugh it off” (Michelle). Michelle reflects her limited agency and space to challenge these remarks and demonstrate her anger. She therefore resorts to humour in an attempt to brush the comments to one side as a method of pretending that this does not impact on her. As this information became ‘common knowledge’ across the school, her friends became aware, and appeared “shocked” and disappointed by her behaviour. This demonstrates a degree of victim-blaming and a sense of judgement that

Michelle deserved the consequences of her actions, as she had ‘chosen’ to be used for sex, further perpetuating the culture and limited space to challenge this form of behaviour. The commentary and judgement by her friends was focused solely on Michelle’s sexual activity, which is a form of ‘slut shaming’ that labels her choice and behaviour, with no repercussion or focus on the young man’s behaviour.

The internal conflict experienced by participants was evident through their narratives, body language and in the urgent need they conveyed to discuss the acceptability of their decision-making; in particular, regarding their first sexual experience. The often unspoken dilemma of their decision-making process of agreeing or disagreeing to have sex was a key theme weaving throughout their narratives. However, the consequences of their potential refusal to have sex were overtly known and questioned; ‘*What if they don’t like me if I don’t ‘do it?’ (Rhiannon) and ‘When you say ‘no’, they say ‘fuck off then’ if you’re not going to do that’ (Aleysha)*. The consequences of refusing sexual consent were framed in the aggression of the language used. This was further confirmed by the message that ‘*If you don’t have sex with them, they won’t want you’ (Aleysha)*. This rejection and coercion was overtly conveyed by the change in mood and character of their boyfriends as they would either ‘*get in a mood*’ or ‘*sulk*’ if they faced a rejection or a refusal of their sexual advances. Elen’s experience reflects her boyfriend as the instigator, manipulator and the coercer of sexual intercourse:-

He would decide everything. He would make the first move. (Elen)

How did you feel you could respond? (Interviewer)

I was really scared the first time, obviously. With time I just thought, ugh. (Elen)

If you couldn’t be bothered- what would happen? (Interviewer)

He would sulk and then go to sleep. (Elen)

Did you stay over and in the same bedroom? (Interviewer)

My dad was like, oh my god, my mum was OK about it and just thought it would happen anyway at least it’s in his house. (Elen)

Did you feel pressure to have sex with him as you were in the routine of sleeping in his house? (Interviewer)

Yes, I suppose and I didn’t want him to sulk. (Elen)

What would him sulking mean? (Interviewer)

Every time he would sulk, it would make me feel bad, I just wanted to please him. I think that’s why I felt low. If we didn’t have sex, then he would sulk, so we would have sex’ (Elen).

Across a continuum of behaviour, the analysis of Elen’s experience reflects the common

features of emotionally harmful and coercive behaviour; in particular, the unequal power relations within young intimate relationships and the dominance of young women by young men. The overall construction of female sexuality conformed to heterosexual norms of passivity, as the desires of their boyfriends were perceived as paramount, their own desires of secondary importance. For example, Chloe demonstrates her confusion and concern about the potential judgement from her peers, her self-blame of not feeling ready to have sex and primary concern of what she saw as the impact on her boyfriend of not knowing ‘*where he stood*’.

I was resigned to the idea of sex after a period of seven months- ‘do it with the right person’. I was worried what they [her friends] would think...its important to me what they thought ... I had previously said that I wasn’t ready, then said that I was more ready to progress the relationship. The uncertainty meant that he didn’t know where he stood (Chloe)

The fact that she felt ‘resigned’ to have sex reflects that she felt it was a duty to have sex at this time; essentially that as the relationship and time progressed that this was an expectation on her as a girlfriend. Reflections on the research journal notes that Chloe’s body language became closed and guarded as she described how she felt ‘resigned’ to have sex. Chloe also voices the dilemma of pleasing her boyfriend, despite her concern of being judged by her peers, with her wishes and desire secondary to this concern. The consequences of coercion, both subtly and overtly, resulted in participants questioning their self-worth and character if they submitted to both unwanted and wanted advances. This illustrates the requirement of responding positively to male sexual demands, with the sanctions of refusing to respond to their needs well known and rehearsed. The worth of being a good/bad girlfriend was also measured by physical appearance and sexual performance; ‘*Boys look at bums and having boobs and are they [girls] good in bed*’ (Bonnie). Furthermore, participants questioned the uncharted territory of first sexual experiences, ‘taking a step back’ once the realm of sexual activity had been entered, and several perceived norms of young sexual relationships. Young men were, on the surface, seen as sexually confident, ‘*Boys are more confident to discuss sex, girls think more about the consequences, boys think about the ‘moment’*’ (Chloe); whilst Chloe was concerned about whether she had made the right decision to have sex and “*had to take a step back*” after the event and questioned whether once she had sex, did she always have to have sex now? Not only does this illustrate the structural pressures, but also the pressures within relationships and the uncertainty of the boundaries around sex, choice and control. Gender norms formed the bedrock of the young women’s understanding of their sexualisation,

sexual identity and their agency to select when to have sex. The young women's narratives revealed the role of gender as pivotal to young women's understanding of their role within intimate relationships.

6.4.2 Coercive Control & 'His Mood'

As previously outlined, the theoretical position adopted here is a feminist perspective with a focus on structural power inequities based on the unequal social construction of gender that favours masculinity. Therefore, domestic violence and abuse within intimate relationships is explained as the consequence of power and control by men over women due to the wider social, structural and institutional inequities. Coercive control as a form of abuse falls within this definition and is described as a pattern of intimidation, isolation, and control used by men in order to limit women's autonomy, again as a result of structural inequalities (Stark, 2007). Stark discusses the concept of coercive control in relation to freedom and oppression within an analogy of the 'invisible cage'. He describes how movements are policed even when women are attempting to undertake everyday routine tasks in order to limit personal space and choice with the aim of creating complete isolation (p.366). Through the total dominance and emotional control of every aspect of a women's life, they experience their personal life as if they were living in a cage as prisoners (p.199).

As discussed throughout this chapter, the presence of surveillance, restricting movements and limiting decisions, was commonplace. This behaviour triggered other forms of abuse; in particular, verbal abuse, humiliation and sexual coercion. The pattern of control discussed above illustrates a drive towards isolation, focused on limiting social freedom and severing friendships. The influence of 'his mood' in dictating the relationship landscape was evident throughout several of the narratives. The switch in 'his mood' was seen as the indicator of his dissatisfaction with a decision, and the trigger for a limitation to the choices to be made. 'His mood' also changed in response to jealousy and paranoia, and was a sign of increased control in order to limit contact with friends. However, whilst explicitly discussing their acknowledgement of this mood change, and indeed their dislike of its consequences, its impact was minimised by some of the young women and responses were framed as a 'fear of losing them'. This was irrespective of the build-up towards an argument 'if he's in a mood', or the realisation of the reason behind his behaviour. As Michelle explained:

'I wanted to go with my friends on New Year's Eve. I wanted to look at the option of splitting the evening between him and my friends, he 'got in a mood' and said

that he was not happy and placed a sad face on 'my story' on snapchat. I changed my plans with my friends, once he got his own way he was OK'.

In several instances, control was focused on social contact with friends:

'He wouldn't let me go and see my friends, only in the evenings. If I saw them lunchtime, then he would go off in a mood. He expected me to stay with him lunchtimes. My friends would say, 'You need to leave him or you won't have anyone, but I didn't listen, I lost them in the end, but I got them back'. (Lowri)

Again, '*his mood*' played a key part in triggering controlling behaviour and limiting Lowri's movements as if she was within an 'invisible cage' (Stark, 2007). For example, though Claire described her relationship as loving and stable, she portrayed one incident following a change to their relationship routine. She had travelled to another part of Wales with the school and had stayed in accommodation with limited mobile phone reception and Wi-Fi access. As a result, she had been unable to contact her boyfriend, as arranged. The consequence was '*his mood*'; explicitly, a feeling of jealousy and insecurity by her boyfriend, which subsequently triggered a verbal argument, due to her lack of availability and presence on social media. Across the sample, there was a general expectation of being in touch and reporting movements. The consequence of not adhering to this limitation in space and social networks was also evident; in particular, when young women attended social events, contrary to their boyfriend's wishes. This would often result in extended periods of '*mood*', control and surveillance. The availability of social media networks made surveillance practices more overt and accessible. Several participants described how their social media presence would be monitored; in particular, the status and pictures shown on social media threads. However, whilst this form of monitoring would often be undertaken covertly and without their girlfriend's knowledge, the constant text messages and phone calls were a vehicle used to disturb social freedom.

When attending social gatherings or parties by themselves, there was a general description of a specific line of questioning at the pre-party stage, '*Why can't I come?, Who else will be there?, Where's the party?*'. Whilst the party was in full flow they described receiving multiple messages and phone calls and, post-party, one young woman described being questioned by her boyfriend two weeks after the event. The result of going against his wishes was further surveillance via multiple calls/text messages and automatic accusations, '*If I was doing something with my friends I would get loads of missed calls- he would ask, are you with boys?, 'no', 'don't lie to me' (Rhiannon)*'. Jealousy was described as the key trigger for most arguments, with peer groups and friends often taking centre stage. Chloe described how the boys within her year group would often come up to her and place their

arms around her to spite and spark a reaction from her boyfriend, who was a year older. Not only does this illustrate the attitude towards women as items to possess, but also reinforces the notion of striving to be the hegemonic male. The culturally and socially accepted response to this behaviour is to trigger a jealous reaction, and reclaim Chloe in a public manner by performing this specific role. Her boyfriend would get angry and blame her for the explicit behaviour of the young men within her peer group. This was despite request to “*blame them, not me*”. Chloe went on to describe how this behaviour had subsided as her boyfriend “*trusts her now*” and is no longer witness to this behaviour as he had left school.

Aleysa described the power imbalance in her relationship with an older male, perpetuated by their age gap, role and responsibilities. This power differential was further exacerbated by her reaction to his reputation as a serial womaniser. When she went out with her friends, he decided when she returned home, as he would collect her in his car. A rejection of his offer would commence a line of questioning focused on ‘*who’s giving you a lift? Where are you staying then?*’. She felt that this established routine resulted in his power over her social arrangements, her movements and when she returned home. However, she had no control over when he returned home after a night out, and would attempt to address this by staying up all night to await his phone call or his return to stay at her home. Again, this reinforced his position of power, which was justified and naturalised by her belief that ‘*boys want to be in control and they decide*’, with any reaction to his behaviour as a result of her going into ‘*psychotic girlfriend mode*’ and therefore automatic self-blame. His position was reinforced by his reputation as a womaniser, which empowered his status. This further placed her in a difficult position of whether she was rational to withdraw trust. She also felt that if she did not have sex with him, her role within the relationship would become redundant.

The findings align with previous research, which suggests that young people are less likely than adults to recognise emotional harm and control experienced within their intimate relationships (Lavoie et al 2000; Barter et al, 2009; Chung, 2005). Abusive behaviour was less excused by those young women who had left abusive relationships, which aligns to previous findings (Barter et al, 2009). These young women who did acknowledge abusive behaviour understood the consequences of the abuse, resulting in less justification or categorisation of behaviour as permissible. This linked to their subsequent understanding of the impact of a continuum of behaviour, which filtered through all aspects of their offline and online lives, to the detriment of their well-being.

6.4.3 Social Media

This research revealed that the pattern of use of social media evolved with age, with the younger groups using primarily snapchat, with the use of Facebook often substituted for TINDER in time. Sexting was also seen as the norm, and indeed a trend for year nine and ten pupils. However, within established older relationships social media was used as a coercive tool in order to monitor virtual relationships and check online behaviour; for example, the ‘likes’ on Facebook pictures, the change in Facebook relationship status and the practice by young people of ‘blocking’ individuals from their girlfriend/boyfriend’s page.

It was common practice within the schools for groups of young men (GSCE age range) to rate the physical appearance of their female peers on Facebook pages, with these pages often labelled as the ‘LADS’ page, in keeping with laddish behaviour (Phipps & Young, 2015). Also, the use of texting shifted with age, with requests for nudies and sexting a key trend with pupils within the GSCE age range. The practice around requesting ‘nudies’ was highly gendered and coercive. Interestingly, for the young women, responding to nudie requests was permissible, and part of the sexual culture or expectations of the peer group. As illustrated, initiating this behaviour or establishing the boundaries of permissible online sexual relationship was not. This was illustrated by the disgust shared about a young woman who requested nudies from young men and later ‘had fun’ in saving them in a personal folder. However, the idea that young men automatically and randomly send photos of their penises around their peer group was labelled as, ‘*they have no shame; it’s just a boy thing to do*’ (Aleysha). In contrast to the expected norm of sexual restraint offline, young women were required to be visually ‘sexy’ online.

Glain described how she had received a plethora of requests for ‘nudies’ one evening; she felt pressurised, reflecting that young women are often coerced to take a naked selfie or video. She decided to tackle these unwanted requests by first peeling an apple and sending a picture of a ‘naked’ apple. As the requests continued, she took a photo of a bath sponge and declared it as a nudie of ‘*Sponge Bob*’²³. There was a sense of an underlying threat of embarrassment if behaviour contravened social norms, illustrating the social control and expectation that young women collude to sustain their continued subordination of their sexuality. As reflected by Glain, steps had to be taken to modify her behaviour in order to avoid embarrassment and shame, but this was done with a sense of humour to deflect these unwanted requests in a creative manner. This modification ensured the maintenance of

²³ Sponge Bob Square Pants is a cartoon character of a Sponge who lives underwater in a fictional underwater city.

social hierarchies and established power dynamics. Glain demonstrated her own surveillance of her position and behaviour to ensure that she was '*subtle*' and conformed to normative gender standards in order to avoid judgement or an unwanted label. Glain reinforced the '*subtle*' choices *she* makes and the attention she pays to the actions of others when deciding the boundaries of permissible sexual behaviour for herself. This is further reinforced by the lack of discussion within the interviews on female sexual pleasure and desire, illustrating the missing discourse of desire (Fine, 1988).

Not only were there examples of surveillance by checking phone and social media content, but also, again, the reinforcement of social media as a humiliation tool. Examples were also shared of revenge porn being instigated and facilitated by ex-boyfriends; for example, a young woman who cheated on her boyfriend was upset when her ex-boyfriend shared 'nudies' of her on Facebook and Snapchat without her consent. In another case, Glain described how her friend's boyfriend 'leaked' nude photos of his girlfriend/Glain's friend as a result of her choice to have night out with her friends, whom he labelled as 'sluts'. As a consequence, she had to create a new Facebook page. His surveillance subsequently resulted in sexual coercion and his refusal to allow her to leave his house until she had sex with him, at which point her friends intervened and demanded that she left his property with them. As already illustrated in this discussion, a key concern drawn from the data is the general focus of blame and judgement on the young women whose images were circulated without their consent. The gendered nature of this harm is highlighted by the fact that several studies indicate that young men perpetrated this form of abuse more than young women (Walker & Stealth, 2017), with the negative impact on the mental health of survivors of this form of harm of concern (Bates, 2017).

The permission of free access to check your partner's phone was also a contentious issue with young men as described by the participants, with their boyfriends often described as overprotective of their own privacy, but wanting free access to check their girlfriend's phone to monitor their movements; a trend observed in recent research (Baker & Carreno, 2016). There were also examples of this behaviour continuing following the end of the relationship; in particular, on Facebook, where photos would be 'liked' or comments placed on old statuses, which stimulated jealousy. Although this form of behaviour was visible and explicit, young women interviewed discussed their feelings and concerns when they saw a photo/selfie of their boyfriends close to another girl. There was a general view that if you were in a relationship you had to modify your behaviour; in particular, if you were in a photo and it was posted on Facebook. However, the young women's reaction to

these photos/selfies were described as different from their boyfriends', with their overall tendency not to react or say anything for fear of triggering an argument or explicitly sharing their jealous feelings as it was perceived as a sign of insecurity and 'neediness'. These feelings continued to remain hidden as the relationship progressed. As Donna explained; *'With pictures on Facebook....he's more jealous with certain people, but I'm generally jealous with everyone. Before, I would have said something, but now I don't'*. This suggests a broader and gendered view of jealousy, with jealousy naturalised as an entitlement for young men, but a feeling that should not be shared by young women.

6.4.4 Escalation

Arguments were generally normalised as acceptable within intimate relationships; however, a line was drawn when the arguments became physical or threatening, with an acknowledgement that this was unacceptable. There were several examples of boyfriends approaching their girlfriends and shouting abuse close in their face, invading personal space and causing fear, *"He would shout in my face and that would make me feel uncomfortable. But when he said 'sorry', that would mean a lot to me"*. (Lowri). Despite the advice from Lowri's friends that her boyfriend was nasty, she justified his behaviour and was reassured by his constant apologising. This was despite his actions of frequently humiliating her in front of her peers, with examples of explicit verbal abuse within the school grounds during break and lunchtimes. However, peers were often influential in triggering arguments and abusive outbursts,

"He would also accuse me of talking with other boys on social media...I would get upset and stay quiet. At the end of the day he would come up to me and apologise as his friends had said that they had been joking. His friends would get in his head" (Lowri).

The fear and threat of using social media to not only monitor movements, but also to humiliate and punish young women was evident. This overt display of abusive behaviour is contrary to the hidden nature of adult abusive behaviours, indicating a lack of awareness of acceptable behaviours or the need to hide this harmful display. Whilst this may indicate the visibility of verbal abuse in young intimate relationships, it also reflects that young people are socialised in order to display these types of behaviour in the public arena, reflecting the normalisation of verbal and emotional abuse. As a result, the visibility of this behaviour does not appear to function as a protective factor, despite the risks associated with the 'hidden' aspect of abusive behaviours within adult intimate relationships. This aspect requires specific consideration when designing prevention programmes; in particular, the role of peers in identifying abuse and providing suitable support (see chapter seven for

further discussion on this point).

The escalation of controlling and verbal abuse was focused on the physical display of ‘*his mood*’, with his temper escalating with a physical outburst to damage property and objects as illustrated by Bonnie.

How did he generally treat you?(Interviewer)

I don't know. He was alright, yeah. But I know he did lose his temper a lot, yeah.(Bonnie)

If he lost his temper, how would he show that?(Interviewer)

Punching things.(Bonnie)

Just go round punching things? (Interviewer)

Yeah. I just said, what is the point? You're going to regret that in about half an hour, when you've got to clean up all the glass and everything. I wouldn't clean it for him. You made it, you can clean it. (Bonnie)

So he would just get angry, then he'd go round punching things in the house? (Interviewer)

Yeah.(Bonnie)

How would that make you feel?(Interviewer)

I don't know. I just used to laugh at him in my head, yeah. Like, what is the point? You've got a punching bag outside, yeah, go punch that. I'd just laugh at him. (Bonnie)

Did you ever feel uncomfortable?(Interviewer)

When he got mad, yeah. (Bonnie)

What would he do then when you started to feel uncomfortable? (Interviewer)

Just go to a different room and smash there instead.(Bonnie)

There was a sense of ‘calmness’ voiced by the young women placed in these types of circumstances; including an understanding that this form of behaviour was to be expected in certain circumstances. Closer examination would also suggest that this calmness was a lack of control or power to divert the situation or the escalation in behaviour. And the justification and naturalisation of this behaviour:

“He stormed out punching the walls, he has a short behaviour anger thing. He had a bad day at work and I was provoking him. I just thought, ‘what are you doing?’ I've seen it with my older brother, for some girls it would have been more scary, but I've seen it before. You have to meet their needs and their wants” (Aleysha).

Aleysha describes how her boyfriend physically displays his anger and excuses his behaviour as a ‘*short behaviour anger thing*’, ‘*due to his bad day in work*’ and her

perception of self-blame that she was *'provoking him'*. She justifies his behaviour and blames herself, whilst explaining that this is natural male behaviour that she has witnessed with her brother, again reinforcing her belief that this is acceptable and natural male behaviour. Her self-blame extends further to illustrate her coping mechanism when she claims that there is a requirement to *'meet their wants and needs'* and failure to do so therefore has consequences. This resolution of damaging or throwing items was common, and often justified as a male behaviour trait triggered by his mood, temper and tendency to sulk, *'He would throw items....he threw a crutch across the room when I tried to finish things'* (Elen). The notes from the research journal and the 'emotional bracketing' in the transcripts indicates how visibly upset Elen was when she was revisiting the end of this relationship. His physical response to her wish to end their relationship illustrates the tendency for physical violence and abuse to escalate at the end or following the end of an intimate relationship when the woman attempts to sever his control and he attempts to regain his power (Mahoney, 1991).

The shame and stigma of being in a 'bad relationship' is also apparent as, *'I don't know because with most people, if they are in one of them bad relationships, they don't exactly talk about it, no. Just like, yeah, yeah, we're okay.'* (Bonnie). Bonnie illustrates the pressure of the emotion work of managing her emotions to hide her true feelings, due to the norm of 'not talking about it' and the belief of not being believed. Emotional abuse and coercive control resulted in a general negative impact on well-being; in particular, self-confidence, *'I felt alone and stupid'*, (Elen), *'He made me a more nervous person – I was 'in my shell' and more reserved...I'm glad it's over- I'm now a different person now it's finished'* (Delyth). And also the relief when the relationship finally ends and they can reclaim their agency, *'I feel more confident, I'm now the person I was before and I'm more outgoing'* (Delyth). Where a participant was currently involved in an intimate relationship, she tended to be less critical of her relationship in comparison to her past experiences.

The analysis of the young women narratives reveals an epiphany moment leading to the end of their abusive relationships. For example, for Bonnie it was the 'smashing' of items in front of her and then his subsequent disappearance which made her realise that his behaviour was unacceptable. For Elen, it was the persistent name calling and the observation from a new friend that this behaviour was unacceptable. For Lowri, it was the public name calling that resulted in her sharing her concerns with her father who subsequently intervened. However, for some, this symbolic point of change was yet to occur (for example, Aleysa).

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrated how the attitudes voiced by the young women in the survey failed to translate into their own intimate relationships. What was evident instead was a tendency to naturalise and justify sexist and abusive behaviours. What this illustrates is the trend for young women to become the ‘passive’ or ‘reactive’ girlfriend; in particular, when faced with harassment, controlling behaviour and unwanted attention. The presence of gendered norms was damaging for young women in three distinct ways. Firstly, due to the construction of the young women’s propensity to be ‘*emotional*’; secondly, their perceived sexual weakness in contrast to male dominance and desire and thirdly, because of the justification and naturalisation of emotional, abusive and coercive behaviour. If we are to understand the nature and patterns of abuse in teenage relationships, then we must acknowledge how young people construct meanings about their sexual selves, their relationship aspirations, their understanding and attitudes towards ‘good’ and ‘bad’ relationships. The gaps between young women’s expectations and lived experiences was clear. Their attitudes were focused on an ideology of equality, whereas their intimate relationship experiences generally revealed their limited and unequal power base. This indicates the challenges posed by a post-feminist discourses, where narratives and expectations about equalisation and aspirations are far removed from their real positions in intimate relationships. This discourse of equality instead served to minimise the visibility of the abuse for some of the young women who utilised the language of choice and biologically-driven narratives to explain and justify existing relationship inequalities. However, some of the young women were also able to recognise unequal positions, mostly after the end of relationships.

From the relationships described, 83% featured some form of harmful behaviour; however, not all behaviours were identified as ‘harmful’ or abusive. The presence of emotional harm was the most visible, which underpinned and sustained wider harmful behaviours in all these cases, as well as appearing as a form of isolated harm. This was closely followed by overt verbal abuse, coercive controlling behaviour and online patterns of abuse. This coercive controlling behaviour also included sexual coercion and threatening behaviour. There were no explicit examples of financial abuse or direct physical harm. This harmful behaviour, in particular verbal abuse and controlling behaviour, often played out within the public sphere, within view of, or at least in the knowledge of, their peers and often also their family members. This may be due to the routine of the daily contact of young people within large mixed gender group within school and other learning environments. This is in

sharp contrast to the 'hidden' nature of adult domestic violence and abuse, as it remains a hidden and highly stigmatised issue within more mature relationships (HMIC, 2014; ONS, 2017; Women's Aid, 2017).

There was a general resistance towards, as well as a justification of, somewhat subtle forms of coercion, harassment and control. The extent of acceptability was shaped by their image of traditional gendered norms and expectations. In many instances, the young women failed to propose an alternative script to the hegemonic masculinity they were experiencing within their own intimate relationship. The popular narratives of men's 'nature', "*that's how they are*" and "*I'm just a 'psycho bitch'* (Aleysha) were reinforced when prioritising what young men wanted from relationships, primarily as a result of the fear of rejection. Not only did this reinforce the perspective that male demands and desires were prioritised, but also that the notion of casual sex was accepted, as men were constructed as naturally commitment-phobic. This sense of symbolic gendering revealed the perceived benefits and comfort gained from accepting established gendered scripts, rather than suffering the consequences of non-conformity. Thus, it was permitted and expected for young men to have a focus on the physicality of intimate relationships. The ingrained fear of transgressing gender norms and challenging this sexual emphasis placed young women within the quandary of a 'sexual double standards'. It was apparent that young women lacked the power to operationalise their egalitarian attitudes in order to engage in relationships that adhere to the description of what they expect, want or desire within a 'healthy relationship'. As a default position, they relied and drew upon normative scripts focused on essentialist beliefs. Therefore, their claim of gender equality does not translate into their everyday relationships, further concealing and reinforcing their lack of power, negotiation and choice.

Young women's narratives revealed the confusing and often contradictory challenges faced when negotiating their sexual identities. Not only are there different expectations of behaviour online and offline, for example, the dilemma of acting in a passive or 'subtle' manner offline and revealing and sharing 'nude' photos online, their power in navigating the often uncharted territory of young intimate relationships was limited. The young women's general attitudes and beliefs towards gendered norms and equality, as demonstrated in the quantitative data, reflected a rejection of essentialism and the ideology of the breadwinning male and housewife. However, this perspective was mostly invisible in their narratives, even within relationships perceived as 'healthy' or 'good' relationships. It can be argued that barriers preventing the operationalisation of their attitudes, beliefs,

wishes and feelings reinforced gender differences, providing unstable grounding for a change towards 'real' gender equality. The findings make an original knowledge contribution by demonstrating the benefit of using a 'mixed methods' approach to measure the relationships between attitudes and experiences. The findings from the questionnaire and the interviews diverged; with the journey on both paths revealing an image of young women unable to draw on a narrative to assert their choice, assert their individual needs or negotiate their pre-determined relationship scripts. Overall, this outlines the limited interpersonal power held by young women. For example, Glain saw it as positive that she had modified her behaviour to become '*subtle*'. This essentially meant that she managed her appearance and behaviour in a manner that was socially desirable. She did not see her need for subtlety as a hindrance, rather as a necessary expectation of being a young woman seeking respect, subsequently qualifying her actions as '*but I'm weird*'.

To summarise, whilst the participants demonstrated an attitude of zero tolerance towards any form of abuse, as reflected in the ideas shared during the advisory groups and highlighted within the questionnaire findings, these attitudes did not transfer to their 'lived experiences' of their online or offline relationships. Therefore, there was a general disconnect between attitudes, beliefs and the reality of their narratives. Whereas the young women on the whole were able to name, label and isolate abusive behaviours within the questionnaire, they subsequently justified various forms of abusive behaviour, both observed and experienced within their everyday lives during the qualitative stage of this study. The young women's perspectives on their actual power widely digressed from their attitudes towards power imbalances in their own intimate relationships. Indeed, some forms of behaviours were viewed as acceptable, 'OK' or justified in particular circumstances. This was in sharp contrast to the questionnaire findings which illustrated that over half of the sample positioned themselves within a framework of equality, believing that unequal power and control sustained abusive behaviours within intimate relationships. In reality, their position and power appeared constrained within their narratives about their actual relationships. Their inability to operationalise their attitudes on an 'everyday' basis is crucial to understanding the nature of their relationships and in shaping future prevention and support mechanisms. The young women did not describe themselves as vulnerable; rather, their narratives illustrated their lack of power and influence within their own intimate relationships. Furthermore, the young women overwhelmingly illustrated 'double standards' perspectives regarding female and male sexuality and sexualisation. This 'double standard' framed the environment which allowed

the presence and growth of a pattern of abusive behaviour. As such, there was a general lack of genuine understanding of both the individual and structural level inequalities.

This study was small-scale and not intended to be representative of all young women in North Wales and indeed the UK. However, the use of semi structured interviews did allow the detailed and private exploration of relationship experiences. This study contributes to the existing academic debates on young intimate relationships, with a focus on the gendered tensions and how young women lack the power to negotiate their position and to draw on a more pro-active relationship script. The young women's narratives illustrated the task of challenging young men's power due to the cultural attitudes that perpetuate established static gendered identities, which favour men over women. Preparing young men to relinquish their power needs to be incorporated as part of prevention education (as discussed in chapter seven). Furthermore, when re-evaluating the balance of power between young women and young men, young women's confidence and agency requires further consideration. This re-evaluation will assist young women to construct their position in a manner that reduces the likelihood that any form of negotiation and power comes at a cost. This cost was seen within their narratives as the emotion work of the management of this power imbalance, due to the lack of negotiating space within their intimate relationships. Key messages for future research are also identified: primarily, the need to focus on healthy relationship education and gendered norms. The discussion here suggests that this needs to include a focus on sexual identities, consent, privacy and the use of social media. There is a sense that the behaviour of boyfriends was seen as their entitlement due to their power, whilst young women attempted to make themselves 'invisible' to avoid judgement, comments or being ostracised. As a result, young women's scope and power to re-shape established gendered scripts of relationships and femininities is limited.

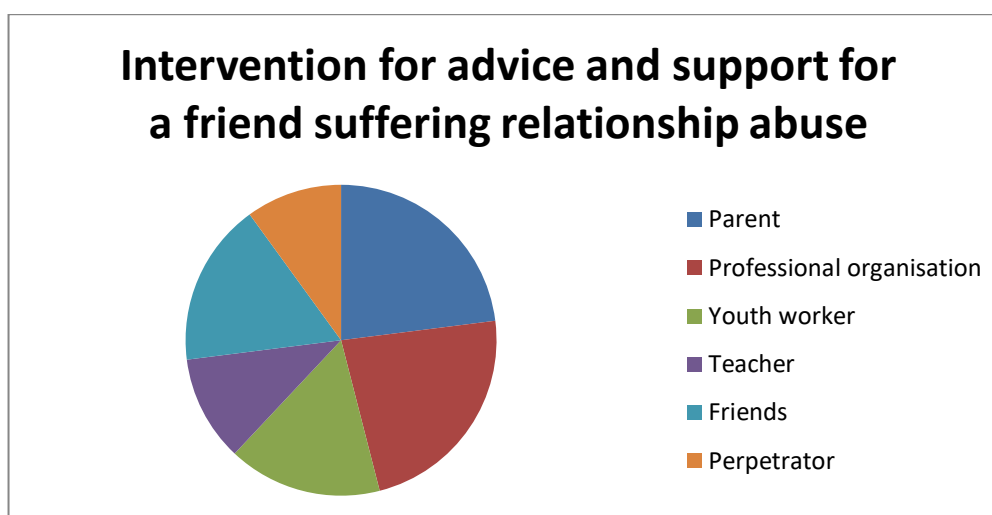
CHAPTER SEVEN: MESSAGES FOR PREVENTION EDUCATION IN WALES

7.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on drawing upon the research findings to inform the development of prevention and early intervention education with young people in schools and beyond. The findings indicate that young women who participated as part of this research were clearly able to express attitudes aligned with notions of gendered equality, with the lived realities of their relationships restricted by traditional gendered norms. Outlined here is an exploration of how aspects of young women's attitudes and experiences of intimate relationships can inform the shape of prevention education in order to assist young people navigate the uncharted territory of intimate relationships. Building on the state of current sex and relationship education, the focus is on an analysis of the key role of challenging gendered norms as the foundation of prevention and early intervention education. The discussion will also include a focus on the impact of peer and professional relationships in supporting young people within their intimate relationships.

7.2 Support for Young Women and Barriers to Help-seeking

The provision of accessible and appropriate support and guidance for young people experiencing relationship abuse is essential; in particular, as evidence suggests that a quarter of young people suffering from relationship abuse had not told anyone (Barter et al, 2015). The young women surveyed for this present study revealed that when they intervened to support a friend who was experiencing relationship abuse, 23% noted that they would ask a parent for advice, 23% stated they would talk to a professional organisation, with 16% outlining selecting to confide in a youth worker, 11% electing to discuss with a teacher, 17% noting they would choose to confide in friends rather than adults and 10% stating that they would talk directly to the perpetrator of the abuse (see Pie Chart eight below).



Pie Chart 8

These findings suggest that the choice of a ‘sympathetic individual’ was diverse and ranged from peers, family members and professional workers (youth workers, teachers) and even expanded to the online world, which suggests that young people benefit from having a private space to seek advice and support. Jennifer felt that she would ask her friends for advice and support;

If you were wanting some advice on relationships or wanting some support if you didn’t feel okay about anything, who would you go to? You’ve mentioned your sister. (Interviewer)

My friends first, probably, because I’m with them all the time and I text them quite often, so I’d just ask them first. (Jennifer)

Do you think that there’s anything that the school can offer then? Teaching, lessons, any information? (Interviewer)

Yeah, give more lessons on how to have a happy relationship and stuff, because they don’t really offer much, other than getting people in to come and talk to us. They don’t give it as a class. (Jennifer).

The regular contact with friends and peers make them an attractive option as a source of advice. Jennifer highlighted, as did others, the gap in teaching provision on healthy relationships. The impact of this gap affected the young women’s choice of accessing support as illustrated by Diane;

“There is a counsellor we can access. But we are not really told that we can talk about relationships. But we haven’t had anything about healthy relationships. More to do about the health/sexual side rather than emotional side of relationships. It would be beneficial. We had a discussion the other day how it’s really weird that we are now this age and there are not really that many of lessons/or session made compulsory for about what is right/wrong in a

relationship". (Diane).

Despite the visibility of a counsellor in the school, Diane notes that she did not feel able to talk to this professional about the emotional aspects of intimate relationships, as the lessons delivered on this topic had been focused on the biological aspects of intimate relationships. This functions as a barrier to accessing support, as the young people are deterred from discussing what matters to them about relationships if the culture, the support and the school curriculum does not openly promote this dialogue on a broad spectrum of issues within young intimate relationships. This study revealed several barriers and enablers for young women when attempting to access support provision. There were several barriers to accessing support/advice/guidance; primarily the availability of professional support. The limited support services were criticised for not being person-centred or private; *"You can go to school nurse. But a once a week visit is not enough as you have to queue for an appointment, it's embarrassing"* (Glesni). The importance of privacy was crucial, as several young women noted that queuing for an appointment with the school nurse only served to raise questions and gossip (primarily around sex, in particular contraception and unwanted pregnancies). So, essentially the role of the school nurse was regarded as more focused on sex rather than relationships education/support. Bonnie expands on this issue further;

Do you think something around relationships would have been quite good in school, do you think? (Interviewer)

Yeah. I don't know because with most people, if they are in one of them bad relationships, they don't exactly talk about it, no. Just like, yeah, yeah, we're okay.(Bonnie)

What do you think stops people from talking about it?(Interviewer).

Well, some of them, yeah, the boys make them think they're not good enough and they won't get anybody better than that boy and they make them feel like no-one's going to believe them, kind of thing. And it's like, yeah, basically that no-one's going to believe them. It's like, no, don't be silly; just because their boyfriend's nice when they're with people, it's like, no, we couldn't do that. (Bonnie)

With relationships now, in schools, what do you think would help young women? What do you think... with regard to lessons, information, advice... what would be helpful? (Interviewer)

There's not enough sex education, to start with. Not enough support for the girls. Like, I hear about girls that are so depressed and so... like, harming themselves. I've been through that myself and... when I was in year nine, and I see year nine now going through it and it's horrible. And some have been in

bad relationships and it's just like they've got no-one to go to. Because if they can't go to their Mum, like, friends, yes, they've got their friends, but they haven't got the professional help they need. It's hard seeing the younger generation going through what they shouldn't be going through at their age. (Bonnie)

What kind of specific topics do you think would be useful to learn about in lessons? (Interviewer)

I think how to cope if your... if... how to cope with relationships if they break down or if the boy doesn't feel like you feel, if you've been heartbroken, things like that. (Bonnie)

So those everyday, practical things. (Interviewer)

Yeah. And how to say no, as well, because loads of girls I know do not know how to say no to boys, and it's just not right. (Bonnie)

What, no to sex, or no to relationships? (Interviewer)

Yeah, no to sex and to pictures. No I won't do this. (Bonnie)

Bonnie highlights the barrier of accessing support due to the feelings of shame and stigma of being in a 'bad relationship', which again links to Goffman's concept of 'impression management' and staging the performance that 'everything's OK' in the relationship. Bonnie also illustrates how the boy's impression management of being 'nice' in front of others impacts on a young woman's ability to access support and manipulates her to minimise the abuse experienced as being 'silly' and as a result 'no one's going to believe them'. Bonnie outlines the impact on a young woman's well-being of not having access to the right professional advice and support, as this is required in addition to family and peer support. Aleysha also discussed her reluctance to ask for help due to her concerns around privacy, confidentiality and the likelihood of a breach of their confidentiality; "*The support needs to be private, as you ask for support and then the school phones home*".

The status and role of the professional was also important as there was a general consensus that they would not access the school child protection lead as this was often the Deputy Head, primarily due to their fear that the information would be shared, dealt with disproportionately and due to their perception in one school that the status of the Deputy Head due to their role was disengaged from the pupils. Approaching an 'outsider' appeared less daunting and more comfortable than confiding in the school nurse attached to the school; "*We [young women] need someone to talk to, similar age to us, from the University, like you...it's more beneficial to have that rather than a presentation from a professional*" (Alexis). Despite the fact that I am not of a similar age to the young women who participated in this research (I was in my late 30s when I conducted the fieldwork for

this research), the learning style adopted during this research (see chapter five for further discussion on this point), and how I situated myself in relation to the young women, transcended the generational gap between myself as the researcher and the young women due to the empathy adopted for their position and the provision of a confidential and private space for discussion. Alexis is essentially voicing her preference for individual support. The key concern around the role of the ‘sympathetic individual’ was focused on privacy, echoing the findings of recent European research (Barter et al, 2015).

There were also reflections on the quality and content of interventions received. Several young women discussed their concerns regarding interventions delivered by the police within their schools. The professional delivering this form of intervention should be suitably trained to have the appropriate qualities to facilitate a safe space for reflections and discussion on these sensitive topics. It is questionable whether the police are the appropriate agency to be delivering these forms of interventions, as their role is focused on enforcing the law. There was a general consensus that the police intervention was ‘extreme’, which was evidenced by their response to a police visit which revolved around the viewing of a film depicting rape.

“During the police visit he asked, ‘If you are in an abusive relationship- could you get out of it?’ But it’s not really a question you can answer is it? He asked stupid questions. He also discussed about consent, it wasn’t anything new. When you’re in that type of position, it’s not that easy.” (Grug)

Grug indicates her understanding of the complexities, challenges and the nuanced nature of abusive relationships. This raised several reflections around young people’s confidence in the ability and suitability of specific professionals to deliver prevention sessions linked to their understanding of the key issues; for example, the barriers to accessing support in the first place. The participants did not fully comprehend the potential range of abusive behaviour, or the impact of it on their well-being. For example, the spectrum of controlling behaviour, including the surveillance, checking mobile phones/Facebook accounts, being ‘in a mood’ or sulking if sex was refused. This mostly went unrecognised as harmful or abusive behaviour. As a result, this often led to these abusive behaviours being normalised, justified and left unchallenged. Across the interventions there was a general lack of attention to the continuum of abuse within intimate relationships. Messages were often gendered, with girls receiving advice focused on managing their own behaviour and being cautious. There was a general lack of discussion on gender norms, power and inequality. Grug’s reflections demonstrate that care should be taken to ensure that the right intervention is offered, at the right level, by the right person, as the consequences of

providing the inappropriate 'sympathetic individual' can result in provision that appears to patronise, trivialise and alienate, rather than engage young people. This also indicates the importance of co-producing teaching materials on these topics with young people and the need to continuously evaluate the impact of prevention programmes in schools.

This present research demonstrates the key role of parents; in particular, fathers as potential protective factors when their daughters experience abuse within intimate relationships. Lowri's relationship with an older boy was dictated by his coercive control and jealousy. She was isolated from her friends, and it was only through the intervention of her father that the relationship ended, "*I would run to my dad to tell him ...If my dad would let me go back with him now, I would... when we were arguing my dad was there for me*" (Lowri). She described her wish to return to this relationship, but her father's disapproval and her wish not to disappoint him prevented her from returning to this situation. However, it is also known that fathers often regulate and police their daughters' sexuality and intimate relationships (Apostolou, 2007; Schalet, 2004; Elliott, 2010), which impacts on the nature of discussion required with parents/carers when shaping the design and delivery of healthy relationship education in schools. Parental focus on delaying the progression of their daughters' intimate relationships was also a key theme here, much to the annoyance of Lowri, who often perceived this as misunderstanding their wishes and feelings. Several of the young women raised concerns about confiding in their parents, primarily due to their fear of disappointing their parents (*Glesni, Chloe, Aleysha, Bella*), feeling embarrassed and unable to have this form of discussion with their parents/carers (*Bella, Chloe, Collette, Diane*); however, they confide in their parents/carers if they were at risk of harm (*Elen, Collette*).

Parents/carers may require guidance, support and education in order to align their thinking to any revised curriculum/prevention programme, to support them in their parental/carer role and ensure a consistent message to their children. It is a challenge to strike a balance between the provision of support, parental control of sexual relationships and attempts to engage in numerous perceived comical discussions of young love/courtship/relationships. Specifically, some of the young women felt that their parents would 'make fun' of their relationships by teasing them. Parents/carers need to achieve a balance, or their children may fear that their discussion and questions around their intimate relationships will not be taken seriously.

The findings from this research demonstrated both the promise and limitations of peer relationships in offering support and relationship guidance to each other. The influence of peer relationships observed as critical in shaping heteronormative behaviour patterns,

including the pressures on young men and women to conform to a particular gender role were observed throughout the interviews. Several participants described the pressure on young men to overtly illustrate their sexuality and desires and perform the normative masculine role. Young men were often described as amending their behaviour performance in front of their peers to either '*pwdu*'/sulking' or '*dangos ei hun/showing off*', illustrating the peer pressure on them to conform to normative standards of expected 'laddish' behaviour. Both these behaviour traits shaped whether young men were willing to share the existence of their relationships, that is, the pressure of whether to disclose or hide their relationships, whilst sexual bravado was described as part of the normative banter in the classroom. Several of the young women described the general behaviour of young men of openly discussing sex and rating young women's appearances in the classroom. This often made the young women feel uncomfortable and vulnerable; in particular, as this behaviour was often left unchallenged by their peers. Whilst this indicates that peer support should be viewed with caution, young people access support from each other and should be supported and trained to provide suitable, safe and age appropriate advice and support to each other.

As the survey conducted for this study reflects that 17% of the participants would access support from their friends, the addition of a peer mentoring programme to the repertoire of prevention-based programmes would ensure that young people can appropriately support and guide each other. Several of the young women interviewed demonstrated how peer relations functioned as a barrier to accessing advice and support, due to the limited willingness to discuss in detail confidential sexual concerns and questions, as a result of the pressure felt from the wider peer group. Therefore, peer groups and '*image*' were regarded as a '*chain*' (*Glain*), which perpetuated the hidden aspect of pressure and concerns within relationships. Whilst young men engaged in sexual banter, the young women described how they discussed their sexual relationships within a different context, primarily a confidential, trusting and serious peer forum. Classroom discussions reinforced peer pressure and the normative expectations of particular behaviour patterns. For example, the expectation was to be in a relationship or sexually active, with the social exclusion from conversations, social media and social gatherings the consequence of diverging from this expected behaviour norm.

Participants demonstrated their lack of understanding of the nature of relationships; in particular, they focused on the expected progression of their intimate relationships and their power to be able to select when to have sex and when to 'take a step back' if they did

not wish to continue to have sex on a regular basis. Not only was there evidence of the overwhelming pressures and urgency to have sex, but also the lack of understanding of sex and relationships. The urgency to discuss sex illustrated the lack of a confidential ‘sounding board’ with whom to discuss their questions and fears in an autonomous manner within a ‘safe space’, which was evident as a theme across the interviews. A question several of the young women asked me was whether, once they had started to have sex in a relationship, did they then always have to have sex? Despite the value of peer support, several participants said that the requisite support from peer networks felt unsuitable to tackle some of the more complex issues around relationship progression. Intimate relationships were often discussed in detail with peers during a drunken night out, rather than within confidential or everyday relationships. There was a general lack of confidence in, or indeed willingness to have, in-depth conversations around sex, relationships or any concerns around abuse. As described, “*Sometimes I want more, but he’s made it clear that he doesn’t want more. He decides what we do. My friends don’t know*” (Glesni). Glesni, who was 18 years old, had a casual relationship with an older male who phoned her to come to his house for sex when he felt like it. She described her feelings about the relationship and indicated that she was too ashamed to discuss the casual nature of their sexual relationship with her friends. Her shame stemmed from the fact that she had previously been ‘seeing him’ but he had later made the decision to bring their relationship to an end and only contacted her on an ad hoc basis to have casual sex. She had told her friends that she wanted a relationship with him and felt that she would be judged for continuing to see him on a casual basis as he had essentially rejected her as a girlfriend.

When describing the impact on their well-being following a coercive/abusive relationship, several of the young women described the negative impact of the isolation from their peer group; “*I felt alone and stupid*” (Elen). Elen illustrates the negative impact of having limited access to support as a young women isolated in an abusive relationships.

How was your relationship? (Interviewer).

He planted stuff in my mind about my friends. I wasn’t that well, so I would go home often. I slowly lost contact with my friends and I would stop getting invites to stuff. I was with him in break and lunchtime. I was manipulated so I couldn’t see my friends. He would stop me or say no, he would just make me feel guilty and manipulate the situation. If I wanted to go out with one my friends, this was at the end; I had decided that I didn’t want to be on my own. He would text me and say- why are you with her, she’s a slag, guaranteed you are doing stuff like what she does, you’re going to be like her. You will end up like her. He would text me or phone me to get me off work (I worked in a pub

doing karaoke). (Elen).

Why did he call her a slag? (Interviewer).

Actually, I don't know as she's a virgin. I just didn't listen to him. She got really angry about this as well and texted him back to tell him to let leave me alone. It started with little things that he would say, I just didn't realise. I realised when I noticed I had no friends left. I really noticed this when I was with my friend and I could see things clearer. I think it was really good that she was there, she would say 'this is not right', she offered me advice and support. (Elen)

Elen describes how she was manipulated and how the feelings of guilt isolated her from her friends. However, Elen highlights the importance of having support, the power of having the reflections of an outsider on the negative behaviour, that her friends 'got really angry' and thought that his behaviour was 'not right'. As a result of these reflections, advice and support she was able to realise the patterns of abusive behaviour and the impact of this behaviour on her well-being and access to friendship/support.

Peer relationships were described as both enabling and disabling as a source of support by the participants interviewed. There is scant research available on the benefit of peer-facilitated prevention interventions; however, the available evidence does suggest that peer-facilitated education can be effective in shifting young people's attitudes about healthy relationships. Prevention education needs to focus on promoting an ethos focused on advice/guidance/support, rather than judgement and 'peer pressure'. The focus needs to be on acceptance, rather than judgement in order to tackle the concern, demonstrated by several young women, of the risk of peer isolation as a result of an abusive relationship.

7.3 Recommendations for Healthy Relationship Education

There was a sense from participants that there is sufficient information available on how and where to get support. Despite this, there was criticism that the support was not specialist or targeted to address their concerns, as the focus was primarily on the biological aspects of sex rather than the emotional aspects of relationships. There was also a call to focus the delivery of any preventive session on practical matters, such as relationship coping strategies and supporting young people to conceptualise what was 'normal', expected or simply what is 'OK' in relationships.

Before discussing the design and delivery of prevention interventions, it is important to discuss the assessment tool used to assess the risk of domestic abuse. Any assessment tool used with young people should be implemented as part of a person-

centred conversation focused on their overall well-being. When professionals have concerns about relationship abuse and violence, consideration should be given to the appropriate use of the young people's 'DASH' Risk Identification Checklist (SafeLives, 2014) to assist in completing a holistic assessment of need and risk or the Duluth Teen Power and Control Wheel, to start the conversation about healthy relationships with young people. However, based on the findings of this research, I would suggest some changes to the 'DASH' Risk Identification Checklist for young people. Outlined below are some suggestions on how the tool could be reviewed:-

- the tool needs to focus on the fluid and less established nature of young people's relationships;
- the first question of the tool asks the young person 'Are you frightened', the focus should be on exploring with the young person the context of his/her relationship;
- the tool asks the young person whether they would involve the police. Whilst it is important to ask this question, there needs to be a broader focus on whether the young person would involve a professional agency, and whether they have a sympathetic individual that they can talk to and gain support from;
- the assessment asks if the young person is pregnant. However, the tool should firstly ask about the status of their relationship, and more about the nature of their sexual contact, with more of a focus on sexual coercion and consent;
- the tool focuses heavily on physical abuse and needs to focus on the continuum of abusive behaviour.

7.3.1 Design

The themes from this research suggested that the design and delivery of prevention education should consider the following:-

- Currently, the role of young people in shaping their learning content and delivery of healthy relationships is limited across schools in Wales, with few examples of the co-production of materials, despite this being a key principle of the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014. This study illustrates the benefit of gaining young people's input and advice on matters that affect them. Aligned to Article 12 of the UNCRC young

people should be provided with the space to participate and assist key professionals to design the content and delivery of prevention programmes. Schools should also engage with parents and carers and the wider community, on this topic.

- As indicated by the findings here, it is well established that attitudes supportive of unequal gender roles and abusive behaviour are predictors of the tolerance of abuse in young intimate relationships. There was a sense from the young women that young men's abusive behaviour was natural and justified as a response to provocation by their girlfriends ("*I was a typical girl*", *Aleysha*). This raises three key points for the design of prevention education. Firstly, there is a need to challenge our understanding of young men and men's behaviour, and the gendered norms of femininity, masculinity, abuse, violence and aggression ("*he did the typical angry boy thing*", *Aleysha*). Secondly, professionals should be mindful of the current levels of young women's empowerment and challenge the belief that, within a post-feminist discourse, young women have powerful relational positions. Thirdly, there is a need to have an institutional response focused on shaping youth mainstream cultures of gendered norms, rather than individualistic notions of justifiable or expected behaviour. Not only will this address the foundation of gendered expectations, inequality and sexism, but it will also empower key agencies in youth and education settings to deliver education which will re-shape youth identities.
- Limited prevention interventions exist to systematically address the broad range of GBV as a continuum of harm to make connections between individual acts of abuse, broader cultural norms and structural power inequalities. As a key aspect of any prevention education, there needs to be an outline of the signs and symptoms of abuse in intimate relationships, including exploration of the continuum of abusive behaviour, coercive control and incorporating the role of digital technologies to take account of young people's realities. There was a general suggestion by the young women participating in this research that there should be several focused tutorial sessions on the meaning(s) of a 'healthy relationship'. Programmes should include practical learning

around being in an intimate relationship, and the expectations and boundaries within these relationships. This call for a practical understanding is aligned to the view of the young women interviewed that practical ‘life lessons’ should be included as part of PSHE.

- Evidence from this present research highlights the need to address sexual double standards; in particular, regarding the sexualisation of young women and the non-consensual circulation of images. The use of the new media technologies and sexting should be a key aspect of prevention education in order to ensure that the heteronormative expectations reinforcing sexual double standards, and the inception of a ‘laddish culture’, are confronted. Not only does this perpetuate the harm experienced by young women, it also reinforces the peer pressures and expectations on young men to conform to ‘laddish expectations’.
- A key theme from the interview narratives was the growing dominance of social media, the visibility of porn, the everyday application of coercive sexting behaviour and the routine requests for ‘*nudie*’ photos, which suggests a need to drive forward robust prevention education to tackle these harmful attitudes and behaviours. Sexting has the potential to replicate sexist and gendered attitudes; in particular, coercive behaviour and the objectification of women. Healthy relationship education should target the promotion of a balanced consideration of sexting, pornography, consent and sexual double standards, including the potential negative impact on their well-being.
- ‘Healthy relationship’ education should avoid the use of stereotypes that reinforce the ethos of victim blaming; for example, the findings from this research that young women were advised by the police to monitor their behaviour and dress sense on a night out. The focus should be on involving young people in education on the engagement of sexuality in a gendered and unequal society.
- Current conversations on prevention focus on the avoidance of risk, rather than pleasure and healthy relationships. Prevention education needs to have a greater focus on talking about the emotional aspect of intimate relationships, including love.

- There was also a sense that young women wanted prevention interventions that practically empowered them to make informed choices and gave them the scripts to reject unwanted attention/requests, as they wanted to learn about “*How to say ‘no’ to guys, not to sex, no to pictures*” (Aleysha) and “*Need to know about respect and keeping sex lives private*” (Claire).

7.3.2 Delivery

- Schools should be the main site for delivering prevention education on ‘healthy relationships’, as over 90% of the young women surveyed subscribed to the idea that schools should work to prevent and address sexual harassment and bullying.
- A general consensus was that receiving sex education in Year eight was ‘out of context’ as it did not feel relevant, with the young women stating that sex education should focus on a broader curriculum focused on the experiences of being in intimate relationships as a whole. There was a feeling that receiving isolated sessions on sex education in Year eight was insufficient, as it purely explored the mechanics of having sex, rather than the nature of intimate relationships. There was a sense that relationship education should commence in Year eight, especially as several of the young women in Years 12 and 13 noted that they lacked the understanding and confidence to explore aspects of relationship norms, etiquette and expected progression. The consequences of not receiving appropriate advice and support were highlighted; “*There’s not enough sex education or support, girls then harm themselves, some have been in bad relationships and they have no help*” (Aleysha).
- Healthy relationship interventions should be separated from interventions addressing risky behaviour. Though this research is based on young women’s experiences, and thus reflects the gendered nature and patterns of harms experienced due to GBV, prevention interventions should be designed to address both young men's and women's needs, so as to include both young women and men as part of this conversation.
- The expertise of professionals working for key agencies, such as the police, social care, education, youth services and in the voluntary sector, will be vital to the success and effective impact of any prevention/early intervention

activities adopted with young people. There were suggestions around training and supervision offered to practitioners when working to support young people in dealing with the plethora of issues surrounding young intimate relationships.

The use of media/films to highlight key messages about abuse in intimate relationships was also suggested as a form of prevention education; in particular, as the impact of the televised BBC film ‘*Murdered by my boyfriend*’ (2014)²⁴ was reinforced during several of the interviews. As previously mentioned, the use of media/films as part of a prevention campaign should be incorporated as part of a broader range of programmes, rather than used as a stand-alone prevention intervention in order to avoid the potential for the ‘boomerang effect’ and the contradictory identifications with both anti-violence messages and victim-blaming discourses. From the interviews, the impact of viewing this film was evident;

What would help young people? (Interviewer)

Maybe it’s a stupid idea, but a TV programme. There was one on an abusive relationship, everyone was talking about it, so it’s showed that young people watch that kind of stuff and that it can help young people learn for themselves what’s OK and not OK in a relationship. (Ceri)

Do you know what the show was called? (Interviewer)

Abused by my boyfriend. (Ceri)

Do you mean murdered by my boyfriend? (Interviewer)

Yes, that’s it, it was on the BBC and it was a true story. You just felt so sorry for her, it was so shocking.

Did it make a different that it was a true story? (Interviewer)

Yes, it brought it back to reality.

Did anything in particular shock you?

Yes, the fact that he was taking her money, I just thought WOW that’s out of order, and all the bruises and the ending, WOW that actually happened. (Ceri).

²⁴ This was a BBC film focusing on the real life of events of a young women’s violent and abusive relationship from the age of 17 years old until she was killed by boyfriend at the age of 21 years old.

Ceri discusses how the film was ‘*shocking*’ and had resulted in ‘*everyone talking about it*’. Ceri also highlights how this type of film can give young people messages about ‘healthy relationships’ and the continuum of abusive and violent behaviour on an everyday basis.

- Several young women noted the benefit of research and their involvement in this project as a space in which to discuss their attitudes and experiences. The development of interventions should be completed in partnership with young people in order to ensure the inclusion of their voice and to empower them to take control of their own lives. This approach is in keeping with the conceptual framework adopted here of a feminist methodology and is also in keeping with the statutory framework and philosophy of social care developments in Wales around promoting co-production and engagement with citizens in the development of service delivery; in particular, prevention services (Social Services & Well-being Act (Wales) 2014). Young people are more likely to be engaged in whatever choices they make, and have better outcomes, if they are involved throughout the process.
- Linked to the messages from the young women’s narratives of observing abuse within relationships (for example, *Glain and Mair*), prevention education should also have a focus on the bystander perspective²⁵ to empower young people and teaching staff to safely challenge inappropriate behaviour when it occurs.

7.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter argues that effective prevention education is required in schools, not only to prevent abuse in intimate relationships, but also to challenge established heteronormative roles which inform relationship expectations and the notion of ‘what’s OK’ and ‘not OK’ in teenage relationships. This argument is offered in response to the narratives of the young women interviewed and their overall lack of power to operationalise non-hierarchical gendered relations within intimate lives. This was despite their ability to clearly articulate their perceived healthy attitudes towards gender equality. Prevention education needs to have a practical focus on providing young women with the ability to apply their understanding of relationship equality to their reality, whilst preparing young men to relinquish their power and privilege. Furthermore, the young women’s narratives revealed

²⁵ This form of intervention focuses on the role of others (friends, peers and the community as a whole) in preventing violent and abusive behaviour in the role as bystanders. It focuses on the ethos that we can all be bystanders to violence and abuse (Banyard, 2014).

a lack of understanding of what it means to operationalise equality in intimate relationships in order to have equal power.

Current resources available to tackle the continuum of GBV that includes issues such as abuse in young people's intimate relationships, sexual bullying in schools, 'sexting' and child exploitation are very limited. These harmful issues require a multi-agency, targeted and age-appropriate approach that enables practitioners to respond proactively at a strategic and operational level. Whilst the inclusion of parents/carers as part of any prevention programme is crucial, engagement with young people should be in schools, as this is their primary site of negotiating relationships and their sexuality. Schools are the ideal site for shaping and deterring potential harmful behaviour on a universal platform. In order to ensure that young people receive an independent 'sounding board' and a confidential site in which to discuss their views, any prevention education should be independently facilitated.

The findings discussed here suggest that the key issues are heavily shaped by gender expectations, and therefore should be explicitly discussed with young people, focusing on a range of well-being issues from healthy relationships, equality, respect, consent and intimacy to inappropriate touching, with the aim of protecting them and preventing harm. At the core of prevention work with young people should be a focus on the transformation of unequal power relationships. This research also identified the need to incorporate key discussions on the gendered nature of relationships, and the association of masculinity with power and privilege. Consideration also needs to be given to same-sex relationships and some of the similar, but also different, challenges presented. Whilst this research focused on facilitating a young-women-only space in which to discuss their attitudes towards and experiences of intimate relationships, research in the future requires a focus on the pressures imposed on young men.

The aim of this research is to contribute to existing academic debates on education and GBV policy within the Welsh Assembly Government, and potentially beyond. A key aspect of this research was the positive engagement and commitment of Education and Social Care Departments in North Wales. This illustrates the importance of fostering engagement with key stakeholders in order to facilitate the completion of sensitive research with young people. Within this geographical area, the conversation around promoting the voices of young people in order to encourage 'healthy relationships' has commenced. The intention is for the research findings to contribute to the academic debate around the development of prevention and early intervention resources in order to educate young

people and professionals, not only on intimate partner violence and abuse, but also on a continuum of related issues such as gendered norms in relationships, the emotional aspects of intimate relationships and everyday sexual bullying in schools and beyond. This present study has identified that young women's perspectives on abuse are shaped by their meaning(s) of gender and their experience of relationships by the widespread prevalence and acceptability of gendered hierarchies, aligning with key messages from related research (Sundaram, 2016).

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1: Introduction

This thesis has argued that gender norms shape young women's power and space to operationalise their attitudes and beliefs of gender equality within their own intimate relationships. The research adopted a 'mixed methods' approach, and was designed to build on existing knowledge in order to offer an in-depth understanding of how young women conceptualise the nature and patterns of behaviour within young intimate relationships. As this is a smaller-scale doctorate study. The intention was not to establish prevalence, but rather to propose a fresh perspective on young intimate relationships by drawing upon feminist frameworks focused on promoting young women as active agents (James & James, 2004) and a theoretical framework, focused on the continuum of abusive behaviour (Kelly, 1988) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1969; Cahill, 1980). The advantages offered by adopting a 'mixed methods' approach included a focus on evaluating the attitudes of young women, whilst also conducting an in-depth qualitative analysis of their experiences. Adopting this combination of methods revealed the tensions between the survey and interview responses, which has methodological implications for further research in this area.

As outlined in chapter four, creative methods were used to engage young women, to gather their views in order to shape all the research tools, not only to ensure that the research was authentic, but also to encourage their participation in the co-production of this research. The study sought to address the following research question: *What can young women's attitudes and perspectives tell us about the nature of young people's intimate relationships?* The empirical research also explored the following sub-questions:

- *What do young women's attitudes tell us about gendered norms in young people's relationships?*
- *What do young women's experiences tell us about gendered norms in young people's relationships?*
- *What roles do media technologies, such as sexting, Facebook and snapchat play in the conduct of young people's relationships?*
- *What are the consequences of intimate partner abuse on young women's wellbeing, identity and understanding of 'healthy relationships'?*
- *What are the knowledge and perceptions about support services available and what are the perceived barriers to accessing support?*

The overall aim of this research was to evaluate young women's attitudes towards gender norms and experiences of intimate partner abuse, with the key objectives of advancing the knowledge available in order to inform the development of prevention education and early intervention services.

The intention of this research is to contribute to academic debates that intend to shift the focus from protection to one that also incorporates prevention, early intervention and an agenda focused on promoting positive well-being. The young women's narratives about their relationships enabled an exploration of how their limited choices are negotiated through their embodied practices within their intimate relationships; thus contributing to our understanding of the everyday conceptualisations and experiences of young women.

The following section will focus on outlining a summary of the key findings, with a specific reference to the research questions, aim and objectives.

8.2 Reflections on the Research Questions

Within this section, I will individually address each sub question and then summarise the section by offering critical reflections on the research question.

8.2.1 *What Do Young Women's Attitudes Tell Us About Gendered Norms In Young People's Relationships?*

Undoubtedly, understanding the nature of the relationship between pro-abuse attitudes and abusive behaviour is crucial. Understanding this link will enable us to gauge whether attitudes reflect the idea of abusive behaviour on a continuum of interlinked 'everyday experiences'. If we are to understand the nature and patterns of abuse in teenage relationships, then we must understand how young people construct meaning(s) about their gender (Sundaram, 2014), their sexual selves, their relationship aspirations and their understanding of attitudes towards 'good' and 'bad' relationships. Creating the space for a 'women-only' questionnaire on attitudes towards young intimate relationships provided an overall sense of a shift away from the ethos of attitudes which are accepting of particular violence and abuse in specific circumstances.

The young women's general attitudes and beliefs towards gendered norms reflected a rejection of essentialism and the ideology of the breadwinning male and housewife. It was identified that the young women were able to articulate 'healthy' relationship attitudes, both with reference to equal gender roles and their views on the role of young women within intimate relationships. Overall, the attitudes of participants questioned the

acceptability of abuse within heterosexual and same sex relationships. The attitudes identified in the survey findings were focused on an ideology of equality, whereas their intimate relationship experiences identified in the interviews generally revealed their limited and unequal power base. This indicates the challenges posed by a post-feminist society, where narratives about equalisation and aspirations are far removed from expectations, and their perceived and real positions in intimate relationships. Moreover, this position was further exacerbated by their lack of tools with which to address these inequalities, or negotiate any degree of power within intimate relationships within a period where there is a presumption of equality. As discussed in the following section, this perspective is of interest when compared with their individual narratives; in particular, the evidence of their lack of power and equality within their own relationships.

8.2.2 What Do Young Women's Experiences Tell Us About Gendered Norms In Young People's Relationships?

The relationship between attitudes and behaviour, specifically young women's ability and power to operationalise their attitudes and beliefs as part of their own intimate relationships, was explored further during the qualitative stage. This demonstrates the benefit of undertaking a 'mixed method' study not only to triangulate the data, but also to explore the relationship between the two data sets (attitudes and experiences).

The gaps between young women's expectations and lived experiences was clear. Young women's experiences demonstrated that the presence of traditional gendered norms favouring young men was damaging for them in their intimate relationships in three distinct ways. Firstly, due to the construction of the young women's propensity to be 'emotional' as a justification for controlling and abusive behaviour; secondly, due to their perceived sexual weakness in contrast to male dominance and desire; and thirdly, on account of the naturalisation of emotional, abusive and coercive behaviour. The participants justified abusive behaviour in their 'passive' or 'reactive' girlfriend role; in particular, when faced with harassment, controlling behaviour and unwanted attention.

There was a general resistance towards, as well as a justification of, somewhat subtle forms of coercion, harassment and control. The extent of acceptability was shaped by their image of traditional gendered norms and expectations. In many instances, the young women failed to propose an alternative script to the hegemonic masculinity they were experiencing within their own intimate relationship. This sense of symbolic gendering, basically the norm or cultural feature of courtship (Lamont, 2014), revealed the perceived benefits and comfort gained from accepting established gendered scripts, rather than suffering the

consequences of non-conformity. The ingrained fear of transgressing gender norms and challenging this sexual emphasis placed young women within the quandary of having 'sexual double standards'. It was apparent that young women lacked the power to operationalise their egalitarian attitudes in order to engage in relationships that adhere to the description of what they expect, want or desire within a 'healthy relationship'. As a default position, they relied and drew upon normative scripts focused on essentialist beliefs. This research reflected the complex emotion work that emerged in young women's narratives of intimate relationships. The young women undertook the daily 'impression management' of performing both the 'doing of gender' and their perceived 'ideal girlfriend' role, often to their own detriment. The young women demonstrate how they carefully managed their 'performance of self' and the management of their own identity (Goffman, 1963).

Therefore, their claim of gender equality does not translate into their everyday relationships, further concealing and reinforcing their lack of power, negotiation and choice when performing their role within intimate relationships. This study supports and contributes to the understanding that young women are limited in their capacity to challenge established gender norms that restrict their sexual identities and performance of self. It can be argued that barriers preventing the operationalisation of their attitudes, beliefs, wishes and feelings reinforced gender differences, providing unstable grounding for a change towards 'real' gender equality.

8.2.3 What Roles Do Media Technologies, Such As Sexting, Facebook and Snapchat Play in the Conduct of Young People's Relationships?

Both stages of the research explored the use of the new media technologies, with the questionnaire focused on their attitudes towards, and the interviews focused on, their experiences of their use as part of their 'online' intimate relationships. Throughout all stages of this research, the importance of social media was evident across this age group, with over 90% of the young women surveyed owning a mobile phone with internet access, with 83.3% accessing Facebook and 75% using Snapchat.

The findings from the questionnaire revealed attitudes rejecting the view that girlfriends should be constantly available 'online' to respond to their boyfriends. However, the findings also revealed a degree of confusion of identifying 'online' behaviour as abusive, as some of the attitudes were accepting of behaviour that does not explicitly appear to be verbally or physically abusive. This confusion also extended to their attitudes towards

online ‘lad culture’, specifically their degree of ambivalence between their role and the pressure of the system of appearance ‘rating’ as a popularity currency.

Analysis of the qualitative data illustrated the full complexity of this ‘online’ behaviour, which was described in contradictory terms by participants as desired, unwanted, coercive, sexual and accidental. The interviews revealed the automatic entitlement of young men to attend parties and social gatherings, and maintain a much more explicit online presence on social media sites. Within established older relationships it was used as a coercive tool in order to monitor virtual relationships and check online behaviour; for example, the ‘likes’ on Facebook pictures, the change in Facebook relationship status and the practice by young people of ‘blocking’ individuals from their girlfriend/boyfriend’s page. There was a general view that if you were in a relationship you had to modify your behaviour; in particular, if you were in a photo and it was posted on Facebook. However, the young women’s reaction to these photos/selfies were described as different from their boyfriends’, with their overall tendency not to react or say anything for fear of triggering an argument or explicitly sharing their jealous feelings, as it was perceived as a sign of insecurity and ‘neediness’. These feelings continued to remain hidden as the relationship progressed.

The practice around requesting nudies was also highly gendered and coercive. The experiences described within the qualitative interviews around ‘sexting’ and ‘nudies’ were primarily focused on sexual inclusion/exclusion, consent and control. Again, the young women’s narratives revealed the confusing and often contradictory challenges faced when negotiating their sexual identities. Not only are there different expectations of behaviour ‘online’ and ‘offline’, for example, the dilemma of acting in a passive or ‘subtle’ manner ‘offline’ and revealing and sharing ‘nudies’ photos ‘online’, but their experiences and power in navigating the often uncharted territory of ‘online’ intimate relationships was limited, often confusing and unclear.

8.2.4 What Are the Consequences Of Intimate Partner Abuse On Young Women’s Well-Being, Identity and Understanding Of ‘Healthy Relationships’?

This question focused on evaluating the consequences of abuse on young women’s well-being, the impact on their identity and their knowledge and understanding of a ‘healthy relationship’. The young women’s experiences of intimate relationships revealed the presence of a range of harmful behaviours when considering the continuum of abusive behaviour (Kelly, 1988); however, not all behaviours were identified as ‘harmful’ or abusive by the young women interviewed. The presence of emotional harm was the most

visible behaviour, which underpinned and sustained wider harmful behaviours in all these cases, as well as appearing as a form of isolated harm. This was closely followed by overt verbal abuse, coercive controlling behaviour and online patterns of abuse. This demonstrated the sustained and harmful impact of the new media technologies on young women's well-being when used to perpetuate abuse, control and bullying behaviour within virtual spaces. This coercive controlling behaviour also included sexual coercion and threatening behaviour. However, there were no explicit examples of financial abuse or direct physical harm. These harmful behaviours, in particular verbal abuse and controlling behaviour, were often played out within the public sphere, within view of, or at least in the knowledge of, their peers and often also their family members. This may be due to the routine of the daily contact of young people within large mixed gender groups within school and other learning environments. This is in sharp contrast to the 'hidden' nature of adult domestic violence and abuse, as it remains a hidden and highly stigmatised issue within more mature relationships.

The experiences of the young women interviewed reflected the impact of these forms of abuse on their overall well-being, both physical and emotional. The harm, upset and impact of the abuse was reflected in the deterioration of their physical and emotional well-being, with the abuse often leading to their isolation from their community as a whole. The impact on their identity was also evident in several ways. Firstly, their lack of power and control to operationalise their attitudes and beliefs of healthy relationships as part of their intimate relationships, therefore the need to re-shape their beliefs in order to have an intimate relationship. Secondly, the requirement for young women to be 'passive', again with regards to sharing their true beliefs, but also with regards to their ability to share their desires and sexual identity, specifically due to the oppressive constant presence of gendered 'sexual double standards'. Young women's identities often became 'spoilt' when they acted in a manner that was perceived to be contrary to social norms and the presumed 'natural' sexual passivity in women. The challenge faced by the young women interviewed of negotiating a female identity, with shifting appropriateness of this 'double standard' dictated by the requirement to be virginal, whilst also available to sexually please the opposite sex. Due to their lack of power, the 'emotion work' was undertaken in order to disguise their true feelings and beliefs of their wishes, desires and their concept of a healthy relationship. They had the knowledge and understanding of the meaning of a healthy relationship, but lacked the power or control to challenge unacceptable or abusive behaviours. Finally, participants described negotiating their identity and the performance

of self (Goffman, 1963) within settings and communities which actively restricted their identity, behaviour, physical choice and liberty.

8.2.5 What Are the Knowledge and Perceptions About Support Services Available and What Are the Perceived Barriers to Accessing Support?

As part of the survey and the interviews, the young women were able to demonstrate clear knowledge of the support services available, both on a local and national level. Despite the general willingness of the participants to access support services, barriers to accessing support were identified. Firstly, the lack of services to discuss the emotional aspects of intimate relationships; secondly, the shame and stigma of acknowledging being in a ‘bad relationship’; thirdly, the need for person-centred and confidential professional support; and finally, young people’s confidence in the ability and suitability of specific professionals to deliver prevention sessions linked to their understanding of the key issues. This research identified the need to ensure that the right intervention is offered, at the right level, by the right person, as the consequences of providing the inappropriate ‘sympathetic individual’ can result in provision that appears to patronise, trivialise and alienate, rather than engage young people. This also indicates the importance of co-producing teaching materials on these topics with young people and the need to continuously evaluate the impact of prevention programmes in schools.

The findings from this research demonstrated both the promise and limitations of peer relationships in offering support and relationship guidance to each other. Peer relationships were described as both enabling and disabling as a source of support. Prevention education needs to focus on promoting an ethos focused on advice/guidance/support rather than judgement and ‘peer pressure’. The focus needs to be on acceptance rather than judgement in order to tackle the concern, demonstrated by several young women, of the risk of peer isolation as a result of an abusive relationship

The key issue identified was not focused on a gap in knowledge, lack of available support, or unwillingness by the young women to access support if required; but rather on the lack of power of the young women to operationalise their knowledge as part of their intimate relationships. Therefore, prevention education needs to have a practical focus on providing young women with the ability to apply their understanding of relationship equality to their reality, whilst preparing young men to relinquish their power and privilege. Furthermore, the young women’s narratives revealed a lack of understanding of what it means to operationalise equality in intimate relationships in order to have equal power.

8.2.6. What Can Young Women's Attitudes and Perspectives Tell Us About the Nature of Young People's Intimate Relationships?

This research demonstrated how the attitudes focused on gender equality voiced by the young women in the survey failed to translate into their own intimate relationship experiences. In response to the overall research question, the findings explored indicate that there was a general resistance to, and justification of, somewhat subtle forms of coercion, harassment and control. The extent of acceptability was shaped by their image of traditional gendered norms and expectations. In many instances, the young women failed to propose an alternative script to the hegemonic masculinity they were experiencing within their own intimate relationship. The popular narratives of men's 'nature', "*that's how they are*" and "*I'm just a 'psycho bitch'* (Aleysha), were reinforced when prioritising what young men wanted from relationships, primarily as a result of the fear of rejection. Not only did this reinforce the perspective that male demands and desires were prioritised, but also that the notion of casual sex was accepted, as men were seen as naturally commitment-phobic. This sense of symbolic gendering (Lamont, 2014), basically the norm or cultural feature of courtship, revealed the perceived benefits and comfort gained from accepting established gendered scripts, rather than suffering the consequences of non-conformity. Thus it was permitted and expected for young men to have a focus on the physicality of intimate relationships, whilst young women were expected to lack desire and be passive. The young women described how they were constantly on the receiving end of 'sexual double standards', where all options open to them would leave them open to the judgement of others.

The negative experiences of feeling shame, stigma, sexism and harassment both online and offline was oppressive and visible. Whilst this visibility means that the patterns of abuse in young people's intimate relationships and wider communities are transparent rather than hidden, it also raises the challenge of addressing harmful behaviour that is well known, rehearsed and permitted. This is a key challenge for any prevention interventions with young people.

In summary, the findings from the questionnaire and the interviews diverge; however, the journey on both paths reveals an image of young women unable to draw on a narrative of choice in order to assert their voice, their individual needs or negotiate their pre-determined relationship script. Overall, this outlines the limited interpersonal power held by young women. For example, Glain saw it as positive that she had modified her behaviour to become '*subtle*'. This essentially meant that she managed her appearance, behaviour and her performance of self in a manner that was socially desirable. She did not

see her need for subtlety as a hindrance, rather as a necessary expectation of being a young woman seeking respect, subsequently qualifying her actions as '*but I'm weird*'. It was apparent that young women lacked the power to operationalise their egalitarian attitudes in order to engage in relationships that adhere to the description of what they expect, want or desire within a 'healthy relationship'. As a default position, they relied and drew upon normative scripts focused on essentialist beliefs.

8.3 Limitations of this Research & Reflections on the Research

It is essential to acknowledge, reflect upon and learn from the limitations of a study. The intention within this section is to review the potential limitations of the study as a whole, to reflect on the learning from the research process, contextualise the findings and interpret the validity of the findings.

When reflecting on the research process as a whole, it's essential to focus on both the uses and limitations of the research. The commitment of both local authorities, specifically their willingness to allow access to explore a sensitive and challenging issue, cannot be underestimated. Establishing a good relationship with each gatekeeper was essential not only to ensure access to participants, but also to ensure access to all possible participants and not simply those who the gatekeeper perceives as being suitable to participate. The difficulties of challenging gatekeepers has been outlined in previous research (see: Barter et al, 2009; McCarry, 2012) when attempts were made to impose a criterion on participation, e.g., only permitting particular students to participate. Having full access to the schools participating in this research ensured that all young women were provided with the appropriate degree of agency, voice and control of their wish to participate.

This research has some limitations in terms of generalisability and external validity. Although this research did include young women from diverse backgrounds, the overall sample size limited the ability to conduct analysis across the spectrum of needs of these young women. Despite purposively selecting the sample to include a diverse range of schools in terms of student composition, the total sample comprised a small percentage of all schools in the region. Strong patterns emerged in the views and experiences of the young women across the range of schools, which indicates the significant role of gendered norms in shaping meaning(s) of abuse in teenage intimate relationships. Due to the small-scale nature of this research, this pattern across the sample was not attributed to specific groups of young women based on particular identity traits or demographic information. Future research may strive to elicit specifically whether differences in the meaning(s) of abuse can be established across a range of intersectional needs; essentially to explore the

interactions of different positions. Therefore, the findings from this research are limited to the population it draws from; that is, mostly white, Welsh young women. The sample selected reflects the local demographics of the research area, and therefore there was a lack of racial and ethnic diversity within the sample. This provided little opportunity for exploring the ways that racial identities interact with young women's "doing of gender" or the attitudes and experiences of these young women of their intimate relationships.

Future research can be strengthened by undertaking comparative work with a larger and diverse sample of young women. Also, as the research was completed within schools, with captive participants, those 'difficult to reach' young women were not then included, specifically those young women not in education or training. To address this, the offer to participate was extended to those young women within the youth justice services within this region of North Wales. Despite efforts to engage this cohort of young women, only one young woman elected to participate. Whilst I was satisfied that all efforts had been undertaken to include young women who tend to be marginalised from mainstream school, it also gave me a sense of the importance of focusing future research specifically on accessing the views and experiences of these young women. Limited research has been completed on this topic with those young people supported and supervised by the youth justice services. This requires further attention in future research in order to ensure that all young women have equal access to participate in research that may impact on their lives, irrespective of their needs, educational background or offending behaviour. I therefore suggest that future research should aim to identify and evaluate the attitudes and experiences of young women who are within the youth justice system, both within the secure estate and on those on community based orders. Whilst this is a challenging aim, and one that previous researchers have also struggled to address (Barter et al, 2009; Wood et al, 2011), future researchers should endeavour to communicate with the Ministry of Justice, the Youth Justice Board and the Youth Offending Teams in order to address this gap in knowledge and to ensure that the voices of these often marginalised young women are accessed and listened to. In addition, future research should also focus on accessing and listening to the voices of young people who have a significant illness or a disability.

Despite the time used to facilitate the process of presenting the research in each school to directly offer the chance of participating to the young women, this robust recruitment process, directed by the researcher, would be followed again for future research. This is to reduce the risk of sample bias and the potential that participants are 'managed' by the school or a particular teacher. Not only does this reduce the chance of sample bias, it also

ensures that participants freely wish to participate and contribute their views and also understand the consent and withdrawal process. This also ensures that the discussion with potential participants takes place before the data collection event, giving them time to consider and reflect on their choice of participation. This is a key strength of this research process and any future research with young people should prioritise this step in the recruitment process to reduce the risk of sample bias and the potential coercion of participants.

Chapter four of this thesis outlines a detailed discussion of the reflexive nature of this research, in particular the need to facilitate young person-centred research which allows them to play an active role in constructing the research design. With detailed planning, and an inclusive approach, sensitive research can be facilitated with young women. When conducting research on a sensitive topic, the value of conducting a sequence of robust advisory groups with young women was worthwhile. Reflections on the research process as a whole makes me appreciate the opportunity I was given to listen to young women's discussions of relationships, including exploring their questioning nature and vibrant ideas. Facilitating the advisory groups also gave a sense of the uses of creating a female-only space in which to discuss our most intimate relationships, which makes me reflect on the potential benefits of the facilitation of young women or young feminist groups within schools, in order to provide young women the space to share their views, develop their sense of self and their confidence.

Several related validated questionnaires were assessed and used as guidance in order to inform the questionnaire design, not only in order to improve validity and reliability, but also in order to develop a range of age-appropriate measures with the available validated scales. Some modified questions of related questionnaires (see Burton and Kitzinger, 1998; Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Fox et al, 2013; Ringrose et al, 2012; survey.net.ac.uk) were used to shape initial ideas on how to formulate questions on such a sensitive topic. The use of pre-tested questions as a guide was useful but, as the questionnaire design evolved, the majority of the questions and statements finally implemented were designed specifically for this study. As a replicable validated scale or questionnaire was unavailable, the originally designed questionnaire required validating on a similar population group to the research sample. Despite the thorough process of co-producing the research tools with young women, including a robust process of pre- and post-testing of the tools, there are particular aspects of this research stage that I would review in the future. During the discussion in the advisory groups and the pre/post-testing stages of the research, the

questionnaire tool was edited to reflect the discussion. For example, the advisory group recommended that the statement, *it bothers me when boys act like girls*, requiring editing to make the statement more specific, e.g., to relate the statement to a specific personality trait. As a result, this statement was removed from the final tool. To ensure that the data collection process and the analysis is not inhibited, I would ensure that all statements are focused on exploring one key attitude. On reflection and experience, I would make some of the statements in the questionnaire clearer. For example, the statement, *It's ok for boyfriends put pressure on girlfriends to have sex, but not to physically force them*, could have been written in a manner that would explore coercion/pressure or physical force. Whilst this is key learning for the development of future research tools, the findings across the questionnaire revealed consistent egalitarian views challenging gender social norms across the sample group. I do not believe that the revision of some of the statements would have impacted on the overall findings of the research that the findings from both data sets diverged (that the young women could not operationalise their egalitarian attitudes as part of their intimate relationship experiences).

Despite the views of the advisory groups that they wanted the vignettes to be longer, as a result of my experience of completing fieldwork, I would design shorter vignettes for future use in a questionnaire designed for young people. This is to ensure that the design of the questionnaire is accessible for all participants, irrespective of their reading level. This would reduce the risk that participants offer contrived responses that may not be a correct reflection of their views. However, the aim of the robust process of testing the tool, the measuring of the construct of the tool and having an open space to add additional comments was to improve the internal validity of the tool used and reduce the risk of contrived responses.

As mentioned, as part of the questionnaire, attitudes to gendered norms were assessed, rather than actual experiences of this type of behaviour. This potential limitation was addressed by implementing a 'mixed methods' approach by adopting semi-structured interviews; questions were asked about experiences and knowledge of abusive behaviour patterns within relationships in order to reflect on the connection between broader attitudes and the context of individual experiences. Using both these methods together assisted in overcoming this potential limitation and, as mentioned in chapter six, revealed interesting tensions in both data sets. Therefore, the value of 'mixing' methods in order to identify the relationship, specifically the commonality and divergence between individual attitudes and experiences, is of empirical value when exploring this topic. Whilst the small scale of the

study may be viewed as a limitation, the aims and objectives of my study were met through the adoption of a 'mixed methods' approach, which assisted in triangulating the data in a manner that focused on identifying young women's attitudes and exploring their experiences of their intimate relationships.

The symbolic interactionist framework utilised in this thesis argues that social interactions are influenced and shaped by the social construction of our gendered identities. Specifically, that it's the everyday 'doing of' gender that both reflects and influences young people's role and power within their intimate relationship. Young women naturalised and justified the nature and patterns of abusive behaviour experienced. As a result, the young women's power to negotiate their identity and experiences within their intimate relationships is limited, and often results in their emotion work to mask their genuine wishes and feelings. The voices of the young women interviewed illustrate the influence of the harmful social interactions experienced both within their everyday schooling and their relationship experiences as the 'norm', rather than problematic behaviour. Due to the gendered structural power hierarchy, the young women lacked the power or space to challenge these norms, and therefore the behaviour was accepted and often left unchallenged. As discussed, the young women clearly demonstrated attitudes that reflect the awareness and understanding of gender equality and healthy relationships; however, the dynamics with their own intimate relationships remained problematic. This influenced the performance of their role within their intimate relationships, which was passive and reactive to the behaviour of their boyfriend.

The findings suggest the importance of a comprehensive educational approach, focused on understanding and questioning gender norms, promoting gender equality and healthy relationships. Based on the benefits observed from conducting this research within a space specifically open to young women, particularly the engagement of the young women in the advisory group stage, suggests the potential benefits of delivering a combination of single and mixed gender prevention interventions. To summarise, this study reveals the presence and harmful impact of patterns of harassment experienced by young women on an 'everyday' basis, and the sustained emotional abuse and coercive control experienced by young women within their intimate relationships. The young women performed what they saw as the expected girlfriend role to satisfy the needs of their audience, essentially to maintain what Goffman termed as 'facework' (Goffman, 1955), paying 'lip service' to her boyfriend's demands to the detriment of their own self-development of identity.

The analysis identified the impact of gendered expectations on young women's abilities to navigate the 'uncharted territory' of young intimate relationships. Within a perceived 'post-feminist' society, young women continue to face challenges when negotiating their feminine identity; in particular, sexual 'double standards'. The young women's narratives indicated the role of gender norms in shaping their relationship scripts, including their views on abuse and violence. Despite their ability to share attitudes focused on gender equality, they demonstrated limited empowerment and space to draw upon this understanding within their intimate relationships. Young women's constructions of their attitudes, identity and relationships experiences suggest a gap between their desires, expectations and actual everyday experiences. As a result, the young women adapted their expectations and repeatedly demonstrated how they restricted their voice, choice and control within their intimate relationships in order to avoid rejection, challenge and abuse. They adapted their wishes, feelings and expectations and, as a result, remained in unhealthy relationships. As part of this, the majority of the young women, specifically those who had experiences of intimate relationships, continued to demonstrate attitudes supportive of gender equality, reflecting both their limited power to change their reality and influence of established gender norms on their own relationships experiences. This was a consistent finding across the research.

Despite potential limitations, this research contributes to the literature and prevailing debates on the nature of teenage intimate relationships and the themes of gendered expectations and social norms, sexism, the influence of social media, young people's understanding of abuse within their intimate relationships and their ideas of a healthy relationship. In doing so, this research extends our knowledge of young women's attitudes towards gender, social norms and intimate relationships. The young women's narratives illustrated the challenge of shifting young men's power, due to the cultural attitudes that perpetuate established hierarchical gendered identities, which favour men over women. Preparing young men to relinquish at least a portion of their power needs to be incorporated as part of prevention education. Prevention programmes geared towards empowering young women should focus on promoting their confidence and individual agency. This re-evaluation will assist young women to construct their position in a manner that reduces the likelihood that any form of negotiation and power comes at a cost. This cost, seen within their narratives, was the emotion work of the management of this power imbalance and the requirement to 'subtly' perform their expected girlfriend role, due to the lack of negotiating space within their intimate relationships. The gaps between young

women's attitudes, their desires, expectations and their 'everyday' experiences, draws attention to the complex dilemma for young women when performing their role in intimate relationships.

8.4 Recommendations

Outlined within this section are the recommendations for policy, future research and practice development. Please also refer to chapter seven of this thesis for a detailed discussion on the recommendations for the design and delivery of healthy relationship education with young people (see section 7.4).

8.4.1 Research:

- Future research should aim to create a space specifically for young men to share their attitudes and experiences of their intimate relationships. The focus should be on accessing a sample of young men in schools rather than targeting a sample of young men who are seen as 'perpetrators'. The aim should be to explore the impact of gender norms on their role within their intimate relationships, the progression of their intimate relationships, their views of a healthy relationship and their views on a continuum of abusive behaviour.
- There is a current gap in the research identifying the attitudes towards and exploring the experiences of their intimate relationships of young women within the youth justice system. Again, this research should explore the impact of gender norms on their role within their intimate relationships, the progression of their intimate relationships, their views of a healthy relationship and their views on a continuum of abusive behaviour.
- There is a current gap in the research identifying the attitudes towards and exploring the attitudes of their intimate relationships of young people who are ill or who have a disability. Again, this research should explore the impact of gender norms on their role within their intimate relationships, the progression of their intimate relationships, their views of a healthy relationship and their views on a continuum of abusive behaviour. This research should also focus on the opportunities for these young people to 'date', have an intimate relationship and their access to sex and relationship education that is focused on healthy relationships rather than risk.
- Future research should also aim to explore the attitudes towards and experiences of love, desire and pleasure within young intimate relationships.

- There needs to be a more intersectional approach to research with young people on this topic, in order to allow the space to explore the interactions of different positions on the nature of the progression of young people's relationships and any abuse suffered as part of these relationships.
- The design of future research in this area should be co-produced with an advisory group of young people who are representative of the research sample group.
- Future research in this area should focus on adopting a 'mixed methods' approach to gather both the attitudes and experiences of young people.
- The focus of research on young intimate relationships should include a specific emphasis on exploring the development and progression of these relationships, rather than a narrow focus on the abusive behaviour that may be experienced as part of these relationships. I would therefore suggest that the direction of future research with young women should focus on longitudinal research with young women focused on exploring the progression of their intimate relationships, with attention given to love, pleasure and desire.

8.4.2 Policy:

- The development of policy on 'healthy relationship' education in Wales should focus on a 'whole community approach' that includes a focus on tackling gender norms as its foundation. The focus of this policy should go beyond the school setting in order to incorporate key multi-agency stakeholders, parents/carers and the wider community as a whole. The ethos of including young people and other key stakeholders to co-produce intervention tools to be used with young people should also be a key component of this policy.

8.4.3 Practice:

- Abusive behaviour in teenage relationships was overtly displayed in schools, indicating a lack of awareness of acceptable behaviours. This reflects the fact that it has become acceptable among young people to display these types of behaviour in the public arena, reflecting their normalisation of verbal and emotional abuse. The visibility of this behaviour may not necessarily function as a protective factor, and requires specific consideration when designing prevention programmes.

- There were several barriers and enablers for young women when attempting to access support provision. The importance of privacy was crucial, as several young women noted that queuing for an appointment with the school nurse only served to raise questions and gossip (primarily around sex; in particular, contraception and unwanted pregnancies). The status of the professional was also important, as there was a general consensus that they would not access the school child protection lead, as this was often the Deputy Head. This was primarily due to their fear that the information would be shared and dealt with disproportionately, and due to their perception that this role was disengaged from the pupils.
- The young women wanted prevention interventions that empowered them to make informed choices and gave them the scripts to reject unwanted attention/requests, as they wanted to learn about “*How to say ‘no’ to guys, no to sex, no to pictures*” (Aleysha) and “*Need to know about respect and keeping sex lives private*” (Claire).
- There was a sense that young men’s abusive behaviour was natural, and was justified as a response to provocation by their girlfriends. This raises two key points for the design of prevention education. Firstly, there is a need to challenge our understanding of young men and men’s behaviour, gendered norms of femininity, masculinity, abuse, violence and aggression. Young people should receive education and support through the adoption of a gender lens, in order to understand how they use gender to naturalise, justify and excuse abusive behaviour (Sundaram, 2014). Secondly, there is a need to have structural and institutional responses focused on shaping youth mainstream cultures of gendered norms, rather than an individualistic approach focused on individual solutions and justifiable or expected behaviour. There needs to be a greater focus on developing spaces in order to enable young women to develop their own sexual identities, including a re-focus on sexual desire, pleasure and love.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE & INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

QUESTIONNAIRE: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

This questionnaire is part of a PhD research project conducted at the University of Lincoln. The questionnaire is in four parts and is about your views on 'healthy relationships'. The questionnaire is aimed towards young women aged 15-17 years old. It will take around 15 minutes to complete, mostly you just have to tick a box.

This questionnaire will be kept secret and all your answers will be treated confidentially. You do not have to give your name, so you can be totally honest.

None of the questions are about your own personal experiences or behaviour, they are about what you think is happening in your peer groups and your opinions about this and the culture around you.

By continuing, you are giving your consent for this information to be used, anonymously, in any resources that are produced as part of the research.

I realise you may not consider yourself an 'expert' on this topic, but your views are really important and I want to know more about them. There are no right or wrong answers, just what you think. It will really help if you complete the questionnaire.

If completing the questionnaire has left you with questions about 'healthy relationships', please see the attached list of organisations and resources for further information or advice.

IDENTIFIER CODE:

PART 1– This section looks at attitudes towards being a boy and a girl

1.1 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements, tick the box expressing your view.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Girls should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers than having a professional career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boys can stay out later than girls. You always have to know where a girls is, she is more vulnerable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boys are better leaders than girls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On a date, boys should be expected to pay for everything	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's important for boys to talk about their feelings, even if others laugh	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girls should care more about their appearance than boys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.2 Please tick **THREE** things from the following list which you think are considered most appealing in a boyfriend and girlfriend?

STATEMENT	BOYFRIEND	GIRLFRIEND
Having a good personality		
Wearing revealing clothing		
Sexually inexperienced		
Having a lot of money		
Being a good listener		
Being sexually experienced		
Knowing what they want		
A slim, toned body		
Intelligent		
Not being too emotional		
Being tough		
Honest about feelings		
Being flirtatious		
Having a good sense of humour		
A caring personality		
Being eager to please		

PART 2 – This section looks at what's 'ok' and 'not ok' in a relationship

2.1 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements, tick the box expressing your view.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Relationships work best when girlfriends please their boyfriends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boyfriends who slap once deserve a second chance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is never a reason for boyfriends to threaten their girlfriends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boyfriends should not damage their girlfriend's belongings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for boyfriends to slap girlfriends if they won't stop arguing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If girlfriends shout at their boyfriends it doesn't really hurt them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for boyfriends to be abusive if they say 'sorry' afterwards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girlfriends who make boyfriends jealous on purpose deserve to be slapped	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometimes girlfriends have to threaten their boyfriends to make them listen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for girlfriends to slap boyfriends if they have cheated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for boyfriends to slap their girlfriends if they get drunk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boyfriends sometimes cannot help but swear at their girlfriends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for boyfriends to expect that their girlfriends will kiss them all the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pushing or kicking is a good way for girlfriends to get back at boyfriends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girlfriends should not see their friends if it bothers their boyfriends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boyfriends should always start sexual activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boyfriends should let girlfriends have their own way all the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girlfriends should always be sexually available to their boyfriends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for boyfriends to use private information to make girlfriends do something	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

It's ok for boyfriends put pressure on girlfriends to have sex, but not to physically force them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boyfriends who text and phone their girlfriends all day are just being caring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for boyfriends to take charge of what their girlfriends spend their money on	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for boyfriends to post private photos of girlfriends online without asking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for boyfriends to cheat when in a relationship, but girlfriends should always be faithful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girlfriends should buy boyfriends gifts all the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girlfriends should be available to answer texts and Facebook messages all the time, but boyfriends can do as they please	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for boys to 'sleep around'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Abuse in gay relationships is not as serious as abuse in boyfriend/girlfriend relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girls who 'sleep around' are 'slags'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Groping/touching without asking is harmless	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rating the appearance of girls on social media is just a bit of fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.2 Story 1

Nia is 15 years old and Marc is 19 years old and they have been going out for the past 6 months. They spend all their free time together. Marc loves Nia and makes sure he tells her daily. He is always buying gifts and paying for Nia to go to the cinema with him. He likes to keep Nia's money safe for her as she tends to be scatty. Marc has just bought Nia a heart necklace and wants her to wear it all the time. Marc likes to make sure he spends Friday and Saturday nights with Nia. Nia suggested that they could spend some time with their friends this weekend, just for a change. Marc flipped out and they ended up arguing, with Marc shouting at Nia. He just doesn't like her mates and feels that they don't like him, they make him feel uncomfortable. She borrowed money from her mother to buy a new skirt and top to go around town with a few of her mates this Friday as she hasn't seen them properly for ages. Marc told her he really didn't like her outfit as it was too revealing. When Nia went to catch the 10 p.m. bus home, Marc was waiting in the bus stop in his car. He was very distant and commented on Nia's new skirt and how much leg she was showing. When he noticed that she had not worn her heart necklace to go out, he shouted and accused her of meeting someone on the sly. He said he felt 'hurt' that she decided not to be with him tonight; he spent the night looking at the revealing photos of Nia on his phone. If she continues to leave him alone at the weekend then, he just doesn't see the point of carrying on without her.

2.2.1 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements -tick the box expressing your view.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
It's 'sweet' that Marc tells Nia daily how much he loves her	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As it upsets Marc, Nia could have just changed her outfit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spending all your time with your boyfriend is good as he get to know everything about you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's ok for Marc to keep Nia's money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spending time away from your boyfriend is ok	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marc has the right to know what Nia is doing all the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If Nia wants an older boyfriend, then she needs to act mature and listen to Marc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nia provoked Marc by wearing her 'revealing' outfit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Catrin was worried about Nia when she saw that Marc was waiting for her in his car. He gave her the evils, didn't say anything, and basically dragged Nia into his car. She could hear him having a go at Nia for not wearing his tacky necklace. Catrin got the feeling that Marc would drop off Nia home in a huff and then spend the night texting and posting weird comments on Facebook. Nia is always defending Marc as if he's prince charming! She's changed, she's so quiet, doesn't attend netball as all she does is work and see Marc. But it was so nice to see her tonight and she must be getting a bit fed-up with Marc to say that she felt the necklace was a statement that she belonged to Marc....

Nia just felt like crying. Marc shouted at her in the car on their way home; she just felt crap. He squeezed her hand hard and said that if she wanted to be a 'bloody tart' like Catrin, then he would treat her like one. Marc has just texted to say that if she wanted to wear tarty skirts, then he might as well text photos of her from last weekend in his bedroom to his friends and post them on Facebook! Nia thought that she should just text 'sorry' and say she won't see Catrin for a while....Maybe Marc was right when he said that she didn't need friends anymore as she had him.

2.2.2 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements -tick the box expressing your view.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
'Grabbing' Nia into his car was 'harmless'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should stop being nosy, as relationships are private	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calling Nia a 'bloody tart' is ok and 'no big deal'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexting private photos without permission is ok as it's just fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nia should give Marc all her time and not see Catrin as it upsets him	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It would be a good idea for Nia to discuss her relationship with a sympathetic adult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.2.3 Do you think Catrin should intervene in some way? Please tick the relevant boxes

Catrin should offer help	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should talk to another friend	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should talk to Nia's family	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should talk to Marc	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should talk to one of Marc's friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should talk to her parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should talk to a teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should talk to a youth worker	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should talk to a sympathetic adult	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should talk to a professional organisation e.g. Childline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catrin should do nothing as this is a private matter between Nia and Marc	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.3 Story 2

Carys is 16 years old and is in a 1-year relationship with Sian, who is 22 years old. Last week, Carys rang her friend from school Darren, to see if he was available to meet, as she had argued with Sian again. When Darren arrives to meet Carys, he notices that Carys has a lot of makeup on her face to cover several marks, in particular a nasty bruise on her cheek. Darren asks Carys what happened and she explains that they had argued as Carys does not want to disclose their relationship to her parents. Also, Sian accused Carys of flirting with a mutual friend at a party they attended over the weekend. Carys was partly placing the blame of their argument on their alcohol consumption and felt that this was her own fault. She seemed particularly upset about the shouting and the constant 'put downs' about her fear of telling her family about their relationship. Sian got so angry she slapped Carys across the face and pushed her against the door frame while screaming that Carys was a 'liar'. Carys felt it was good that Sian apologised afterwards. Sian has threatened that if Carys told anyone about their argument, she would make sure that everyone knew Carys was a lesbian as she would post a comment and change her status on Facebook.

Carys feels that she provoked Sian and doesn't want anyone to know as she just feels weak and pathetic. Darren was concerned as Carys has lost a lot of weight and is constantly checking her mobile phone. Sian contacted Carys several times when she was over at Darren's house.

2.3.1 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements, tick the box expressing your view

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Carys should just tell her family about her relationships with Sian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carys should make sure that she doesn't provoke Sian by flirting with other girls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's not ok for Sian to post comments and change her status on Facebook without Carys's permission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Darren should not interfere as it's a private matter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's not serious as it's just two girls fighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carys needs to act more maturely if she wants to be in a relationship with a girl older than her	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sian was just showing how much she cares about Carys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arguing, getting physical and shouting is just part of being in an intimate relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carys should be glad that Sian wants to be with her	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Darren should talk to Carys and try to help her	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carys should have the freedom to tell her family about her sexuality when she is ready	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's not serious as Carys didn't need medical attention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.4 How many girls/women do you think suffer abuse? Please tick ONE option below
1 in 4 1 in 6 1 in 8 1 in 12
2.5 Tick from the following what you feel are examples of abuse...

Hitting / Punching	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pushing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Demanding sex	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sending sexual images without asking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dictating clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Being Tough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making threats	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flirting with someone else	<input type="checkbox"/>
Groping without asking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Breaking belongings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keeping Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cheating	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asking for Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	Checking mobile/email/Facebook without permission	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>		

2.6 Why do you think boys/men are abusive... Tick ONE options from the following list

They are under stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	They want to control girls/women	<input type="checkbox"/>
They abuse alcohol/drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	No one stops them	<input type="checkbox"/>
They have been abused as children	<input type="checkbox"/>	They are sick	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	Boys/Men are more powerful than girls/ women	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify)			

Part 3: This section looks at Healthy Relationships

3.1 Which words do you think describe an 'unhealthy relationship'? Tick **THREE** options from the list

Supported	<input type="checkbox"/>	Respectful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jealous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	Passionate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caring	<input type="checkbox"/>
Possessive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Selfish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Controlling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Compromise	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.2 Which words do you think describes a 'healthy relationship'? Tick **THREE** options from the list

Supported	<input type="checkbox"/>	Respectful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jealous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	Passionate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caring	<input type="checkbox"/>
Possessive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Selfish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Controlling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Compromise	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.3 Do you think there is enough information available for young people on 'healthy relationships'? Tick **one** box below

YES NO

3.4 More specifically, is there enough information about: Tick the options that apply.

Topic	Yes	No	Don't know
How social media shows sex and relationships			
What consent means in a relationship			
Support services available			

3.5 Are there any other topics you would like to be able to find more information about?

3.6 If you have any comments that you would like to make, please write below

PART 4: About You

This section asks some details about you, all answers given are confidential.

4.1 Age:

4.2 School year:

4.3 Are you eligible to receive school meals?: Yes No Don't know

4.4 Which of the following describes your ethnic group? Choose **ONE** of the following answers

- | | |
|---|--|
| White UK <input type="checkbox"/> | Black / African / Caribbean / Black British <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mixed / multiple ethnic groups <input type="checkbox"/> | Other ethnic group <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Asian / Asian British <input type="checkbox"/> | |

4.5 Which County do you live in? : Ynys Mon Gwynedd Other

4.6 What is your main language at home? :

4.7 How would you describe your current living arrangements? Choose **the relevant** answers

- | | |
|--|---|
| Living on my own <input type="checkbox"/> | Living in residential care <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Living with partner <input type="checkbox"/> | Living with foster carers <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Living with your children <input type="checkbox"/> | Living with friends <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Living with both parents <input type="checkbox"/> | Living with one parent <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other - Please specify:

4.8 What are your aims on leaving school/college? Choose **the relevant** answers

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Full time education <input type="checkbox"/> | Paid job <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Training <input type="checkbox"/> | Unpaid work <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Start a family <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other - Please specify:

4.9 People are different in their sexual attraction to other people. Which best describes your feelings, are you mostly attracted to:-

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Boys/men <input type="checkbox"/> | Both <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Girls/women <input type="checkbox"/> | Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other - Please specify:

4.10 Which of the following do you use? Choose the relevant answers

Mobile phone without internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile phone with internet	<input type="checkbox"/>
Household PC/laptop	<input type="checkbox"/>	Own PC/laptop	<input type="checkbox"/>
Household ipad/tablet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Own ipad/tablet	<input type="checkbox"/>
Webcam	<input type="checkbox"/>	Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>
Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – Please Specify:	

4.11 Have you ever 'gone out' or been in an intimate relationship with a boy/girl? YES NO

4.12 If yes, how many intimate partners have you had?

4.13 Are you currently 'going out'/ in a relationship with a boy/girl? YES NO
If so, for how long?

4.14 In the space provided, which THREE words would you use to describe your current relationship?

See overleaf....

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

If you wish to take part in a one to one interview on this topic please contact Ceryl Teleri Davies at cdavies@lincoln.ac.uk.

NOTE: PLEASE SEE THE FURTHER INFORMATION LIST BELOW, THE RESEARCH INFORMATION LEAFLET AND THE LEAFLET ON HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you want to find out more about the issues covered in this questionnaire, or think you might need some support, here are some good places to start.

Freephone 24 hour National domestic violence helpline: 0808 2000247

Advice for girls from NHS on relationships:

www.nhs.uk/livewell/teengirls/Pages/Teengirlshome.aspx

Childline: A private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen: Helpline: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

Expect Respect Toolkit:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97773/teen-abuse-toolkit.pdf

NSPCC Cymru Tel: 0844 892 0290

Welsh Women's Aid Tel: UK freephone: 0808 80 10 800

http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/index.php?option=com_alfcontact&Itemid=57

This is Abuse: <http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/>

Victim Support: <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/> Tel: 0845 30 30 900

AVA, How to help your mates leaflets: [http://www.avaproject.org.uk/our-resources/reports--publications/children,-young-people-and-domestic-violence-how-to-help-your-mates-leaflet-\(2008\).aspx](http://www.avaproject.org.uk/our-resources/reports--publications/children,-young-people-and-domestic-violence-how-to-help-your-mates-leaflet-(2008).aspx)

www.hideout.org.uk

www.respect4us.org.uk

www.there4me.com

In case of an emergency, call the police on 999 for immediate help.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Introduction

Icebreaker, rapport building, outline ethical issues (reiterate consent, confidentiality, selecting false name, right to withdraw, skip questions, no right or wrong answers, safeguarding responsibility etc.)

2. Perception of relationships

- How would you describe a ‘close’ relationship? (e.g. boyfriend/girlfriend type relationship).
- What does it mean to be in a relationship- what does it give you?
- Are intimate relationships something that you discuss/talk about with friends?
- Are there different peer pressures on girls than boys to be in a relationship?
- How do you think boys and girls talk about their feelings?
- Should boys and girls play a particular role in relationships?
- What tends to be the age of boyfriends/girlfriends within your peer group? (If older-ask) Are there different expectations if boyfriends are older?
- Do boys and girls talk differently about relationships?

3. Relationship experience

- Are you currently/ have you ever been in a close relationship? (*if no, focus on ideas/perception of relationships around them & vignettes- go to section 4*)
- What has been your longest/most serious relationship?
- Explore nature & progression of this relationship. Did you talk about it just being you and him/her in a relationship? Who brought that up and how was the decision made to be exclusive? (*probe further regarding feelings around this dependent on answers*).

4. Decision making/coercive control

Gerallt and Lowri went shopping together and found a dress that Gerallt approved of for the school ‘after exams’ party. They had a great time at the party and were both looking forward to the summer holidays. Gerallt and Lowri both had summer jobs. Lowri and her friends decide to visit Gerallt at his workplace, McDonalds. When Gerallt sees Lowri walk in his face gets really red and he wouldn’t speak to her. After the girls order their food, Gerallt comes out of the back and starts yelling at Lowri for being out without him and trying to embarrass him by watching him work. He calls her names and knocks the food tray out of her hands and storms off.

- *(Discuss vignette if participant has limited relationships experience to draw upon)* What do you think is going on here? Have you come across any of these issues?
- How were feelings expressed and demonstrated in the relationship?
- How would you describe your behaviour towards each other?
- Nature of contact-how, frequency, why? *(probe further: do you reply straightaway?)*.
- What was up to you in the relationship? *(probe further with questions below dependent on answer)*
- Who tended to make the decisions?
- Who's choice was it around how often/when/where you met?
- What happened if you didn't want to do what he/she wanted to do?
- If you wanted to spend time with your mates- what was his/her response to this?
- Have you ever been in a situation where your boyfriend/girlfriend has tried to sort of stop you from spending time with your mates?

5. Social Media

- a) *Nia is really worried. She finished with her boyfriend today and he is now threatening to post her private pictures on Facebook! He has started to circulate some embarrassing rumours about her. She just can't face seeing anyone and doesn't know who to tell about this.*
- b) *Ceris is crying and telling her friend how much she loves her boyfriend, but she is also confused as he has threatened to 'finish with her' unless she de-friends all her male contacts on Facebook. Her boyfriend has also been signing into her Facebook account and reading her messages.*

- *(Discuss vignettes if participant has limited relationships experience to draw upon)* What do you think is going on here? Have you come across any of these issues?
- Which social media devices do you tend to use to keep in contact?
- If via mobile phone (texting/phoning)- What did you generally discuss?
- How often do you text/phone/email/Facebook your boyfriend/girlfriend in a day if you are not together? *(probe: explore the patterns, progression and feelings around this)*.
- Did it ever feel like it was too little or too much?

6. Physical harm

a) *Lois felt happy to be going out with Osian, the best looking lad in the school! Lois feels so happy to be with him she doesn't care that he tends to check up on her. But it does start to 'get her down' when he makes comments that she flirts with Owain, her neighbour, when she hasn't even seen him for ages! He flew off the handle yesterday when she was sunbathing in her bikini in the garden. He threw her magazine at her when she wouldn't change into her tracksuit. It was so hot and she was enjoying her chill in the garden- until he arrived! There was a red mark on her thigh where the magazine had landed, but it didn't really hurt. Lois thought he got so mad because he loves her so much and maybe it would be a good idea for her to change into her tracksuit.*

b) *Delyth and Aled are two GSCE students who have been seeing each other for the past 3 months. They have gone to a party at a friend's house, where they have a few WKDs and beer. They both enjoy the party and meet up with their friends from school. Delyth chatted with an ex-boyfriend for a few minutes at the party. Aled is convinced he saw Delyth give her ex-boyfriend a quick cuddle as they were leaving the party. After they leave, Aled questions Delyth about her ex-boyfriend and wants to know why she was cuddling and flirting with him. Delyth is drunk and tries to 'laugh off' Aled's questions. He grabs Delyth and hits her across her arm. She is injured and requires medical attention. This is not the first time this kind of thing has happened.*

- *(Discuss vignettes if participant has limited relationships experience to draw upon)* What do you think is going on here? Have you come across any of these issues?
- If he/she was annoyed- how did he/she tend to show this? *(probe further dependent on answer)*
- Have you ever had a boyfriend/girlfriend who gets upset/angry?
- What sort of things made him/her upset/angry?
- Have you ever been in a relationship with someone who gets upset/angry quickly?
- When it comes to kind of pushing and shoving, do you think that happens in relationships? If so, is that something that's ok? Who tends to do the pushing and he shoving?
- Has this ever happened to you? (explore: 1st incident, most recent incident, most serious incident)

7. Sexual harm

a) Karen and Gareth had gone to the 6th form party together last Saturday night. At the party, they were kissing and touching each other. Gareth wanted to take things further, but Karen didn't want to, but she felt ok about carrying on kissing and touching. Gareth felt really annoyed as he had heard stories and seen Facebook comments indicating that Karen had been 'sleeping' with her previous boyfriend. Gareth felt that she must love her ex-boyfriend more than him. He really didn't feel like stopping and didn't really want to take 'no' for an answer.

- (*Discuss vignette if participant has limited relationships experience to draw upon*) What do you think is going on here? Have you come across any of these issues?
- Sexual progression- How did your first kiss come about? (*probe*: who started it, how did it make you feel?).
- Do you think that boys feel more or less pressure from their friends to do/discuss sexual stuff?
- Did you ever have to do anything you didn't feel comfortable doing? (*probe further* dependent on answer: pressure to take things further in a kind of sexual way & feelings about this, can it happen the other way round: that it's the girl pressurising the boy?)

8. General- closing questions on relationships

- Do you think that boys/girls see relationships differently? If so, how?
- If you were making a relationship cake! - What ingredients would you need to make a good cake?
- Are there drawbacks to being in a relationship?

9. Support

- Who do you think should offer advice/support on relationships? Where would you go for advice/support on relationships?
- Would anything stop you from talking about your relationship?
- What support is available locally?
- Would any further information help?
- Do you think schools should offer sessions/teaching on relationships? What should the content include?
- If you were the head of education- what three things would you change about relationships guidance/support/teaching?

APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH AREA

Area One: This is a vast rural county in North West Wales covering an area of 520,875 hectares, the second largest county in Wales covering 12% of Wales (ONS, 2011). The county is split into three main areas: A (which includes a city and a major town and also borders a neighbouring local authority), D (covering a national beauty spot) and M (which borders another local authority towards mid Wales). The local council provides a spectrum of public services for 121,900 residents, with a population growth of 4.3% (5,057 people) in comparison to a national average growth of 5.5%. In 2012 the median household income was £22,369, which is 10.0% lower than the national average income of £24,848 and 21.3% lower than the UK figure of £28,41 (source: local council). Across the county, there are 102 primary schools, 14 secondary schools and three special needs schools, with all schools accepting both male and female pupils. All secondary schools are 11 – 18 community schools, apart from the M/D area where the secondary schools are 11 – 16 community, with the post-16 provision at a local tertiary college, with the exception of one high school in the area. The majority of primary schools are also community schools, but a small number of schools are linked to the Church in Wales or the Catholic Church some of which are voluntary controlled schools, and a smaller number being voluntary aided schools. Regarding diversity, 1.9% of the population is ethnic minority, and 65.4% of the county's residents speak Welsh (this equates to 77,000 people), in comparison to a Welsh national average of 19% (ONS, 2011). The council operates a bilingual policy throughout all schools to ensure that students are provided with the necessary opportunities in order to develop their language skills aligned with their community culture. The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age eligible for free school meals is 13.6%, which is lower than the Welsh average of 19.3% (Estyn, 2013). In summary, an inspection by Estyn in 2013 judged the local authority's education services for children and young people as 'adequate'. A useful summary of the education system in Wales is illustrated from the Estyn report extract below:

Overall judgement: Adequate

- *performance at key stage 4 does not compare well to that of similar schools in other authorities across Wales;*
- *attendance in too many secondary schools is in the lower quartiles in comparison with similar schools on the free school-meal benchmarks;*
- *the authority's arrangements for supporting and challenging schools are not robust enough and have not had enough impact on improving outcomes;*

- *the authority has not made enough progress in the management and governance of safeguarding; and*
- *the number and proportion of surplus places in the schools, in both the primary and secondary sectors, remain amongst the highest in Wales.*

However:

- *at key stage 3, performance against the core subject indicator is the best in Wales;*
- *In 2012 no learners left school without any recognised qualification. This is the best in performance in Wales against this indicator;*
- *the authority's language policy is successful in ensuring good progression in the proportion of pupils studying Welsh first language across the key stages and many pupils succeed in attaining a GCSE pass at grades A*-C in Welsh first language at the end of key stage 4;*
- *the youth service has succeeded well in increasing the number of young people who gain accredited units or qualifications, and in promoting apprenticeships, entrepreneurship and learning pathways;*
- *a number of well-established partnerships contribute extensively to the offer of experiences for children and young people including partnerships within the council and those of the council with the, health board, social services, police, youth support services and education and training providers; and*
- *the authority's corporate financial leadership is strong. The authority manages resources well in order to deal with reductions in its revenue budget.*

(Estyn, 2013, A report on the quality of local authority education services for children and young people– March 2013).

Area Two: This is a small island covering an area of 71,124 hectares, the second smallest local authority in Wales. The county council provides a spectrum of public services for 69,751 residents in comparison to a population of 66,829 in 2001 (ONS, 2011). At £396, the median weekly pay for full-time workers in the area is around £19 less than the Welsh median. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005 ranks specific small areas in Wales in terms of deprivation: 2% of this area falls in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales, but the majority of its areas are more deprived than the Wales average (WAG, 2008b). Across the county, there are 48 primary schools, five secondary schools and one special needs schools; all are 11-18 comprehensive schools, accepting both males and

females. The majority of primary schools are also community schools, with one foundation school, and a small number of schools are linked to the Church in Wales or the Catholic Church, some of which are controlled by the local authority, with one being a voluntary school aided by the local authority (local authority website). Regarding diversity, 0.7% of the population is ethnic minority and 57.2% of the county's residents Welsh speakers, in comparison to the Welsh average of 19% (ONS, 2011). The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age eligible for free school meals is 18.8%, which is lower than the Welsh average of 19.7 % (Estyn, 2012). In summary, an inspection by Estyn in 2012 judged the local authority's education services for children and young people as 'unsatisfactory'. A useful summary of the education system in Wales is illustrated from the Estyn report extract below:

Overall judgement: Unsatisfactory

The local authority's education services for children and young people are unsatisfactory because:

- *standards for children and young people are below what could be expected at all key stages;*
- *attendance rates in secondary schools are unacceptably low;*
- *the school improvement service is inadequate;*
- *not enough progress has been made in planning for school places;*
- *operational leadership in the delivery of education has not driven improvements in areas of underperformance and schools and officers have not been held to account; and*
- *business planning and risk-assessment processes have not been robust enough to identify and address the slow pace of progress in education services and schools.*

Capacity to improve: Unsatisfactory, The local authority has unsatisfactory prospects for improvement because:

- *there has been long-term underperformance at service level;*
- *the pace of action to bring about improvement has been too slow in the past to assure inspectors that improvement can follow this inspection without external challenge;*
- *self-evaluation processes have been patchy and progress against recommendations made in previous inspections has been limited;*
- *school leaders have not been held to account; and*

- *service level lines of accountability are unclear.*

APPENDIX 4: OUTCOME OF ADVISORY GROUP DISCUSSION

There were two advisory groups in two different schools in different areas (two hours' drive apart). Both groups adopted the same ethos, ground rules and responsibilities. However, the group role is slightly different, due to the aim of fully using the time slots of both groups to practically cover the advisory and piloting workload. In summary, Group one focused on advising on all elements of the questionnaire, from the more complex issues exploring the changes in the vignettes and all the questionnaire tables, to advising on the clarity and language adopted in the instructions, service support pathways and accompanying leaflet; whilst Group two advised on the vignettes and the attitudes tables and undertook the piloting and pre-testing work.

Group one consisted of 13 young women, with 12 young women aged 15 years old and one young woman aged 16 years old (all from year 10); the group membership remained stable throughout all four sessions. Group two originally consisted of 12 young women, eight from year 10 and four from year 11. However, by the second group session, two young women did not attend, but an additional 12 young women attended, resulting in an overall group size of 22. Ideally, a smaller group would have been more suitable, but as the young women were waiting in the classroom, the researcher felt it was not possible at that stage to restrict participation. Despite the group size, the young women engaged well and worked effectively in their pairs. Consent forms were received from all the young women, with their parents/caregivers agreeing to their daughter's participation by effectively providing passive consent. A learning support officer was allocated to 'sit in' on for the first session of Group one, primarily to assist if any of the young women felt upset or uncomfortable by any aspect of the group discussion. This was helpful, in particular when enquiring further about the school's practice around language needs and bilingual lesson delivery. The majority of the young women were first language Welsh speakers; however, three of the young women from Group one were Welsh learners. To assist their learning needs, Group one was facilitated bilingually, both via the translation of all documents, but also through the verbal delivery of sessions. All members of Group two were fluent Welsh speakers, therefore all sessions were delivered in Welsh, but all documents used were bilingual. The young women were advised to call me by my first name, reiterating my role as a researcher, rather than the formal role of the 'Miss' and 'Sir' of their school. The young women demonstrated a relatively short attention span, with half-hour sessions generally best suited to their learning styles. Despite the bilingual facilitation of the advisory group, the benefit of local knowledge assisted in the understanding of local nuances and youth sub-culture.

A ‘step-by-step’ colourful session outline was presented on a flipchart at the front of the classroom to clearly outline all session plans. For Group one, in order to reduce the disruption on the teaching timetable, it was agreed that sessions would be arranged at different days and times. Also, in order to highlight the voluntary nature of the group, some of the sessions were arranged to run before, during and after lunchtime period. Group two was facilitated at the same time on a weekly basis, which was the slot provided for ‘guest speaker’ sessions. To ease arrangements, the initial session commenced by reiterating key messages following on from the project presentation delivered in July; this highlighted details from the project information leaflet and consent form. Ground rules were explained and agreed, in order to establish clear boundaries and expectations. In addition to a focus on the practical elements of the research, the introductory section also included two icebreaker exercises as outlined below:-

1). The first exercise focused on asking: *If marooned on a desert island-what three items would you take?*

For Group one, the young women worked in pairs to decide on their priorities. The majority focused on bringing food, drink and a social media device, the most popular being their I-pad, rather than a mobile phone. Four of the young women elected to have a friend, one would bring her boyfriend and none of the young women chose to bring a family member. Due to the room layout, Group two worked in small groups. The most popular choice by far for this group was their phone, but they also emphasised the importance of having Wi-Fi, and elected to use one of their choices to ensure internet access on the desert island.

2). The second exercise was formulated based on the ‘*stand-up/sit down*’ participatory exercise. This exercise was an age-appropriate method of getting the young women to discuss their interests, e.g., *who walks to school? Who watches Hollyoaks?* If they answered the question positively, they swapped seats; whoever was without a seat asked the next question.

3). The *diamond ranking exercise*: The first exercise focused on gathering ideas on the topic as whole, using a visual tool/worksheet, as it is suggested that the use of physical ‘props/aids’ can assist to engage young people, and in ‘breaking the ice’ to establish rapport (Kirby, 2004). The focus was for them to decide, in groups, which questions they thought were the most important to be asked about intimate teenage relationships, and rank their ideas in a diamond shape. The results outlined below are from both groups' discussions, see Table 14 below:-

DIAMOND RANKING	GROUP FEEDBACK	EMERGING THEMES	IMPACT ON QUESTIONNAIRE
Rank 1	<p><i>Communication,</i></p> <p><i>If you get on well/</i></p> <p><i>Lots of arguments?</i></p> <p><i>Do you feel peer pressure is a factor in a relationship?</i></p> <p><i>Is there trust in him?</i></p> <p><i>Trust</i></p> <p><i>Do you trust him?</i></p> <p><i>Respect</i></p> <p><i>Trust in a relationship</i></p>	Trust and respect discussed as the priority.	Ensure that questions are implemented in the questionnaire to explore attitudes in relationships towards trust and respect in relationships.
Rank 2	<p><i>Trust, Consent,</i></p> <p><i>How often do you spend time with them outside school/work?</i></p> <p><i>How long do you spend talking to them on social media?</i></p> <p><i>What makes you feel safe in a relationship?</i></p> <p><i>What makes a happy relationship?</i></p> <p><i>How much time do you spend together?</i></p> <p><i>Do you really love each other?</i></p> <p><i>Respect, sex</i></p> <p><i>Is there a future? / do you argue?</i></p> <p><i>do you feel like he takes advantage?/ respect</i></p>	Again, trust and respect an emerging theme, but also how much time should be spend with an intimate partner.	Discussed in the vignettes and links to the perception of controlling behaviour and healthy relationships.
Rank 3	<p><i>Respect, boundaries, sexuality</i></p> <p><i>Judgemental/do they accept you/do you feel as if you have to hide/feel embarrassed about certain things,</i></p> <p><i>how long do you talk on social media, Act differently around each other/act differently around friends to when they are with you/ do you treat each other fairly/with respect</i></p> <p><i>What age is appropriate to get intimate? How long into the relationship is it suitable to tell your parents/introduce him/her to your</i></p>	Social media, sex and the role of parents was a key discussion point for this rank discussion.	Discussed in the vignettes.

	<p>parents?</p> <p><i>What do you think is an appropriate age difference?</i></p> <p><i>Do you get forced to do something that you don't want to do?</i></p> <p><i>Do you know each other's background?</i></p> <p><i>How long do you spend communicating?</i></p> <p><i>Do you speak over the internet, if so; do you know who is on the other side? (Catfish)</i></p> <p><i>Discuss relationship with parents, pregnancy, how long have you been in the relationship</i></p> <p><i>Did you lose your virginity to him, do you feel like he takes advantage of you, do your friends and family approve of him</i></p> <p><i>Does he make you do things? e.g. sex</i></p>		
Rank 4	<p><i>Understanding, feeling comfortable/safe,</i></p> <p><i>Are you proud of him/are you ashamed of the relationship?</i></p> <p><i>Are you willing to tell your parents about him?</i></p> <p><i>Should you get to know them before getting into a relationship or does it not matter?</i></p> <p><i>Do you think that disagreements contribute to a healthy relationship?</i></p> <p><i>How long have you been going out/have you finished before/On/Off relationship?</i></p> <p><i>Have you met the each other's family?</i></p> <p><i>Parent's view on the length of the relationships</i></p> <p><i>Trust, abuse, relationship, loyalty, pregnancy, parents</i></p> <p><i>Does he make time for you?</i></p> <p><i>Does he force you to do things-</i></p>	<p>Similar themes to the above rank, however, by this stage, the group discussion was more specific e.g. does he force you to do things?</p>	<p>Discussed in vignettes and statements.</p>

	<i>send pictures, sex, drugs, alcohol..?</i>		
Rank 5	<i>Attraction</i> <i>Do you feel pressurised to do certain things</i> <i>Is it possible for a relationship to develop over the internet?</i> <i>Do you argue a lot?</i> <i>Loyalty</i> <i>How long the relationship lasts?</i> <i>Friendship</i> <i>Has he ever cheated?</i>	The key theme at this stage was loyalty, friendship and the development of a healthy relationship.	Vignette 2 was amended to incorporate this theme.

Table 15

This information informed the design of the questionnaire as key issues and themes emerged that required incorporating as part of the vignettes, statement and questions.

All the young women in Group one posted their views on the characteristics they found most appealing in a partner, their comments cards were placed anonymously in the suggestion box, see Table 16 below.:-

Young Women (numbers allocated randomly)	Characteristic 1	Characteristic 2	Characteristic 3
YW 1	Cuddling/good hugs	Tall	Smells good
YW 2	Good personality	Trust	Ability to cook
YW 3	Funny	Hot (face and body)	Fun
YW 4	Good personality	Wants to be with you because of your character, not just to have sex	Respect everyone
YW 5	Good sense of humour	Caring	Understanding
YW 6	Makes you laugh	Good looking	Makes you feel nice
YW 7	Personality	Trust	How they look
YW 8	Loving	Honest	Thinks of others
YW 9	Kind with me and others	Attraction	Dependable
YW 10	Sexy	Sweet	Funny
YW 11	Caring	Good sense of humour	Attractive
YW 12	Good personality	Respects you for being yourself	Cuddly and caring

Table 16

These views were used to inform the design of Tables 1.3 and 1.4 of the questionnaire.

In pairs, the young women evaluated Table 1.1 on the attitudes towards being a boy and a girl. They were asked to consider the clarity of the statement and to note with a colour sticker any statements that they did not like or that did not make sense. Useful feedback was received, resulting in the removal of particular statements:-

Boys have different attitudes to computers to girls. Boys use them to play games and girls use them to do homework

Group one as a whole did not like this statement and commented that it was generally accepted that computers were used for different reasons by everyone (games, homework, shopping, social media, music etc). Mostly the young women from Group two did not like

or agree with the statements challenging gender norms, e.g., *boys and girls should do the dishes, only boys can be airline pilots etc.* The general views were that some of the statements were too sexist, which generally reflected their attitudes to gender norms and expectations. Particular statements, for example, *it bothers me when boys act like girls*, were highlighted as requiring amendments to make the statement more specific, e.g., to relate the statement to a specific personality trait. Additional statements were also discussed, with the following suggested as options to be included in the questionnaire:-

Girls should care about their appearance more than boys

It's ok for boys to cheat

If a boy 'sleeps around', it makes him a proper 'man'

If a girl 'sleeps around', she should be labelled as a 'slut' or a 'slag'

Girls asking about a boy's height is just like a boy asking about a girl's weight

Girls should buy their boyfriend's gifts

Boys should buy their girlfriends gifts

It's essential for a boy to start the conversation around texting, Snapchatting and Facebook

General comments from both advisory groups suggested that the order of the statement response categories should be changed from:

Strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree, don't know

To

Strongly agree, agree, don't know, strongly disagree, disagree

The original order was implemented to avoid planting the perception of the 'don't know' choice as a 'middle ground'. However, this response does provide a 'neutral' selection choice and, as a result of the comments received, the order of the responses was changed (see also discussion in the questionnaire design stage, section 4.4.5).

The group discussion of the three vignettes focused on asking the young women to describe their immediate reaction to the stories, language and characters depicted. The comments reflected that both groups preferred a longer vignette with more details and liked responding to the statements in separate tables as the story developed. There were key suggestions to amend some of the story:-

'The bus ticket should change to something else, but the story is realistic'

In the draft of story three, Mark met Nia to go home on the bus; the story was amended so that Marc was characterised as an older boyfriend with his own car. Following both advisory groups, the impact of having an older boyfriend was identified as a key theme missing from the draft questionnaire. With regard to the statement on Marc's financial control of Nia's money (*It's so kind of Marc to keep Nia's money and to pay for everything*), the advisory groups wanted further information to explicitly reflect this point. A few comments were received that the final statement, *'he just doesn't see the point of 'carrying on' without her'*, was not explicit enough to distinguish whether he was making threats to hurt/kill himself or finish his relationship with Nia. However, the researcher left this point as it is there to allow more 'open' feedback and trigger discussion during the qualitative stage.

General comments received on all the vignettes, which illustrated their views and informed further amendments:-

- *Nia is a 'pushover' and is 'blinded' by love, she is scared and feels threatened.*
- *Marc was described as a blackmailer, selfish, threatening, pushy, clingy, controlling, possessive, obsessive, powerful, and demanding.*
- *It was a secure, mature relationship in the beginning and then became obsessive.*

They were then asked to consider whether the stories required changing:-

"As a student studying for my GCSEs I have not come across this type of thing, but when I think about it I can believe that it would happen" (Comment on story one)

"I don't think vodka is the type of alcoholic beverage I would drink, maybe WKD or lager. But to be honest, vodka is drunk, but on its own" (Comment on story one)

"Not realistic, change the glass bottle, I think he would hurt her with his body not object (e.g. grabbing her)" (Comment on story 1- In the first draft of the vignette a glass bottle was used as a weapon).

"The story is realistic, but, I did get slightly confused about who was who. Perhaps make 'Gwen' a boy to make it less confusing. Slightly too long" (Comment on story two-In the first draft the character of Darren was a female character called Gwen).

“How old are they? More details is needed on the pictures” (comment on story two).

“Marc has just texted to say that is she wanted to wear ‘tarty’ skirts...”

Marc has just texted to say that if she wants to ‘hang out’ with everyone but him...

Comments on the use of the word ‘tarty’, as a result, this word was changed to ‘slutty’”. (Suggested changes to story three)

During the discussion on where young people would seek support, all the young women noted that they would not discuss their concerns with a teacher, with three quarters of the groups stating that they would discuss their concerns with a parent or their friend’s parent. However, the majority reflected concern about telling someone about their friend’s experiences and ‘going behind her back’; this was seen as something that just was not done. One young woman suggested that she would phone Childline anonymously to seek advice and support to assist her friend. The general consensus outlined was that encouragement would be given to their friend to discuss her situation directly with a sympathetic adult, with their concerns increasing if abuse occurred more than once. Suggestions were offered on how to seek help/address the issues in Mark and Nia’s relationships:-

- *Talk to Marc and Nia separately and offer to talk to them together,*
- *This is a private matter, I would not tell anyone,*
- *Talk to another friend for advice,*
- *I would ask my mother for advice.*

Group one agreed that the introduction, support services information and project leaflet did not require amending. The leaflets were drafted in an age-appropriate manner and discussed with the advisory group, with consideration given to good practice when drafting information sheets/leaflets (SCIE, 2013). The benefits are explained as,

The design and development of data collection tools is often something that young researchers are keen to get involved in, as this gives them a direct stake in the research and the questions being asked (Shaw et al, 2011, p. 46).

A few comments on the Welsh translation indicated that the words required amending, in particular, the Welsh version of ‘sexting’ adopted, which was generally not used or understood. As a result, as part of the Welsh translation, the English word ‘sexting’ was simply adopted.

At the end of the group sessions, a comments form was circulated in order to gather the general views on the questionnaire focusing on *what worked well, what required developing and any other comments*. The themes gathered from the responses/data received suggested that:-

What worked well?	What required developing	Any comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of different stories • Everybody gets to give their opinion • Everybody had the chance to voice their views on the stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some wording of some of the questions after the stories • A little more detail/background information on the characters in the stories. • More detail on some of the stories 	Overall, all the sessions were a success and I enjoyed taking part.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The short stories (experiences) • Discussion on the stories and experiences. • The structure of the stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left blank 	Left blank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The short stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left blank 	Left blank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left blank 	Left blank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Short stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left blank 	Left blank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left blank 	Left blank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in discussion groups • Discussing realistic situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss scenarios with older males 	Left blank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vignettes are interesting and keep the reader interested. • The questions are simple to understand and not too long winded. • It's easy to make a connection between the story and the questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some detail is added into the questions that aren't told to the reader in the story. • Some words in inverted commas don't need to be and make the story confusing. • Some questions are too similar. 	It was really fun. Thank you for everything and for letting us miss lessons!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We worked together • Everyone shared their opinions • Everyone had a change to say that they wanted to say 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some working of the questions/story • More detail with some of the stories • More details of the 	Overall it worked well and I enjoyed it.

	characters	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of different situations within relationships. • Good personal questions. • Clear and interesting statements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some details in the first story. • Use of clearer vocabulary. • Some story situations can be unrealistic. 	Left blank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions relevant to the stories. • Statements that were easy to understand and relevant. • Different situations in relationships of young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some unrealistic parts of the stories. • Some unclear details in story 1. • Some unclear details. 	Left blank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the questionnaire is split into sections. • The good range in the answers (i.e. strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree, don't know). • The use of 'post it notes' to express our views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the words used • Need to look at the age gap in relationships 	Left blank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to see and discuss the stories by offering comments. • The use of colour dots to separate questions into categories. • The use of 'post it notes' to express our views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the detail in the stories. 	Left blank

Table 17

As a general evaluation of the advisory group process a 'head, heart, carrier bag and dustbin' form was circulated, focusing on *what they had learnt, what they had felt, what they would take away and anything that they would leave behind*. The feedback received is outlined below:-

Young Women	Head: What they had learnt	Heart: What they had felt	Carrier bag: What they would take away	Dustbin: What they would leave behind
YW 1	Other people's opinions and viewpoints	As if I was being trusted	How to recognise a private relationship	People's private experiences
YW 2	Making decision about a serious relationship and	I feel better because I know where to go if I	The evaluation on the short	Left blank

	about getting on well	need help!	stories	
YW 3	Make a decision on a relationship	I know where to go for help	Left blank	Left blank
YW 4	How to make a decision when the time comes	I felt better to ask for help	Left blank	Left blank
YW 5	How to make decision when it comes to serious relationships	I felt better asking for help	Left blank	Left blank
YW 6	How to make decisions	Feel better asking for help		Left blank
	Knowing who to go to for advice	Left blank	Left blank	Left blank
YW 7	Different points of view	I felt closer to the people in the room	Other people's opinions	What's happened to people and not to tell anyone
YW 8	Different viewpoints on certain situations	That I got to know other people taking part in the session	Other people's opinions	Stories shared by member in the group
YW 9	Communication is important in a relationship	Left blank	Other opinions and different sides of the stories	Negative topics
YW 10	Communication is important in a relationship	Left blank	Other opinions	Left blank
YW 11	Communication and feeling comfortable in a relationship is important	Related to some of the issues	Important points on a good relationship	Nothing
YW 12	How to develop my opinion on certain things	Feel for people in difficult relationships	Important points on keeping a good relationship	Certain views on relationship 'situations'

Table 18

A clear acknowledgement of their role was recognised with a certificate for their portfolio as a record of their contribution (Shaw et al, 2011). Due to resource limitations, it was not intended that the group role would extend to focus on the research findings.

APPENDIX 5: PEN PICTURES: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Participant	Age	School Year	Area	Relationship Status
1. Chloe	15 years old	Year 11	Rural	Yes, Chloe was in a relationship that lasted a year.
2. Michelle	16 years old	Year 11	Rural	Yes, Michelle had been in several relationships, but was currently single.
3. Becky	18 years old	Year 13	Rural & Urban	Yes, Becky had been in several relationships. She is currently in a long-term relationship.
4. Glesni	17 years old	Year 12	Rural and Urban	Yes, Glesni has been in al relationship. She is currently single, but is 'seeing' her ex-boyfriend.
5. Mali	16 years old	Year 11	Rural	Yes, Mali had been in two relationships. She is currently single.
6. Glain	15 years old	Year 10	Rural	Glain has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
7. Aleysha	16 years old	Year 11	Rural	Yes, Aleysha has had several boyfriends and is currently in a long term relationship with an older boyfriend (19 years old).
8. Jennifer	18 Years old	Year 13	Rural & Urban	Yes, Jennifer has had several boyfriends and is currently in a long term relationship with a boyfriend in her school year. Her wish is to bring this relationship to an end as soon as possible.
9. Elen	18 years old	Year 13	Rural & Urban	Yes, Elen has had several boyfriends and is currently in a long term relationship. She describes the impact of abuse experienced as part of a long term relationship which has now ended
10. Bonnie	18 years old	Not in education or employment. Working with	Rural	Yes, Bonnie has had several intimate relationships. She is currently in a long term relationship with an older man

		the Youth Offending Service.		(21 years old), who has a daughter. Bonnie does not live with her boyfriend, but she does stay with him at weekends. Bonnie has an acrimonious relationship with her boyfriend's ex-partner. She also describes the impact of abuse experienced with an ex-boyfriend who was the same age as her; she met him through the youth offending service and described how he was in and out of custody.
11. Lowri	15 years old	Year 10	Rural	Yes, Lowri has had one significant relationship with a young man in her school year. She describes that he was emotionally abusive towards her. The relationship ended when her father intervened and refused to allow her to continue the relationship.
12. Rhiannon	18 years old	Year 13	Rural & Urban	Yes, Rhiannon has been in several relationships. She is currently single.
13. Megan	15 years old	Year 10	Urban	Megan has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
14. Delyth	17 years old	Year 12	Rural & Urban	Yes, Delyth has relationship experience. She is currently single.
15. Ceri	18 years old	Year 13	Rural & Urban	Ceri has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
16. Claire	16 years	Year 11	Rural	Yes, Claire is in a long-term relationship with her current boyfriend. This is her first serious relationship.
17. Diane	18 years old	Year 13	Urban & Rural	Diane has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
18. Bella	16 years old	Year 11	Rural	Yes, Bella has been in one short term relationship with boy the same age as her. However, her parents disapproved and disallowed

				her from meeting up with him.
19. Collette	15 years old	Year 11	Rural	Collette has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
20. Julie	15 years old	Year 11	Rural	Julie has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
21. Mair	15 years old	Year 11	Urban & Rural	Mair has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
22. Margaret	15 years old	Year 11	Rural	Margaret has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
23. Grug	15 years old	Year 10	Rural	Grug has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
24. Alexis	16 years old	Year 11	Rural	Alexis has not been in a relationship and has limited experience of 'going out' with boys.
25. Donna	16 years old	Year 11	Rural	Yes, Donna has been in a long term relationship for over two years with her current boyfriend. He is a year older than Donna.

APPENDIX 6: INFORMATION LEAFLETS



Healthy Relationships Project

About this project

My name is Ceryl Teleri Davies and I work at the University of Lincoln studying a PhD in Social Science. I am trying to find out about what matters to young women in intimate relationships and how they see healthy relationships, which will help services support young women. I want to find out what matters to young women when they are in an intimate relationship.

The project is called 'Healthy Relationships' and it explores young people's views of their intimate relationships, looking at what's 'OK' within intimate relationships and the possible impact of social media (Facebook, snapchat, mobiles etc.) and other factors.

To help me with this project, I will ask an 'advisory group' of young women to help me design my research tools (the questions I will be asking young women as part of the research). Following on from this advisory stage, I will be asking young women acrossto complete a questionnaire during November-December 2014 and will conduct one to one interviews with young women between January-March 2015.

Can you help me?

I would like your help to decide what matters to young women and what questions I should be asking about intimate relationships. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project as an advisor. As part of this role, you will be asked to look at and test the research tools, that is, the questionnaire, list of interview questions and information leaflets. You can tell me what's good about the questions, what needs changing and give me tips on how to make it better. What you think is important!

What would you have to do?

If you are interested, I will be starting the advisory sessions at and you are welcome to be part of this group. The sessions will last approx 45 minutes, and will be arranged at your school. Please speak toto note your interest to be part of the group. You will need to complete a consent form to note that you want to be part of this project. In the presentation I gave at your school before the summer holidays, I noted the

importance of respecting the opinions of all group members and the confidential nature of our discussions (unless there is a safety matter requiring consideration). Please be aware of this before you decide whether you want to join in. I really hope you will want to take part, but this is your choice. I am hoping that the group will be fun and am really looking forward to working with you.

The main benefits of being part of the group are having the opportunity to share your views and ideas that may be of benefit for other young women. Additionally, your contribution will be acknowledged with a certificate to be included in your CV portfolio.

Any questions?

If you would like to talk to me about this project and the role of the young person's project advisor, or if you have any questions, please email me, Ceryl Teleri Davies, at: cdavies@lincoln.ac.uk

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP LEAFLET
What Does “RESPECT” Really Mean?

‘Respect’ is a word that means a lot of different things. You may have been taught to show respect to your ‘elders’, pay respect to others, and have self-respect.

RESPECT is the number one quality of ‘healthy relationships’

To show respect in a relationship means:

- Making decisions together;
- Talking honestly and openly;
- Trusting each other;
- Valuing each other's independence;
- Building up each other's self-esteem;
- Supporting each other in going after goals or dreams;
- Encouraging each other to spend time with friends, family and alone;
- Having the freedom to be yourself;
- Saying you're sorry when you make a mistake and learning from it.

How do I build A healthy relationship based on RESPECT?

No relationship is perfect. Overall, you should feel happy and safe with whoever you're ‘going out’ with. To build a healthy relationship, it's important that both you and your partner make a commitment to work hard and treat each other with respect. A good way to start out a relationship is to talk about what you want from each other, like being honest and having good communication.

Some basic agreements you can make are:

- You agree to speak up if something's bothering you;
- Consider each other's feelings when talking to each other;
- Agree to support each other when times are hard;
- Respect each other's need for privacy;
- Agree space to be with other friends as well;
- Treating each other as equal partners.

What is an 'unhealthy relationship'?

Any behaviour in a romantic or intimate relationship intended to establish an unequal balance of power and control.

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships

Healthy	Unhealthy
Supportive	Humiliating
Good Communication	Poor communication
Secure	Fearful
Respectful	Disrespectful
Independent	Controlling
Understanding	Demanding
Honest	Dishonest
Trusting	Jealous
Patient	Impatient
Caring	Selfish
Equal	Unequal

What are the Warning Signs of an Unhealthy Relationship?

- He/she wants you to be available at all times;
- He/she treats you like property rather than a person;
- He/she lashes out or blames you for his/her bad day;
- He/she tells you he/she can't live without you;
- His/her threats and anger are followed by vows of love and pleas for forgiveness;
- He/she breaks things to intimidate you;
- He/she acts jealous and says jealous things;
- He/she makes you afraid to express your thoughts or feelings;
- He/she pressures you into doing things you don't want to do by saying, "If you really loved me you would..."
- He/she can be physically abusive;
- Your weight, appearance or grades have changed dramatically since you started seeing this person;

- He/she constantly threatens to break up with you;
- He/she blames you for his/her problems;
- He/she puts pressure on you to act in sexual ways you're uncomfortable with.

Remember that sexual relationships should be safe, private and consensual every time.

- If you're not sure whether something is OK, check it out with someone you trust- possibly a sympathetic adult.
- You must both consent or agree and also understand what you're agreeing to.

Remember: no one should have sex if they don't want it, or aren't ready for it. It's ok to say no!

Support pathways/contact details:

If you want to find out more about the issues covered in this questionnaire, or think you might need some support, here are some good places to start.

Freephone 24 hour National Domestic violence helpline: 0808 2000247

Advice for girls from NHS on relationships:

www.nhs.uk/livewell/teengirls/Pages/Teengirlshome.aspx

Childline: A private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen: Helpline: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

Expect Respect Toolkit:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97773/teen-abuse-toolkit.pdf

NSPCC Cymru Tel: 0844 892 0290

Welsh Women's Aid Tel: UK freephone: 0808 80 10 800

http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/index.php?option=com_alfcontact&Itemid=57

This is Abuse: <http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/>

Victim Support: <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/> Tel: 0845 30 30 900

AVA, How to help your mates leaflets: [http://www.avaproject.org.uk/our-resources/reports--publications/children,-young-people-and-domestic-violence-how-to-help-your-mates-leaflet-\(2008\).aspx](http://www.avaproject.org.uk/our-resources/reports--publications/children,-young-people-and-domestic-violence-how-to-help-your-mates-leaflet-(2008).aspx)

www.hideout.org.uk

www.respect4us.org.uk

www.there4me.com

In case of an emergency, call the police on 999 for immediate help.

APPENDIX 7: CONSENT FORMS

Consent Form: Healthy Relationships Advisory Session

Purpose: You have been invited to participate as a member of the Healthy Relationship advisory group conducted at your school. The advisory session is for young women aged 15-17 years old.

Responsibilities: To take part in the group by attending two or three sessions at your school to provide input and advice on a research questionnaire and other research tools to be used with young women as part of this research project. Your role is to give your honest view, communicate ideas, and listen to the views and ideas of other members of the group.

You will be asked your views on:

- The content, layout, language use and style of the questionnaire and leaflets;
- If the support offered in the leaflet is OK;
- What is important to you- what would you like me to ask in the questionnaire?
- Your views on this topic of healthy relationships.

Please tick the boxes to the right if you agree with the statement below:-

1.	I have read and understood the information about this project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project advisory session.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand that I may withdraw from the group at any time without giving a reason and that I will not be penalised for selecting to withdraw.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, disclosure of risk of harm) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Student: If you wish to take part- please sign below.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Parent/Carer: If you DO NOT wish for the above named young women to take part in this group- please sign below and return to the School.

Name of Parent/carer/guardian Signature

Date

Date:

Dear parent/carer/guardian

I am conducting research inlooking at 'healthy relationships'.

Details of the research are given below. **If, after reading this information, you decide that you do NOT wish your child to take part in the questionnaire, then please complete the reply slip and return it to the school by.....** If you do not complete the reply slip we will assume that you are willing for your child to participate in the research.

Please note that the focus of the questionnaire is to evaluate young women's understanding of healthy relationships, they will not be asked to talk about their own experiences. Although the researcher will treat the content of the discussion confidentially, if a young woman discloses something that gives good cause to believe that they or someone else is at risk of significant harm, then there is a duty to pass on this concern to your child's school.

Your child will only be invited to take part in the questionnaire if they volunteer; they do not have to take part if they do not wish to. They will be told that they do not have to answer any questions they do not want to answer. I do not expect the pupils to be upset after completing the questionnaire, but if they are upset, they will be told to speak to a teacher or parent/carer/guardian about it if they are.

It is expected that the research will take place at your child's school on the.....If you have any questions regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Ceryl Davies, for assistance on cdavies@lincoln.ac.uk

Yours faithfully,
Ceryl Davies

REPLY SLIP: Healthy Relationships Research **Please return to the school**

I **DO NOT** give permission for (child's name) _____ to take part.

Your child's year group: _____ Your child's form: _____

PRINT NAME: _____

SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____
