

**ABUSE OF ADULT MALES IN INTIMATE PARTNER
RELATIONSHIPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The study revealed that the experiences of male victims in Northern Ireland were similar to those reported in studies in other local jurisdictions. Male respondents reported a variety of abuse – from emotional to serious physical assault, including occasional serious sexual assaults by their female partner.
2. Male partner experiences were similar to those reported in cognate studies. Nearly all respondents considered that the emotional effects of abuse were the most serious.
3. What is absent from other studies is the recognition that such abuse may be continued into extra-familial domains – respondents were particularly concerned about their experience with the legal process and consequences in relation to their employment and to their accommodation.
4. Most studies fail to reveal the various devices that male respondents utilise to cope with or to manage the abuse. A variety of such strategies were noted – from physical exercise to deliberate absence from home. Such solitary coping strategies were invariably unsuccessful.
5. Unique to males is the effect of patriarchal images on the question of reporting. Traditional images of masculinity appeared to be the primary reason for the failure of the respondents to report injuries to friends, and to voluntary and statutory agencies.
6. As in other studies, a minority of men attempted to utilise the available support agencies. Experiences were mixed, although the respondents universally proffered the view that reporting to the police would produce unsupportive reactions. The male respondents also argued that a similar lack of support was found within other institutions, legal process and from the legal professions. The respondents also held the view that this was in contrast to the support that reports of female victimisation would elicit.
7. There were a limited number of respondents in same-sex relationships and consequently evidence of gay victimisation in partner relations was limited. However, the small number who did participate reported similar experiences to men in abusive heterosexual relationships.

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

This study was commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Assembly on behalf of the Northern Ireland Domestic Violence Forum (NIDVF). It breaks new ground in that jurisdiction by providing evidence of male experience in abusive partner relationships. Specifically, it documents the features of such partner abuse, the effects of abuse, the coping strategies of male victims, the contribution of patriarchal stereotypes to the sustenance of abuse, and the sources and the perceived inadequacies of voluntary and statutory support for the male victims.

The origins of this project lie in the Forum's acknowledgement that there may be a vacuum in the current support structure in relation to partner domestic violence. The existing mechanisms have focused chiefly on women as the victims of violence and men as perpetrators. This is despite some, often anecdotal, emerging evidence that men too can be objects of their partner's abuse. Relate, N.I. Victim Support, and other agencies participating in the Forum, had reported that they were becoming increasingly aware of domestic violence against men. In some 10% of the incidents reported to the then Royal Ulster Constabulary, the victims were male (Stanko 2001). For example, male partners occasionally sought advice from the Women's Aid HelpLine.

The Forum accepted (as in the case with domestic violence against women) that reported incidents did not necessarily give as an accurate reflection of the extent of the problem. The difficulties that women face in reporting domestic violence and in seeking support are well documented (e.g. Dobash and Dobash 1979). It was therefore reasonable to assume that men might also encounter reporting problems and difficulty seeking appropriate support.

The Forum recognised that the current primary focus on both female spouse and (child) abuse may sometimes ignore events and behaviours, which could have far-reaching negative consequences for men subject to abuse, and indeed, to their families. It was this realisation that little was known about the male partner experience in Northern Ireland and a genuine concern to see the development of

effective responses to male victims that formed the backdrop for this research.

NIDVF appreciated that it would be unrealistic to assume that men's experience of domestic violence paralleled that of women or that identical agency responses should be developed for male victims. It also recognised that research methodologies which measured the experience and extent of female victimisation, might not be appropriate when applied to the experience of men. The proposed investigation would represent a step towards understanding the male victim's experiences and needs. It would utilise qualitative techniques for assessing any such victimisation, abuse, and agency response.

Current Knowledge

Until recently, presumptions regarding female violence against males have been that, insofar as it exists, it is the mirror image of male violence against females. However, that presumption was qualified in a number of ways. Caveats include the notions that where male victimisation occurs, it may be a reciprocal action where both parties may experience some violation and it is difficult to determine whom initiated the aggravation. Secondly, that in any case, where such victimisation was established, it would not be of the same severity of impact as in female victimisation. Thirdly, any such abuse would occur to a much lesser extent. If the two types of partner abuse were of a parallel character, the support devices such as battered women's shelters would, where resources allow, provide for similar support – if less extensive - for male victims.

But there is reason to believe that there are qualitative differences between the two types of abuse that may require alternative forms of amelioration and support. One part of this study is concerned to suggest that male needs are not necessarily identical to the needs of female victims and that a different approach may be relevant where such qualitative differences in need appear.

Furthermore, evidence has also emerged that in some instances of women's violence against their male partners, it was part of a larger pattern or cycle of abuse within the partnership or family. Abuse of a partner, male or female, might be only one component of a larger family abuse syndrome, perhaps including child and elder abuse. Greater understanding of such conflict would assist in developing responses to domestic violence or family abuse in the wider context in Northern Ireland.

The Research Focus

Initially the primary research question posed was

- to discover the extent of any such victimisation in Northern Ireland together with subsidiary questions regarding severity, frequency, and access to support services

However, for several reasons, the final research question was re-focussed on qualitative rather than quantitative matters. This was because

- a. The nature of the topic and its complexities does not lend itself readily to the kind of statistical analysis implicit in such an initial focus.
- b. In Northern Ireland – as compared with Scotland, England and Wales, and further afield in the United States and Canada – there is an absence of adequate secondary data sets within the preceding victim surveys in that jurisdiction. Such quantitative material does not exist in a reliable form from which to draw insights and deductions as the basis for a more substantive statistical research project on male victimisation.
- c. Preceding studies in other domains have increasingly moved away from the comparative method implicit in quantitative analysis (who suffers most, males or females) – often involving fraught comparisons between male and female abuse – to be more concerned with the severity of the impact on victims rather than perhaps invidiously setting up one form of victimisation as a competing territory with regard to potential resource allocation or political debate with the other.

Consequently, the focus of the present study was directed primarily at the qualitative experience of self-reported victims, partly because of their own importance as victims *per se*, but also because it might allow greater understanding of family abuse and conflict by the relevant support agencies

The Key Research Questions

Universally within Anglo-American societies, controversy about male victims of domestic abuse can now be located within six themes.

1. As the succeeding definition makes clear, the current abuse rubric encompasses many different forms of harm both physical and non-physical – what are the characteristics of abuse experienced by male partners?
2. Women sometimes passively and sometimes actively deal with abuse in a variety of ways – from the extremes of continuing acceptance to the other polarity of combating the abuse and seeking external support. How do male victims react to an abusive partner?
3. Abuse may have both direct and indirect effects – from physical pain to effects on lifestyle and on employment. What does the male victim evidence reveal about these different types of consequence?
4. Traditional stereotypes play a key role in the subject's expectations of 'normal' abuse and of significant reactions to it – how do men deal with preconceptions of their 'masculinity' and 'relative power' in heterosexual abuse relations?
5. Is there a measurable need for specialist services for *male* victims of domestic abuse?
6. Information from gay victims may suggest different explanation of abuse than those that emphasise male dominance. If such abuse is as common in homosexual relationships as in heterosexual ones, then traditional emphasises on male dominance may not be a sufficient explanation. Some evidence is necessary of the character of male-male partner relations.

Inevitably such a study as in this Report encounters several key tensions over gender relations, ones that are open to development and clarification in a different context. While limited comparison between male and female victimisation is inevitable in such a monograph, it is neither the aim nor the capacity of this study to explore the quantitative comparison between the two phenomena. Sequentially, while any such documentation of male victimisation may have subsequent implications – given limited statutory and voluntary agency resources – for support provision for the different types of victim, it is outside the remit of this study to explore such determinations. This is not a study which seeks to explore the relative male-female experience in combative mode.

A further problem relates to the definition of abuse. The original conception of domestic abuse has long been superseded by a recognition that inter-personal violence can assume other forms than within the artificial limits of physical violence – i.e. that which is normally potentially subject to legal penalty. Clearly in extending the definition beyond that legal straitjacket, necessarily subjective components enter the analysis – not all forms of emotional and psychological pressure are open to agreement over the character and nature. Nor are they as susceptible to empirical measurement.

Varying definitions of abuse create both research and policy problems. It was initially proposed that, for the purposes of this project, domestic violence should be defined as:

“ the use of physical or emotional force or threat within close adult relationships in a way that causes harm or distress to victims. In addition to actual or threatened physical or sexual assault and damage to property, domestic violence includes non-physical intimidation, such as persistent verbal abuse, emotional blackmail and enforced social or financial deprivation.”¹

This definition was later extended in the light of – *inter alia* - recent research on elder abuse research (Brogden and Nijhar 2000) to recognise that in the particular context of the male experience, abuse may have non-familial components – such as threats to employment and legal process which may be perceived as discriminatory. While such latter factors may also be applicable to women, they are often gendered in character. Some consequences of partner abuse may be relatively unique to male experience. It seems appropriate therefore to include notions of abuse wider than that of the familial context.

Outline of Sections

The monograph follows an appropriate pattern in order to detail and clarify the above issues. Section Two seeks to clarify in accessible form ‘what we already know’ about male victimisation in partner relationships. It summarises the state of knowledge about male partner victimisation in Anglo-American societies. It notes that different methodologies have produced different results on male-female domestic violence.

¹ Tackling Domestic Violence – A Policy for Northern Ireland, DHSS 1995 p.2

Section Three delineates the particular, *ethnographic*, qualitative methodology utilised in the study and the characteristics of the respondents. It argues that a qualitative approach to understanding the problems is the only realistic way to proceed

Section Four deals sequentially with the evidence from the fifty two male respondents - *Components of Abuse; Effects of Abuse; Management of Abuse; Contribution of Masculine Stereotypes* and *Agency Reactions*. Section Four concludes with details from a limited number of gay victims.

Finally, Section Five details the resultant recommendations. It concentrates on the question of the development of support services for male victims.

SECTION TWO

THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE ON MALE

VICTIMISATION

Key Points

- ❑ Most evidence of male partners victimisation until recently was anecdotal rather than substantive.
- ❑ Studies from a feminist perspective were the first serious attempt to document spouse abuse. To a varying extent, they predominantly argued that the main source of spousal abuse lay in traditional masculine notions of power in gender relationships.
- ❑ Contrarily, more recent Family Violence studies have suggested that spousal abuse may often be derived from more complex factors of family relations.
- ❑ What is clear is that different quantitative research methods on spousal abuse often produce quite different results about the contributions of males and females to that abuse – community crime surveys tend to emphasise the disproportionate violence against women, victim and family violence surveys tend to suggest much more parity in relatively minor male-female violence.
- ❑ Qualitative ethnographic studies of both female and male victims for the most part avoid the question of blame and concentrate on the degree of harm and victimisation.

Early Information on Male Victimization

Until the late 1960s, most knowledge of partner victimisation in the household drew upon literary and historical accounts. Such textual details clearly emphasised the role of women as the predominant victims in household abuse and violence. More recently, several writers have noted literary illustrations of women being publicly rebuked for acting as the aggressive party in intimate relationships. There are historical references (for example, in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*) to medieval and rural chastisements of such women under the rubric of the 'hen-pecked' husband. Allusions are made to the *scold* – the iron horse on which a woman was forced to ride around the village to signify community disapproval of her alleged abuse of her husband. Similarly, devices such as the *bridle* to stop the 'nagging' wife were relatively common. Unworthy males, who failed to curtail their partner's aggression, in the 18th and 19th century, might be forced to wear women's clothing and "a battered husband" was made to wear an outlandish outfit and ride backwards around the village on a donkey" (Steinmetz and Lucca 1988). (The quality of such work is typified by one study that claims the 'discovery' that Abraham Lincoln's wife was violent, propelled him towards to the Presidency as an escape from home!)

In the present day, cartoon strips (the Andy Capp syndrome - presumably drawn from popular folklore) may dwell on female household violence. For example, Saenger's early study (1963) of newspaper comic violence, noted that three-quarters of the perpetrators were women. Husbands were the victims of aggression in 63% of conflict situations, while wives were victims in 39% of situations. In 10% of situations, husbands and wives were equally aggressive and in only 17% of situations were husbands more violent than wives. Jokes are common about hen-pecked husbands (Wilkinson 1981).

However much of this data is little more than anecdotal, reflecting popular prejudices as much as hard empirical evidence. Such material, while demonstrating a consistent trajectory in popular images of women historically, proves nothing. The scold and the bridle for example, like the ducking stool for the presumed witch, may have been nothing more than an attempt to maintain patriarchy against women who did not readily accept a lower status. Similarly, caricatures may reflect the prejudices of their masculine authors rather than representing a valid account of household relations – there remain few popular female cartoonists.

Current Academic Approaches

In the last twenty years, two different social science schools – *feminist* and *family violence* - have produced often-contradictory findings on the extent and character of male victimisation in partner relationships.

1. Feminist Contributions

The voluminous literature on domestic abuse owes most to feminist contributions. While there are variations in emphasis in such a wide movement, generally feminist studies have explained victimisation in the household as a function of material inequalities, institutional values, and historically embedded social practices that confer power and privilege on men. Generally, men are perceived as either perpetrators or as complicit bystanders whose failure to effectively challenge abuse perpetrated by other men sustains female victimisation (Hearn 1998). In such work, men's victimisation is only recognised within the context of women's defensive response to their cumulative experience of harassment, intimidation, and violence. Where men suffer from abuse, it is a consequence of reciprocal violence from their female partners. Such studies perceived a continuum of emotional, physical, sexual, and financial abuse in intimate relationships.

The problems with such work in relation to the recognition of male victimisation in partner relations include a number of factors. In its older form, emphasis on the patriarchal structure of interpersonal relationships inevitably excluded factors that may result in male victimisation. Feminist scepticism often curtailed the recognition of male victimisation. In particular, documentation of that phenomenon was sometimes perceived as a threat to resource distribution to support female victims. Generally, such studies have suggested (as below) a ratio of some 9:1 in terms of female male victimisation patterns and that men are rarely direct victims.

2. Family Violence Research

Family Violence studies (often relying on a particular psychological measuring instrument – the Conflict Tactics Scale) have been primarily designed not to explain women's relative powerlessness in such relationships but rather the extent of victimisation in the family as a whole. They have a different *raison d'etre*.

Where inter-personal violence was encountered in such surveys, half the partners were reciprocally violent (the *mutual combatant* thesis). The remainder divided

almost equally between those cases where men were the primary perpetrators and where women were the primary perpetrators. Much of this evidence has been challenged by feminists and others – for example over the failure of the measuring instrument, the Conflict Tactics Scale, to document forms of violence that most affect women (sexual assault, choking, suffocating, and stalking) and under-sampling those whose victimisation is most likely to have been severe – such as women in refuges. There is little agreement on the validity of such criticism. But it is accepted by both feminist and Family Violence scholars that whatever the ratio of male–female abuse, women generally sustain more severe physical injuries than men. (Straus 1993)

3. Different Methods, Different Results

The two different perspectives have drawn methodologically on often quite different instruments to document their claims – crime surveys (from the reported crime rates to self-report surveys of community crime) and on community victimisation studies (where violence may not have a criminal connotation). Certain studies have drawn on samples of the general population; others on self-selected abused populations. Samples of the general population can provide some estimate of the extent of violence and abuse. However the broad sweep of those response categories cannot deal with the individual differences of experience. They necessarily combine often quite different subjective experiences of victimisation under the same heading. They furnish little in terms of the evidence of the qualitative factors – particularly, the effects of that experience. Random samples of the general population (or of limited populations such as university students) can provide some estimate of the extent of violence and abuse. Because of the necessary limitations on the size of such samples, they may exclude the most serious forms of abuse which may only affect a minute proportion of the population.

Conversely self-selected populations are necessarily untypical of the population at large. Surveys of them cannot provide estimates of the extent of such violence and abuse. But they are very effective at documenting the severity of the experience for individuals and the forms of resolution achieved. Only an oral methodology can deal adequately with subjective experiences.

This study takes the second approach insofar as it focuses on the nuances of the victimisation experience and on the quality of support required for developing policies about appropriate support procedures for victims. The major body of primary

evidence drawn on in this study takes the second qualitative approach in order to explore the nuances of subjective experience of abuse and of responses to it.

4. Current Practices and Methods

In practice, there are some five types of social science method in studying adult partner victimisation (which in turn broadly divide into quantitative and qualitative studies) – *family violence studies of single respondents* from a sample of the general population; *couple studies of sample populations* in which one respondent's answer is checked against that of his/her partner; *victim studies* where the interest is in terms of the commission of a legal offences; *accounts of official populations* (such as those who have reported criminal victimisation to the police); and *studies of selected populations* such as the residents of battered women's hostels. Table 1.1 summarises such approaches, their key findings, and their benefits and disadvantages

Table 1.1 Findings of Alternative Methodologies in Assessing Domestic Abuse

Method	Findings	Benefits	Problems
Family Violence Surveys	Rough parity between males and females over minor violence in over a hundred such studies; (relies mainly on statistical methods and the CTS)	Evidence of extent and frequency; Provides accounts of ‘abuse’ in ‘normal ‘ families’	Little indication of severity or impact on victim; Does not account for social context of abuse; Criticism of reliance on CTS; Evidence much different from that of front-line workers with abuse victims; Initially limited to physical violence
Offences reported to the police by victims	Approximately nine to one ratio of male to female violence; (Relies almost entirely on statistical methods)	Evidence of demand for official services May be useful measure of severity of victim need	Major problem of reporting – Most women do not report domestic abuse to police but evidence that men may be even more reluctant – hence inaccuracy of numbers; Limited normally to severe physical violence
Couple Studies	Attempts to provide a check on one partners response by providing the second partner’s version; Suggests rather more male to female violence May be due to male’s greater probability of discounting seriousness of actions	Allows check on accuracy of accounts Allows material on causation and context	Major problem of finding couples – consequently often of artificial couples such as in dating relations of college students; May be limited by use of the CTS
Victim surveys	Many more female victims than males	Deals with law-breaking within legal definition of abuse i.e. discards relatively trivial and ‘normal’ conflict	Only records what respondents regard as ‘crime’ rather than abuse i.e., ignores relativity of definition (which may be antecedent of major violence) and forms of verbal, psychological, and emotional abuse plus sociological factors
Studies of selected populations such as battered women’s homes/ or voluntary reporting	Provides account of severity of abuse on individuals through case studies (originally women but now male studies as well); uses oral methodology/biographical Histories	Importance of qualitative victim factors i.e. severity of impact on individual victims; can deal with nuances such as emotional and psychological abuse; and of preceding factors and context	No indication whether such evidence is typical or a-typical; Can say nothing about extent of problem; Problems of socialisation by agency – may reduce explanation to unicausal; new studies suggest that men may have mirror image of women’s experience.

5. Studies of Selected Population (Ethnographic accounts)

This study utilises an ethnographic account, one that has been used with studies of self-elected samples of abused female partners. In this section, we summarise the existing material from that source, before proceeding to outline current research with regard to studies of abused men from that perspective.

i. "battered women."

A number of researchers point to the importance of qualitative research methods for a more accurate understanding of the meaning attached to a violent episode and the context in which it occurred (e.g. Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Qualitative data can add a richness to family violence research that quantitative data alone cannot provide. Techniques, such as open-ended questions enhance interviewer-respondent rapport, allow respondents to qualify their responses, encourage interaction and collaboration between researcher and subject, and elicit versions of violent events that reflect the lived experiences of victims.

Studies of residents in shelters for battered women furnish a typical example of qualitative research. Such in-depth interviews with women, who have sought safety in emergency shelters or whose husbands are in treatment for wife assault, document the severity of the violence, the regular recurrence of such beatings, its male partner initiation, and the type and character of support services required (Johnson 1994). Marital rape is also commonly associated with such abuse. Critically, Johnson claims that two different types of violence may be present in relationships – the severe experiences of those who appear in battered peoples' residence and the normal 'trivial' conflict of everyday life. Some of the authors of such self-selected population studies have acknowledged their limitations "These women were not randomly selected, and they cannot be considered a legitimate data base from which to make specific generalisations." (Walker, 1979, p. xiii)

ii. 'abused' men

There are now a few mirror image studies of battered men to contrast with those of self-selected female populations. Most, however, have only a minute population of respondents. Unpublished qualitative studies, both conducted in Alberta, constitute the only available North American research that attempts to understand the experiences of men who are abused by their wives. Gregorash (1990) interviewed eight men, while Tuttle (1997) reported on ten. Such qualitative studies are limited by

small sample sizes. But the in-depth nature of the results is considered to balance out the problems of the small research population. Much of the abuse reported was emotional rather than physical, and male respondents commented that they found the emotional abuse worse. Violence included being scratched with their partners' fingernails, hit with an object such as a wooden clothes-hanger or fist, or being kicked in the back. A few referred to sexual attacks. The men described their partners as being "enraged", "destroying things with a baseball bat", "attacking with scissors" or "threatening to do damage with a hat pin". Several described the violence as a continuing part of the relationship. Half of the respondents reacted to the abuse only by restraining their wives from hurting them – a reaction which in itself might cause injuries to the female partner. A similar number could be described as being in mutually violent relationships.

Support services were problematic. No male victim contacted a doctor to treat his injuries. Eight men mentioned that at some point their partners either threatened to contact the police to charge them for being abusive or to obtain a restraining order. Two men complained that they had been unjustly accused of child abuse and one of marital rape. Most did not seek external help. Counsellors interviewed in these studies claimed that the men told stories that were strikingly similar to women victims of husband abuse. They tended to minimise their partner's behaviour, had low self-esteem, and admitted feeling both afraid of their partner's aggression and ashamed. They often offered the same rationales for staying in a stale relationship as abused women. For example, some men did not wish to leave because they feared their children would be abused, or they stated that they loved their partner and simply want the abuse to stop. Some counsellors believed that because men tend to have more resources, such as money or jobs, than do women, they might be in a better position to leave an abusive relationship. The counsellors also noted that many of the men who were abused, refused to be aggressive in return, and several claimed that many aggressive women have a history of childhood abuse.

In several ways, the evidence gathered in this study mirrors these limited Canadian findings.

In Lewis and Sarantakos (2001) study of 48 Australian men (contacted via men's support groups), most respondents reported unreasonable and unprovoked verbal attack, a minority reported being described as 'inadequate' – for example being told that their children were not their own. The minority that reported physical attacks

recognised that it was more severe in impact for females.

There are a few equally limited British studies. George's survey of thirty-eight self-selected male victims of domestic abuse attempted to discover the backgrounds of both partners as well as the types of injuries and attacks most commonly sustained (George 1992). The majority of male and female partners had little or no childhood experience of violence. The overwhelming majority of male victims rationalised the women's violence in terms of some form of mental disorder, or explained it in terms of (allegedly) a dominating, bullying, controlling personality, with a tendency constantly to blame others for any existing problems. Most respondents described their wives as having little or no control over their impulses, especially anger, becoming violent and abusive "in the manner of a small child when their wishes remained unfulfilled".

A small study (20) of male interviewees in Merseyside (Stitt and Macklin 1995) reported that all their interviewees had endured severe forms of abuse – ranging from front teeth knocked out, scalding, stabbing, attacks to the genitalia, and being scalded with boiling water. Many claimed that their partners had deliberately sought to subject them to embarrassment and stigma by trying to injure them on the face and arms so that it would be evident to third parties. In most cases, abuse also involved verbal, emotional, and psychological forms of cruelty. Most argued that fear of further violence together with emotional abuse, was worse than actual physical harm, even if the latter was extensive. Some female partners were said to have constantly threatened to attack men in their sleep, told the police that self-inflicted injuries were caused by men, and threatened to take away their children. Only one man admitted any contribution to the abuse. On the few occasions when the police were called, the male victims were arrested.

Two final studies have attempted to combine initial quantitative data with later qualitative investigation. The 1996 British Crime Survey sweep was followed up with a limited domestic violence self-completion questionnaire. Amongst other findings, the BCS (Mirrlees-Black and Byrne 1999) concluded that the outcome of assault tended to be less serious for men than for women and that male victims are less likely to admit for reasons of shame and *machismo*, the true seriousness of such assaults. In terms of support, male victims were considerably less likely to report their experiences to the police.

Finally, a more intensive study (Gadd et al 2002) in Scotland was unusual in that it attempted to combine a quantitative crime report analysis with qualitative studies of a limited

number of male respondents revealed by the first sweep of the Scottish Crime Survey. Gadd et al claimed from the outset that all methodologies consistently report that women experience more injuries and more repeat victimisation. Their qualitative study revealed that those men who are victims often find the experience of abuse severely emotionally and physically harmful; that all social strata were liable to be violent; that there was an increased risk for men to be violent if they were poorly educated, unemployed, and lacked social support. They note (in relation to service provisions) that disbelief and lack of support services can compound male victims' experience of abuse.

These studies suggest a clear difference between studies of 'battered' women and of 'abused' men in that women were more likely to define slaps, hits, and punches from their partner as 'assaults' while men were less likely to do so. Family doctors or other health workers are not always informed about episodes of domestic violence by men or by women, but men appear to be much less likely to report it. Typically men's injuries have to be more severe than women's before they will seek medical support and men will be less likely to admit that their partner has injured them than women. However, even allowing for this potential bias, it would seem that women have a higher risk of injury from domestic disputes than men. Clearly, in the instances where men and women engage in violence equally within their relationship, those men who hit, hit hardest, and women sustain more injuries.

This account of the findings from the different methodologies raises several points regarding gaps in the literature to which the present Northern Ireland study was directed. In particular, this study was aimed at demonstrating the similarity of male victimisation experiences to those found in other jurisdictions. Secondly, it wished to explore the impact of such victimisation on individuals in that jurisdiction. Thirdly, it was concerned to explore the key reasons why men did not report those experiences and in particular, if patriarchal stereotyping affected the extent of reporting. Finally, it was also concerned to explore male experience of the current reception of their requests from local support services.

SECTION THREE

METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENT DETAILS

Key Points

- ❑ An ethnographic approach, involving a self-selected population of respondents, appears to be the most effective technique for establishing evidence on the nature of male victimisation and abuse in partner relationships.
- ❑ Respondents were obtained by a variety of advertising techniques.
- ❑ A semi structured interview schedule was utilised – emphasizing specific factual biographic information and questions that would document respondents’ accounts of their abuse experience.
- ❑ While the respondents could not be said to be directly representative of all male partners in Northern Ireland, in terms of key variables such as religious affiliation, socio-economic status, employment record, housing tenure, and age, respondents approximated to a varying extent to the norms of the Northern Ireland male population.

1. Selecting a Methodology - Representative Samples versus Self-Selected Samples

As we note in Section Two, many of the differences over rates of gender victimisation relate to questions of methodology. The discrepancy between the findings from Family Violence responses and findings based on criminal justice system data or the experiences of women in shelters for battered women does not indicate that one set of statistics is correct and the other not. Both may be correct (Gelles 1993). However, they apply to different groups of people and reflect different aspects of domestic assault. Most of the violence that is revealed by surveys of family problems is relatively minor and relatively infrequent, whereas most of the violence in official statistics is chronic and severe and involves injuries that need medical attention. These two types of violence probably have different etiologies and may require different types of intervention. Resolutions indicated by one may not be relevant to resolutions for the other.

Both community sample data and ethnographic sample data are needed. Community sample data are essential for informing support programmes directed at the larger community especially programmes intended to prevent such cases in the first place or to prevent them from developing into "clinical cases." Conversely it is essential to have research on self-

selected samples, such as those involved with shelters for battered partners in order to elicit data that do apply to such cases and therefore provide a realistic basis for programmes designed to aid the victims and to end the most serious type of domestic violence. (Strauss 1999). Given the priorities of the commissioning agency with regard to assessing need for provision of support services from both statutory and voluntary agencies, the researchers therefore determined that an ethnographic qualitative methodology was the most appropriate in this case. Where support services are to be geared to the most serious cases, it was essential to discover the severity, the frequency, and the consequences of partner abuse of males in order to determine the requirements of agency response.

This study adopts an ethnographic methodology that uses a similar approach to the 'battered women' studies in dealing with a self-selected population of males. Consequently, like the studies of female residents of hostels, it is primarily concerned with questions of breadth and severity of violence and abuse, of consequences and resolutions, and does not address causation and frequency among the population at large. Like the former studies, the validity of its evidence depends on the reliability of the respondents' accounts.

2. The Self-Selected Sample.

It was clear from the outset that there would be no question of a methodologically pure sampling frame. For pragmatic resource reasons, a twelve month period was determined in which researchers would explore men's experience of violence and abuse in close relationships, the consequences it had for them, how they responded to it, and the support they required. While acknowledging the persistence of domestic violence in which the victims are women or children, the specific remit of this research was to focus on those instances in which the victims were adult males.

This was a hidden population. In attempting to generate a sample of men in the North of Ireland various approaches were taken to ensure adequate coverage.

- Meetings / contact with both voluntary and statutory agencies who would either have direct access to men in this situation, or indeed were concerned with men's health issues.
- Extensive mailshots throughout Northern Ireland including information and recruitment poster (directed not only to voluntary and statutory organisations, but also to off-licenses, hostels, bars, solicitors and bookmakers etc.)

- Posters sent to all accident and emergency departments throughout the North.
- Posters sent to all domestic violence police officers for display in reception areas of police stations.
- Dissemination of information through conferences, organisational databases, and organisational newsletters.
- By far the most successful approach was through features in local newspapers and radio stations.

The interviewees (52 respondents making this the largest such study to date) were given the opportunity to be interviewed at home, in a neutral venue of their choice, or at the research base, if preferred. Each interview lasted approximately two hours but on many occasions the interview extended beyond that time-scale. Each interview was taped with the permission of the interviewee and later transcribed and anonymised. Due to the sensitive nature of this research each interviewee was informed of the confidential nature of their information i.e. that no names or identifying factors would be included in the final Report. No financial incentive was offered for participation in the report. Names used in the report are substitutions for actual names.

The key parameters of the schedule included.

- Immediate biographical details – employment, family, relationships, socio-economic class, age etc.
- Detailing of the abuse – features and perceived causes – reciprocity in relations.
- Detailing the short and long-term effects and consequences of abuse – for example for emotional, mental and physical health, and on relationships, employment, finance etc.
- How the victim responded to the abuse – coping mechanisms.
- Disclosure to friends and family and to the voluntary and statutory services – investigation of the men's experience of the attitudes and responses of those from whom they sought assistance.
- The role of the other parties in reporting or ignoring the abuse.
- Reactions of the social audience – attitudes towards the issue of domestic abuse of male victims.
- Victims' evaluation of third party support from voluntary and statutory services, including legal reactions.
- Victims' needs and recommendations.

This study accepts the methodological limitations of such a self-selected group of respondents while simultaneously emphasising a life history (ethnographic) approach. The study therefore does not attempt to measure the prevalence of abuse of males by females in Northern Ireland. It is concerned to deal with the qualitative aspects of such abuse rather than on the quantitative dimensions. As attested elsewhere, such an approach inevitably involves several caveats, apart from its inability to deal with quantitative factors. It is a one-sided account like most of the first generation of abuse studies – it does not provide for the allegedly abusing partner’s story. However, as the evidence noted elsewhere in this section suggests, other studies have generally recognised the qualified validity of such accounts.

3. Respondent Details

The self-selected sample appears essentially representative of the larger Northern Ireland male population in terms of the following key dimensions (see Appendix One) – although severely weighted in terms of life experiences to the middle-aged. In total, 52 men volunteered to be interviewed. Of these, three had been in abusive gay relationships, and two others described abusive relationships, which did not involve their partners. Of the latter, one described how, in his childhood, his mother had been violent to his father on a sustained basis; the second man described how his mother’s abusive behaviour had existed from his early childhood and continued to be a disturbing factor in his mature life (he is now in his forties). In the latter case, issues of mental health were involved. The data from these five men have not been included in the following tables although the remaining 47 men include two bi-sexual men who, at the time of their abuse, were involved in a heterosexual relationship.

Apart from the men who came forward to be interviewed, a sizeable number of contacts were made either in writing or by telephone. Often the men who made these contacts, wished to remain anonymous or feared that any reciprocal attempt at contact would have adverse consequences for themselves. In other instances, contact was made by members of the man’s family who wished to highlight their concern about the man’s current situation. One mother talked retrospectively of the violence which her son had suffered in his relationship and of his subsequent suicide.

The youngest respondent at point of contact was 29 years old; the oldest man was 60 years old. While almost half the men were in their forties, the remaining half of this

group was almost entirely constituted of men in their thirties or fifties. The mean age of the sample was 48 years old. Men still in an abusive relationship seemed more reluctant to disclose. That men in their sixties or over did not, in the main, come forward can only be a matter for conjecture. Possible factors could include the easing of the abuse, the death of a partner, and the passage of time since separation or a practised acceptance.

Six of the respondents entered the relationship while still in their teens. If one excludes the single example of the widower who remarried at 51 years of age the range of the sample narrows to 17 – 35 years of age. The majority of the men interviewed entered the relationship before the age of thirty. The mean age on entering the relationship was 26 years.

In the case of the one co-habitee who was still living with his partner, he was about to leave, as she had developed a new relationship. One man was re-married to a new partner. To avoid duplication and, as we are here concerned with the change in the relationship with the abusive partner, this man has been recorded as divorced. The length of the relationships ranged from 3 years to 35 years. The average duration was 13 years.

Of those classified as being in full-time employment, one man had just returned to work after a two-year absence, the cause of which was stress related. Among those unemployed were two houseparents; two men who had been made redundant; one who had been subject to allegations of sex abuse; one suspended from work following allegations of theft instigated by partner; three were on long-term stress-related sick leave and two who were on invalidity benefit, stress related and stress and injury related, respectively. Two of those classified as retired, had been retired medically. The first was in this position at the time of meeting his partner; the second had been medically retired from the police force following an accident at work.

SECTION FOUR

THE EVIDENCE

Key Points of Section

- Respondents claimed to have suffered a variety of forms of abuse and violence – from the directly physical such as attacks on the person (including sexual violence), to emotional abuse (such as humiliation in front of third parties), to extra-familial abuse with regard to employment and to the legal process
- Varied effects of abuse and violence were claimed. These respondents unanimously claimed that emotional abuse had by far the longest-lasting consequences.
- Respondents attempted to cope with their victimisation in a variety of ways – from isolation, to physical exercise, to support from third parties. Very few appeared to have successfully coped with the abuse and violence by such strategies.
- Perhaps unexpectedly, patriarchal stereotypes had the opposite effects to that which might have been conventionally expected. Physical stature compared to the female partner did not seem to have deterred victimisation by the latter. Secondly, images of patriarchy encouraged third parties' disbelief that such violence could occur against a male
- Existing support agencies – from the statutory such as Social Services to the police – to the voluntary such as Nexus and the Samaritans – to the informal – such as friends and GPs – were almost totally disbelieving and ineffective.

4.1 THE COMPONENTS OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Key Points

- ❑ Physical violence was creative, common, often unpredictable, and included sexual violence. Weapons or surprise attacks might compensate for the male's superior strength.
- ❑ Emotional abuse appeared to have been the most severe according to respondents, especially when conducted with an audience of the joint children of the household.
- ❑ Victimization could be exercised obliquely by control of household affairs such as rationing financial income and expenditure or exclusion from family meals.
- ❑ Sleep deprivation was especially pernicious according to the respondents, especially where employment required concentration.
- ❑ Physical violence against the male partner might be accompanied by apparently random destruction of household property.
- ❑ Children might also be physically harmed in the process – apparently as surrogates for the male adult.
- ❑ Sexual victimization might range from either direct attacks on the partners' genitals to denigration of the partner's sexual competence *vis a vis* other males.
- ❑ Finally, several males claimed that false accusations either to the police regarding alleged violence to the female partner or to their children were one way in which the female partner could assume household dominance.

In domestic violence, traditional studies dwelt on physical violence. They conformed to gendered stereotypes by focussing on a form of violence that is perceived to be characteristic of males. However, in this study, the definition of abuse was drawn from a wider domestic discourse of violence and abuse. Several discrete categories of abuse could be distinguished. Victim accounts determine the distinctions and relative severity. The following categories were emphasised.

4.1 The Components Of Violence And Abuse; (1) Physical Violence.

Involving both actual and apparently intended harm against the partner. A whole array of devices was used in physical conflict – from fingernails to any available domestic instrument. Scratching, kicking, and biting were the normal forms of direct violence, incidents that might be almost casually listed by respondents. But severe violence with potential murderous weapons was not uncommon in the responses. When prompted, respondents would detail the extent and character of the physical violence. But normal responses were detached - relegating the physical violence to secondary consideration behind other features of the domestic dispute. On the vast majority of occasions, the violence was spontaneous rather than planned.

Illustrations

- **She has a terrible habit of grabbing me by the ears and pulling me to the ground, because she can't pull me by the hair, and physically lashing into me, she banged the telephone over my head. [Paul, plumber, 33 years]**

- **I came up the stairs one day and was met with an iron bar coming down from the top. When I woke up I was lying on the first landing with blood everywhere. She was at the top where she had hit me. I had fallen down the four steps. She was at the other step, where I had been hit, mopping up the blood with the bleach. There was bloodstains on the stairs. I couldn't get it, why is she mopping the blood up there? Why isn't she mopping the blood off me and trying to help me? Her first instinct was to clean the blood up after it happened. My first instinct was "What if she had killed me?" There was no concern at all for the fact that I had been struck. I had been left unconscious at the bottom of the stairs. [Gavan, technician, 51 years]**

Table 4.1 Examples of Weapons Used against Male Victims

EXAMPLES OF WEAPONS USED
BELT
KNIVES [HOUSEHOLD & NON-HOUSEHOLD]
FORKS
BOTTLES
SCISSORS
HIGH-HEELED SHOE
VASES
SAUCEPANS
CHAIRS
HEDGECLIPPERS
AXE
PLATE (WITH OR WITHOUT DINNER ON IT)
BOILING SOUP
STEERING-WHEEL CLAMP
ROLLING PIN
TURKEY FORK
TELEPHONE
ELECTRIC IRON
LUMP OF WOOD
T.V. CABLE (AS WHIP)
HOOVER
AEROSOL SPRAYS
TABLETS
DOG
BREADBOARD
SCREWDRIVER

Table 4.2: Examples of physical abuse by partner

EXAMPLES OF PHYSICAL ABUSE BY PARTNER	
PUSHING	ATTACKING IN SLEEP
GRABBING	CHOKING IN SLEEP
PULLING BY EARS	WHIPPING
SCRATCHING – DRAWING BLOOD	ATTEMPTED ELECTROCUTION
KNIFE TO THROAT	THREATENED WITH SHOT GUN
STABBING	SPRAYING IN FACE WITH AEROSOL
HIT WITH WEAPONS/ OBJECTS	ATTEMPTING TO PULL CAR OFF ROAD
BITING – BREAKING SKIN	BY PULLING STEERING WHEEL
PULLING HAIR	DRUGGING FOOD
PUNCHING	SCREWDRIVER UP NOSTRIL
SLAPPING	DESTROYING PERSONAL
KICKING	BELONGINGS/ CLOTHES
KNEEING/ KICKING IN GROIN	DESTROYING HOUSEHOLD ITEMS /
VIOLENCE TOWARDS CHILDREN/	DOORS ETC
BEATING UNBORN CHILD	BLACK EYES
FOCUSSED ATTACKS: ON EAR THAT	SPLIT HEADS
HAD CANCER/ ON SCAR TISSUE AT	SPRAINED ARM
BASE OF SPINE	BROKEN NOSE
TRIED TO CUT PENIS OFF	BROKEN ANKLE
NIPPING	BROKEN COLLAR BONE
SPITTING	EXTENSIVE BRUISING
THROTTLING	CUTS/ SCARRING
STITCHES	BRUISED RIBS
SCALDING	KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS

4.1 The Components Of Violence And Abuse; (2) Emotional Abuse.

Most respondents regarded emotional abuse as more sustained and significant than physical violence, resulting in cumulative effects, including the destruction of self-confidence and self-esteem, demoralisation, depression, suicidal impulses, nervous breakdown and mental instability. The qualitative effect of emotional violence should not be underestimated. Generally, it appeared as sustained denigration rather than as an occasional rupture of an otherwise healthy relationship. It might constitute the principal form of verbal communication in the relationship. Humiliation was a central theme, with sexual innuendoes. Much of it was played out in a household theatre with the children as unwilling audience. Denigration of relations might be a means of hitting the primary target. Emotional violence might potentially have material consequences. Two respondents emphasised that the abuse occurred while they were in serious ill health. Other allegations of emotional cruelty included examples of partner's disregard for the man's well being, following hospitalisation or during illness. Or it might take the form of induced isolation within the household.

Illustrations

- **To me, the violence is bad, but it's the emotional side of what happens, the shame, the embarrassment, the not being believed is worse. [Joe, teacher, 53 years]**
- **She runs around, making allegations that my father is a flipping paedophile, "Father Brendan" as she calls him. My mother is a whore... myself I am a hateful bastard and so on, my sister, she is a useless so and so, one of the other sisters, she calls her "the older she is getting, the more she is showing her Mongolian features". It hurts like hell and the younger brother she calls him "the baby bastard of the family". This has been ongoing for years. [Paul, plumber, 33 years]**
- **They took my appendix out and I went home and the first thing. (Partner) said was she was going to go away in a couple of weeks because she wanted a break. [Alan, bus driver, 32 years]**
- **My wife and the three children would sit in there with the door closed watching television, and I was across in the other one with the door closed, and I had to buy a portable television for myself. [Rick, clerical worker, 46 years]**

Table 4.3: Examples of emotional abuse

EXAMPLES OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE
THROUGH PHYSICAL VIOLENCE
THREATENING REMOVAL THROUGH FALSE ALLEGATIONS
THREATENING TO DEPRIVE MEN OF CONTACT WITH CHILDREN
THREATENING VIOLENCE (VERBALLY OR WITH WEAPONS)
RIGIDLY MONITORING MAN'S MOVEMENTS
TAUNTING
DENIGRATION OF FAMILY, FRIENDS, SELF
INTIMIDATION
SEXUAL GOADING- MOCKERY
FLAUNTING OF SEXUAL UNFAITHFULNESS
EXCLUSION FROM DECISION TO HAVE ABORTION
RAGES/ IRRATIONAL FIERCE TEMPER
FALSE ALLEGATIONS (RAPE, INCEST, PHYSICAL ABUSE)
FINANCIAL ABUSE
JEALOUSY
BLACKMAIL
MANIPULATION OF FAMILY, FRIENDS & PROFESSIONALS
PHYSICAL ISOLATION IN HOME
WITHDRAWAL OF FOOD
NON-COMMUNICATION
PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN
INVOLVING CHILDREN IN DENIGRATION OF MAN
SHAMING MAN IN FRONT OF CHILDREN/ & OTHERS
SLEEP DEPRIVATION
HOWLING, SCREAMING, ROCKING
SUICIDE THREATS/ ATTEMPTS
SELF-MUTILATION
NAMECALLING
CONSTANT FAULT FINDING
THREATS OF SELF-ABUSE AS ULTIMATUMS
NOISE
FALSE ACCUSATIONS TO POLICE, COURT, WORK, NEIGHBOURS
FRIGHTENING LOOKS / GLARES
ALIENATING FRIENDS AND FAMILY
KEPT PRISONER IN OWN HOME

4.1 The Components of Violence and Abuse; (3) Fear as abuse.

Many respondents were concerned about the unpredictability of abuse. Although clearly a sub-category of emotional abuse, fear needs emphasising as a distinct type. This was fear not only of physical violence, but also of unpredictability, of unknown reactions to stimuli, of trauma relating to sleep-deprivation, and of the pressure of verbal abuse. Fear could take the form of general and prolonged anxiety, a sense of “living on one’s nerves”. Many respondents confessed to fear of their partner and what that person might be capable of. There was the fear of confronting the partner.

Fear meant a constant concern with escape routes. For most respondents, that fear was exacerbated by lack of access to some agency of resolution or support.

Illustrations

- **I used to come home and used to wonder what kind of a reception I was going to get. Because you couldn't be sure from one minute to the next what kind of condition she was going to be in. [John, engineer, 50 years]**
- **Anything that came to hand, she had a knife a couple of times and I really felt that she was going to use it. Saw it in her face. I was really afraid of her. [Gavan, technician, 51 years]**

4.1 The Components of Violence and Abuse; (4) Control as abuse.

Several respondents felt that they were most abused when the female partner sought to control their daily timetable and to dictate the way they spent their time.

Occasionally, the relationship centred on the woman's control over her male partner's life-style. It could involve continuing allegations about the male partner having an affair during working hours. It might mean restrictions on his privacy. Several respondents felt that they were being permitted to stay in the marital home on material sufferance. But being evicted by one's partner was not uncommon. Several of the women who engaged in control behaviour with their partner, reportedly acted similarly towards their children.

Illustrations

- **She didn't want to go out, so I wasn't getting out. I was sort of kept in prison. [Joe, teacher, 53 years]**
- **If I was a couple of minutes late, there was an atmosphere, a tension, accusations. If I was too early home from work, I was tied to arriving into the house exactly on the dot. She would have suspected that I had been seeing somebody during my supper hour at the end of my shift. Even if I forgot about that for a second, it would've come into me head like a flood, that "my goodness I've got to get this over with and get outta here. I'm only two minutes late or I'm only five minutes late", but if it got over ten minutes late it would really be "its going to be serious" when I got there. [Francis, ambulance driver, 32 years]**

- **She searches everywhere round the house. I have had to stop bringing my mail in and have had to ask friends to keep it for me. There was nothing private from her. [James, salesman, 44 years]**
- **When I had no money I was thrown out in the street - no money no clothes and nowhere to go. [Tony, unemployed, 36 years]**
- **I was put out of the house a few nights and I spent nights in the car.... The kids wondering what was going on, and all this playing on my mind. The next day, it was like she couldn't remember doing anything. If I dared raise my voice about the dinners not being made, or the house not being taken care of, or more importantly the kids not being looked after, she got very uptight, and just threatened that "if you don't shut your mouth, that is you out". [Colm, manager, 45 years]**

4.1 The Components of Violence and Abuse; (5) Sleep deprivation as abuse.

Although often disregarded, attempts to interfere with the other party's sleep can be a major form of aggravation, one difficult to quantify or prove to the outsider. Sleep deprivation was a recurring theme in the responses. This occurs either because the men's partners are deliberately keeping them awake (and wakening them if they slept), or because the men were fearful of attacks occurring if they slept. It is clearly a relatively easy – if calculated – form of abuse to inflict, although rarely documented in orthodox accounts of marital violence and abuse. It was probably the most frequent form of abuse recorded. Sleep deprivation might be enacted under the guise of performing necessary household tasks such as using the vacuum cleaner or cleaning the house. While the threat alone of physical violence can be sufficient to prevent the man from sleeping, several respondents reported physical attacks while they were asleep. Such a tactic removed any male physical advantages, catching him in his most vulnerable state. Orthodox images of male physique in countering partner violence are dispelled when he is caught in sleep.

Illustrations

- **She has threatened to stab me some night that I am sleeping. I haven't slept now for about six-seven months with my bedroom door closed. I throw an old pair of socks behind the door so that if she goes to open it will jar the door. So as I hear her coming in. Then all of a sudden, maybe one or two o'clock in the morning, she will open the door, and that is me awake. I can't sleep again. [James, salesman, 44 years]**

- When I do go to bed, I can't even rest because she will come up and down the stairs - she is putting clothes away. She'll go away for about half an hour and when she hears the bedroom light going off and the bedroom radio, she'll be back up the stairs again, opens the door, messes about. This goes on until the early hours of the morning and I am going to work shattered. Many's a time when I'm at work out in the lorry, you have to pull in for five minutes to get your flipping five minutes to yourself, to get your head down to try and carry on with the day's work, between the strain of what she is saying to you and the tiredness. [Alex, lorry driver, 42 years]
- I came off night duty at eight o'clock on a Sunday morning, got to bed and I must have been falling off to sleep. The next thing I felt myself being choked, couldn't breathe. She had her knees on my elbows and her two hands round my throat and I just could not move. I could move my head about, but there was no way I could shift her. (My son) ran into the room, shouting "Leave Daddy alone." He pushed her off the top of me. From that point on, I never really slept in the house, properly, unless she was away at work. I just was afraid. [Francis, ambulance driver, 32 years]
- One night I woke up and the blood just gushing out of my face. I thought someone came into the bedroom and hit me as if we'd be robbed or something. I jumped up. Just "You were snoring. You just woke me up." I still can't breathe through this side of my nose. I don't know what she used. My nose clicks. [Miles, farmer, 39 years]

4.1 The Components of Violence and Abuse; (6) Property Damage.

On occasion, a partner might vent her anger on domestic property rather than on the other party. Attacks on property could be a form of secondary violence against the male. Or they could simply be an outcome of frustration and anger. One respondent spoke of returning from work to find the house vandalised by his partner. Another claimed attacks on his office premises.

Illustrations

- Watching telly, she would explode. Putting her boot through the floor, howling like a wolf sometimes in the middle of the night. If I didn't respond to that, then half the doors in the house would have had holes kicked in them. The house was badly smashed and fixtures and fittings in the house. Delf in the house, plates. [Fred, unemployed, 53 years]

- **She used a hatchet about the house for destroying things. She didn't just throw a stereo; she threw each individual section not into the aquarium but through the glass. [Eamon, production worker, 45 years]**

4.1 The Components of Violence and Abuse; (7) Violence to Children.

A violent person may act in that way not just to a partner but also to other members of the social unit. Many of the women who were prepared to use physical violence against the man were also physically abusive towards their children. The target may become irrelevant. Children could become direct victims as an alternative to the partner. They could also be emotionally abused as witnesses to the violence, which in turn affected the male partner. On occasion, the emotional effect on the children was severe. Frequently, verbal abuse not only occurred in front of the children but the children were actively encouraged to side against the man. Children might be encouraged to assume the blame for the conflict between the adults. Conflict within the home could also have external effects, with children being ostracised by their peers. Intra-partner violence was in any case difficult to conceal from the children. Children may attempt to intervene in the conflict.

Illustrations

- **One time when the roars were so bad and we went down to my bedroom, the three daughters and me, were all wrapped around one another and she said, "What's wrong with mammy, why is she doing it Dad?" and me I was saying "Fuck her". But to my children I was saying, "Say a prayer for her". The four of us crying below in the room and her roaring and shouting at us. [Rick, clerical worker, 46 years]**
- **He started crying and says "that's not fair, I'm not going to have a Daddy and it's all my fault," Because she was shouting at them all the time about "you kids are annoying us" and stuff like that there. "It's your fault, this is why Mummy and Daddy is fighting." [Michael, manual worker, 55 years].**
- **One day, she gave me such a beating, that she opened every window in the bungalow, and chucked every bit of clothing out, uniforms the lot. It took one and a half-hours to get that lot in before the bus stopped and my two children got off the bus, so as not to embarrass them. They said, "What happened to you Dad?" and I said that I walked into closet door. She said, "No, mammy done that on you". [Rick, clerical worker, 46 years]**

- **The youngest wee girl puts her hands over me and holds my legs. She won't let her hit me. "Don't hit my Daddy". Even the wee boy comes over and he tries to hit her back. [David, engineer, 36 years]**
- **My son gets desperate abuse. I don't know what to do about it. I lie and listen to what is being said to him. "You're just like him". He is called every name. The abuse is terrible, keeping him awake when he should be asleep. There is nothing I can do. [Harry, shipyard worker, 39 years]**

4.1 The Components of Violence and Abuse; (8) Financial Abuse.

Again, often disregarded, in family violence studies (although now critical in elder abuse studies) is the extent to which unauthorised abstraction of finances may be a major way of damaging the interests of the other partner. This could take the form of the partner exercising complete control over the man's income. In other instances, the man's financial resources were depleted because of his partner's alleged extravagance and irresponsibility. Some partners refused to be involved in the expenses of running the household or rearing the children. The partners also detailed cases of theft. Such behaviour could be combined with deliberate public embarrassment and denigration of their partner. One respondent described how the partner persuaded the bank manager to withdraw all his credit cards and forged his signature on cheques. Financial abuse could be both calculated and unscrupulous. For example, one respondent complained that his wife had seized his financial compensation for an accident.

Illustrations

- **Her money was her own; I paid all the bills. When I worked in the airlines, I could have got a meal at the airport. I wasn't allowed. She made me up lunches and at the end of the week, I borrowed the money from my young sister to pay her back for the lunches because I gave her my pay packet intact. I never touched it. If you had said to me come down town for a cup of coffee, I couldn't have done it. I had no money. [Bill, engineer, 44 years]**
- **I was doing without. I didn't have any petrol to go to work....and I can't turn around and say "I have no money. I can't come in." [Steve, car salesman, 52 years]**

Table 4.4: Examples of financial and sexual abuse

MEN'S EXAMPLES OF FINANCIAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE	
FINANCIAL	SEXUAL
WITH HOLDING MONEY/ DEPRIVING MAN OF MONEY	ATTACKS ON GENITALS
CLEARED MAN'S BANK ACCOUNT	MARITAL RAPE
SPENDING MONEY THEY DIDN'T HAVE	GOADING ABOUT EXPLOITS WITH OTHER MEN
STOPPED MAN'S PENSION	SEXUAL MOCKERY
STOPPED SON'S INSURANCE POLICY	NON-CONSUMMATION OF MARRIAGE
DESTROYED BUSINESS	MASTURBATED IN SLEEP
TOOK MAN'S COMPENSATION MONEY	SEXUALLY DEMANDING
	PORNOGRAPHIC MOVIES AND MAGAZINES

4.1 The Components of Violence and Abuse; (9) Sexual Abuse.

Sexual violence by women is an under-studied topic but nevertheless apparent to several of these respondents. It has not previously been appreciated that women might conduct it against men. Remarkably, two respondents cited the ultimate sexual abuse. The male respondents – paradoxically, echoing the complaints of patriarchy through the ages – claimed that the sexual act could also be the locus for the abusive use of power in which the male partner was treated without regard. This was a complicated area where responses, on one hand, reflected stark images of traditional patriarchy, but on the other, remarkably, mirrored – although clearly to a lesser extent - women's own sexual abusive experiences. It encompasses both direct assaults but more commonly sexual denigration. Sexual attacks can rob the male of any belief in physical power in the relationship. Sexual assault may more than compensate for any apparent superiority on the part of the male.

Verbal abuse commonly contained elements of sexual denigration. Several referred to persistent – and allegedly unfounded - accusations of infidelity. Generally, the responses embodied gender-laden stereotypes about rights and obligations, which in turn could be contorted for particular ends. In verbal sexual abuse, such abuse – if it were abuse - was apparently more related to a process of humiliation than to direct physical gratification or harm. Conversely, sex could be used to try to repair the effects of abusive behaviour.

Illustrations

- She went and got the scissors and she was going to cut my dick off. She was for cutting my penis. I was quite sore the next morning because she was trying to hold me. She certainly grabbed me by the penis and she was hauling and pulling at it. She didn't really succeed. [Bob, transport worker, 43 years]
- You'd never bend down in front of her. If you bent down in front of her, you got a kick in the nuts from behind. [Neil, plumber, 41 years]
- She switches off the lights and launches a vicious attack on nowhere else, not my face, not on my stomach, but on my privates, four times in a row, vicious, unprovoked, pre-meditated. [James, salesman, 44 years]
- The times when we did, it was because (partner) wanted it, but I didn't feel I should've. I remember one night lying in bed and (partner) coming on, and I said, "I don't really want to." It was like "Come on, come on and you'd better fucking..." Unwillingly I gave in. It was the first time I felt like I'd been raped which is "how do you know you felt like you'd been raped?" but like I had sex really against my will. I didn't like it and I mentioned that to her later on and (sobs) she just basically played it off. [Michael, manual worker, 55 years]
- She opened up her dressing gown, and pointed at her private parts and said, "You see that there?" I never looked. "I got the greatest ride I ever had in my life." She started to roar and shout. [Rick, clerical worker, 46 years]

4.1 The Components of Violence and Abuse; (10) False Accusations as Abuse.

Earlier abuse studies often treated the woman as the passive recipient of the other's violence. In practice, an active female partner, familiar with stereotyped violent roles, may use that image in order to control the relationship. Again, there is a contradiction between stereotypical masculine images of the 'manipulative' woman and the traditional view of women as passive in the abuse relationship. Nearly all respondents claimed their situation had been made worse by the way their partner had made false accusations against them. The picture was drawn of an abusing woman, whom by manipulation of stereotypes as well of legal process, could reconstruct the abusive relationship to her own advantage. As elsewhere, judgement on the validity of respondents accounts are subject to caveats. But insofar as the respondents believe them, they constitute a peculiar form of abuse in their own right.

Law came to constitute part of the abuse process itself. For example, two respondents claimed that they had been falsely subject to child abuse allegations in order to have them removed from the house. Child abuse accusations guarantee the separation of the man from his children, an accusation difficult to refute. Several respondents felt that the drama was being structured in advance of a formal separation and preparation for a legal case for exclusion and divorce. The aims of such planning might be to obtain a divorce, to exclude the partner from the house – or in two cases to prevent a divorce occurring. One respondent had been reportedly wrongly denounced as a member of a para-military organisation, in possession of guns, to the police. A second claimed he had misleadingly been reported to the para-militaries and beaten up by them. Another complained of a wrongful allegation of marital rape. Several claimed that – perhaps encouraged by a solicitor – their partners had compiled detailed records of alleged misbehaviour by the male, unknown to the latter. All these records could be conflated into an image of “unreasonable behaviour”.

Illustrations

- **You lived in fear. The one thing that I was afraid of, and I used to lock my door, was that she would come up in the middle of the night shouting, “rape”. [James, salesman, 44 years]**
- **She started to make fun of me, says “I’m going to take you to court. Get you out of this house. Get an exclusion order. You’re not going to see the wee one”. [Tony, unemployed, 36 years]**
- **When the axe finally fell, I had nothing documented; I had no evidence, because I didn’t believe it would ever come to that. When I was told that accusations of violence had been levelled at me, I couldn’t believe it. [James, salesman, 44 years]**
- **I have read her diary where she is fabricating stories to her Doctor. She has been planning this for some time, for nearly five years. She has been plotting this, and I honestly believe that the whole idea of it, was to wear me down to the extent of me going and getting legal people. She has written in her diary that I was out drinking last Saturday night and I was drunk or something. She stayed at her mother's because she feared for her life is what she told her doctor. She came back on the Sunday, because she was scared of me changing the locks on the house. [Paul, plumber, 33 years]**

4.2 EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

In many ways, the consequences of the conflict were similar to those that characterise the end of any long-term relationship, but in this case exacerbated by the violence and abuse.

Key Points

- ❑ The most severe form of abuse cited by all respondents was emotional victimisation, normally cumulative in character and involving long term trauma, which at the extreme – in two reported cases – led to suicide attempts.
- ❑ Such victimisation could affect respondents' abilities in employment.
- ❑ Several respondents emphasised that one result of such victimisation could result in loss of home and livelihood.
- ❑ Only a few respondents found that in subsequent legal and matrimonial procedures were the courts receptive to the notion of the male as victim.
- ❑ Respondents were emotionally scarred not just because of the direct effects on themselves but also because of their children witnessing such abuse and in some cases, being forced to take sides.
- ❑ Such experiences in several cases affected the individual's ability to develop future relationships with members of the opposite sex. However, others found that such eventual relationships could largely compensate for their experience of partner trauma.

4.2 Effects of Violence and Abuse; (1) Emotional.

Emotional effects were the most evident. Emotional abuse is a rubric to cover a range of effects - from general distress to the extremes of trauma and depression-related suicidal behaviour. While in several ways, these consequences are similar to those experienced by many separating couples, abuse cases reflect the severity of experience. Severe depression, mental illness, isolation and suicide attempts were recounted. Many respondents confessed to suicidal thoughts and several had actually attempted suicide. Hanging, guns, jumping in the canal, slitting wrists, had all been considered. Several respondents expressed the view that self-harm was the only way left to them to express the accumulated pain. Different rationales were given for not carrying the action through. Some had nervous breakdowns of varying length and complexity. Material deprivation compounded those effects – for example, three respondents spent several weeks living in their cars.

Irrespective of the degree of physical violence suffered, nearly all respondents stressed the *emotional* effects of long-term abusive behaviour. Bite marks, scalding, and scratches faded but the emotional scars never healed. Many of those still in relationships had internalised a sense of worthlessness. They had become pieces of furniture, a source of gratification – including sexual favours – for others. Several respondents were concerned about the effect which the abuse was having on their mental health. They feared ending up in either mental hospital or single man's hostels, devoid of children and of material comforts. The cumulative emotional abuse might manifest itself physically – severe loss of weight, and sleepwalking were reported.

Illustrations

- **Six weeks sounds like a very short period. In fact, it was a very, very, long period. I had nowhere to live. The account had been cleared out. I had lost the company car. I had no clothes as such. I had nothing. I managed to get into a bed and breakfast thing. This was so alien to me. I had always paddled my own canoe. I had always been in front of the game. But somehow they just pulled all the support from me and left me. If not suicide, being found dead. I was down to six and a half stone. I was just finished, absolutely - people lying on the streets and people homeless, never really took the time to think. Why are they lying in the streets, why are they homeless? Suddenly I was one of them. Nothing I could do. All my education, all my contacts, all the infrastructure I had built up in my life had just been wiped out by this woman. [Gavan, technician, 51 years]**

- **What I done was try to take an overdose. I wanted to feel like I was still a human being. I wasn't just a machine, being used constantly. I wanted to feel the hurt of my own body. I cut my arm and everything. Cut it along there. Twice I have done that. I just wanted to see if there was blood in there. But I look at it this way. I know my pain will be still there, because I wouldn't be able to rest because my children would still be asking for me. They would be wanting to know why I had done it...why I had left them in this world to be with their Mother. "Daddy if you die, who is gonna look after us?" and "you promised us that you would be here for us, no matter what happened."**[Steve, car salesman, 52 years]
- **It is all a fuzz. I stumbled from housing benefits to income supports to the sick. I was very very ill. By this stage nobody wanted to help, just say, "In three months time, fill this form out". That is all I seemed to hear. My head just couldn't cope with the whole thing.** [Gavan, technician, 51 years]
- **The physical aspect was bad enough, but the scar eventually heals through time. Many a time I was left with black eyes and I had bite marks all over me. But those heal. But the emotional scars never heal.** [Joe, teacher, 53 years]
- **I have dropped helluva lot of weight. I've had to go down to the doctor and say look "Why am I losing this much weight so quickly?" He's put it down to a lot of stress. I tell him it's obviously work stress.** [Jim, manual worker, 42 years]

Table 4:5 Effects of emotional abuse from partner

EMOTIONAL EFFECTS	
LOSS OF SELF-ESTEEM	PARANOIA
DEPRESSION	TEARFULNESS
FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS	INSECURITY
SUICIDAL THOUGHTS/	POWERLESSNESS
FEELINGS/ATTEMPTS	INDECISION
FEELINGS OF SHAME/ HUMILIATION	HAIRLOSS
ANXIETY/ PANIC ATTACKS	SECRETIVENESS
FEAR FOR LIFE	SELF-BLAME
FEAR FOR MENTAL HEALTH/ SANITY	LOSS OF 'GOOD NAME'
FEELINGS OF BEING TRAPPED	ANGER
NAUSEA	NERVOUS RASH
DISILLUSIONMENT	MANHOOD UNDERMINED
NIGHTMARES	EXHAUSTION
INSOMNIA	MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY MANIPULATED
SLEEP-WALKING	BULLIED
LOSS OF CONCENTRATION	WEIGHT LOSS
CONFUSION	ISOLATION
FEELING FOOLISH/ STUPID	ALIENATION IN OWN HOME
LOSS OF INTEREST AT WORK	FEAR FOR CHILDREN
UNSETTLED/ FRUSTRATION	SHAMED BEFORE CHILDREN
DESPERATION	FEAR OF NEW RELATIONSHIP/ PROBLEMS IN
BLACK MOODS	NEW RELATIONSHIP
DEPRIVED OF CONTACT WITH CHILDREN	RESIGNATION
STRESS	DISTRUST

4.2 Effects of Violence and Abuse; (2) Employment Effects.

The effect of the abuse upon the men's work was threefold. In the majority of cases it had a detrimental effect upon their productivity. Secondly the workplace was often where the men were most under pressure to conceal the abuse and its effects.

Sometimes the concealment was successful. In other cases, the rationale offered for the injuries was relatively transparent. Thirdly, the abuse impacted on their work materially. This could be because the abuse itself included financial loss or because of the consequences of being excluded from the home or going through the courts. Men also lost their jobs because of stress, reduced capacity to function, due to illness resulting from the abuse, or because of becoming homeless. Respondents spoke of how emotional pain, turmoil, mental and physical tiredness, affected their ability to do their job. A car salesman, for example, noted that the intensity of his sales practices was drastically reduced by the household experience. Work might be also affected by stigma, as the reason for under-performance became known. Employers, made aware of the problem, varied in their reactions. Three respondents recounted the embarrassment of attempting to conceal facial scratches from their employers and colleagues. For most respondents, work meant further stress, either because of the emotional effects of being abused or because of the tension and embarrassment involved in concealing the true reasons for their injuries. Rather than conceal the abuse or risk reactions from work colleagues, the victims might absent themselves.

Illustration

- **I was coming into the office more and more often with scratches, scars, bumps, bruised eyes, bruised face. "How did you get that, football?" "Nah. squash," any excuse. There was one time I was brought in, came in with a black eye. The regional manager says, "You're not going out on the road like that. What are the customers going to say about this, if I arrived in your office today with a black eye and said, "I fell on the way up the road"? "[Gavan, technician, 51 years]**

4.2 Effects of Violence and Abuse; (3) Material Effects.

Many respondents reported the loss of the family shelter as a major consequence. Material losses invariably included other aspects of collective household possessions, and especially the financial costs of maintaining a separate household. Accounts of material loss were always described comparatively with the respondent reflecting bitterly on the presumed better result for the former partner. The effects of separation

because of abuse for some respondents were indistinguishable from 'normal' forms of separation. The bitterness at material loss was often vituperatively expressed. Loss of home and its material comforts, together with support payments for the children, when coupled with the emotional effects of the domestic abuse, made the respondents feel doubly victimised. The loss of identity given by church membership, by car ownership, and by pension rights all contributed to this material feeling of defeat.

Illustration

- **The women have everything ... every single thing. They've got the kids, family allowance books; they've got their kids' money. When the man's put out after all those years, all he's got is forty pound a week on the bureau to start a new life. You've to try and get a home, your food and your life together again with forty pound. There's not a place you can come to. Twenty years I was in that house and they've threw me out with a black bag. I went up to the DHSS to try and get stuff for that house. One hundred and eighty-pound they give me to build my life up again. They loaned me it. I have to pay it back at twelve pound a week. After waking up in a lovely home, and your kids around you, and your cupboards full of food and your fire lit... and you wake up in an empty house with nothing. [Errol, unemployed, 48 years]**

4.2 Effects of Violence and Abuse; (4) Legal Abuse.

The law was generally perceived to act in a stereotypical nature to the males in ensuring that where discretion was available, it functioned to the benefit of the female. While we discuss contact with legal agencies below, most respondents felt legally disenfranchised. Law in practice and well as in procedure was perceived as appearing to label the male as culprit rather than as victim, and appeared to officially sanction an unequal share of family property and access to children. Personal views by legal personnel together with the formal effects of a Court Order in barring the respondent from home and children, created a further sense of embitterment. The abuse victim, incorrectly labelled as the 'culprit' felt that he could be formally regarded by the Housing Executive as one who had made himself legally homeless. Additionally he was publicly stigmatised in the proceedings as a violent male. There was a strong feeling that the law did not protect those who were served Exclusion Orders as a result of false accusations. The respondents felt that the injustice also had an incremental effect, in that the courts were unlikely to look favourably upon such a man, believing the Order to have been justified. As a

consequence of having been excluded from the home, the man was also likely to be living in circumstances that the court would deem less favourable when considering custody or access to the children.

Access to children was frequently seen as being deliberately thwarted by their partner and, when this occurred, they, rather than their partner, were viewed negatively by the courts. Much of the evidence here mirrored the effects of any divisive divorce with the male claiming that he was deliberately being prevented from seeing the children by a series of procrastinating tactics. However, not all respondents despaired of their experience of the legal process. A small minority of respondents found that the Court acted in their favour – in two cases an Exclusion Order against the violent partner was obtained. Overwhelmingly, however respondents' experience of the legal system was negative. Given that these men had actually been the abused partners within the relationship, their treatment by the relevant agencies constituted an extension of the abuse that they had already suffered, materially and psychologically. The overwhelming view was that the legal system was severely imbalanced to the advantage of females and the disadvantage of males.

Illustrations

- **She admitted to my sister, that I had never laid a finger on her. Yet now she was claiming domestic violence, a personal protection order is out against me not to go near her. She can get that dead easy, without any proof without any justification. That means now that I'm branded a violent man and that is the stigma attached. If anybody hears "Oh, he has got a personal protection order served against him", you immediately think, "he's been knocking his wife about." No truth and no investigation. [Paul, plumber, 33 years]**
- **I had to fight through the courts for access to my child and with the new Children's Order, it is worse, more manipulation to the detriment of the father and the children. [Eamon 45 years]**
- **I am faced with losing my home, nowhere to go to, no way of getting a house; I'm not a priority need for the Housing Executive. No one to talk to, there is no counselling service, no support, suicidal, the courts, the welfare and the police are no way enforcing whatever rights I may have. It is all pro-woman. The law in case law says "she gets the children", everything, I see my kids from 10am -6 on a Saturday, that is all my contact, and the Judge thinks that's extensive. Now I saw my children, seven days a week before**

that. I cooked. I cleaned. I changed their nappies. I did everything for them. I played with them and for him to see that brought down to ten hours on one day. He is totally out of his tree. All those things of what could happen to a man when the CSA come into the picture, getting his wage cut. I have to find suitable accommodation where I can bring my children to have the overnight stay. So I had to look for a two-bedroomed flat which was above my means. I had to take on a second job to try and pay for all this. So I am working longer hours which put a good stress on me. There is no way of getting a mortgage because of the CSA payments being taken out (and) when it goes to a divorce; she is entitled to half the property. If I don't have a proper house I can lose the overnight contact with the kids. It is a vicious circle. Basically, I am a man. I can look after myself is the view. It has been said to me from solicitors to welfare officers to the courts "You have no rights." Sometimes as plain as that, sometimes disguised under other things. You used to talk in this country about Diplock courts. There is nothing more Diplock than the Family Proceedings court. It is a closed court, and this is why it has been kept hidden for so long. If it was more open and out in the air, I think a lot more people there would be shocked and horrified at what could happen. A man who is in a happy marriage, his wife at any moment could turn round and "go get the fuck out of this house" and he has lost it all. He has no rights, nothing; it is all taken away from him. He could end up paying loads of money through solicitors. My wife gets Legal Aid; therefore I can't even sue her for the costs that I am incurring - paying a solicitor, taking time off work. If I win any of my court battle actions, I can't even sue her for the hassle and the cost. [Michael, manual worker, 55 years]

4.2 Effects of Violence and Abuse; (5) Effects in Relation to the Children.

Several respondents spoke of curtailment of access to their children as a consequence of the eventual break-up of the relationship. Others noted the lasting emotional damage that the conflict appeared to have upon their children. Following separation, those respondents who were parents, remained concerned for their welfare and were frequently anxious because invariably the children remained in the care of their ex-partner. Concern for the children was a strong incentive to stay together. For those who had chosen to leave, rather than continue to endure their partner's abusive behaviour, the children could act as an additional reproach. Several respondents, following separation, commented on the quality of assumed care. In two cases, they claimed the children now had access to alcohol and drugs and were being deprived of adequate food. Nevertheless, a few felt empowered through separation to challenge their partner's behaviour. Several respondents complained that the same manipulation that they perceived with regard to the partner's public and legal image was also

conducted with the children. The fact that an ex-partner had custody of a child, and considerable control over the father's access to the child, could be used to continue verbal abuse. An ex-partner could prevent communication between father and child. The respondents especially stressed the emotional effects of separation from their children.

Illustrations

- **She treated the kids, in the way she treated me. I suppose that's why I feel such a protection for the kids. Because I know what it's like to feel the verbal abuse and manipulation and ultimately the emotional abuse that she gives you. So I don't want them to suffer that even though I think they will. [Keith, teacher, 47 years]**
- **Her sister moved in and there was partying going on. Drink and drugs everything, my youngest said "Daddy.... This sister's boyfriend pulled the zip down and was flashing himself at the kids." The wee girl didn't make that up, at four. [David, assembly worker, 36 years]**
- **She now has the child terrified of me. Whatever stories she has told, it is like the candyman situation; I have become this brute of a man, this spectre, this bogeyman. So the only recourse, I have, I write to the child trying to let her know that I am still thinking about her, and she is still part of my life. [Gavan, technician, 51 years]**
- **She phoned me now and again in work. "I got you over a barrel, I have the child, you are over a barrel. "[Michael, manual worker, 55 years]**

4.2 Effects of Violence and Abuse; (6) Future Relationships.

Having experienced one abusive partner, several men had begun to regard all women as potentially abusive. Future relationships with the opposite sex could become much more fraught. Constructing a new partnership after leaving the abusing relationship was again more complicated than separation or divorce in a non-abusing case. New potential partners might possess hidden characteristics. Others respondents felt fortunate in the new relationship they had formed. Despite the abuse which they claimed to have suffered, some still felt responsible for their ex-partner's well-being. A small minority considered being reunited with their partner but the majority expressed only antagonism.

Illustrations

- **It is their baggage that they have with them and you don't know that. I thought I knew my ex-wife, but I didn't know the baggage she carried with her. The way she couldn't let it go and the effect it had on her. [Neil 41 years]**
- **She was in bother - I would get her out of it. She knows that too. All she has to do is lift the phone and we would be there to pull her out of it. Even the children help out. That's the only thing again, family comes first. [John, engineer, 50 years]**
- **If she had three million of the Lottery, knocked on that door and says "there Pet, there's three million of the Lottery, spend it whatever way you want and take me back", I'd turn her down. I don't even want to see her. [Colm, manager, 45 years]**

4.3 MANAGEMENT OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Respondents to a varying extent could ‘manage’ the coercive abuse. Coping strategies were necessary for several reasons. Abuse severity could mentally destroy the individual. Or its revelation could undermine his image of masculinity in the outside world. Respondents evolved different survival strategies. Some attempted to repress the experience of abuse and to conceal it from the outside world. Others went from pillar to post seeking support from the range of possible voluntary and statutory agencies. Some resorted to alcohol or to sport. Several claimed they managed to “turn the other cheek” while a final group could only deal with the conflict by finally terminating the relationship.

Key points

- ❑ Most respondents attempted to conceal their partner victimisation experiences from public view – variously out of embarrassment, by self-injury to conceal their bruises, or because they believed third parties would not take the abuse.
- ❑ Only a few sought external support, normally from trusted friends.
- ❑ Others attempted to normalise the abuse – believing that it would ease over time.
- ❑ Alcohol was a common resort with no positive effects.
- ❑ Some attempted to use physical exercise to alleviate the domestic travails.
- ❑ Work provided a temporary but unsatisfactory distraction for some respondents.
- ❑ A majority of respondents had terminated the relationship – either through choice by either party or through exhaustion.

4.3 Management of Violence and Abuse; (1) Concealment.

Fear of rebuke from the outside world led to imaginative techniques to hide the experiences. Most tried to conceal the abuse from the outsiders, attempting to “normalise the abnormal”. For the abused respondents, several factors were persuasive in seeking to conceal the intimate violence - feelings they had no-one to turn to, the likelihood that they would be disbelieved, fear of false accusations, of the consequences with regards to their children and/or partner, of becoming homeless, of increased abuse, and of becoming publicly stigmatised. Withdrawal from social interaction and explanation was a common practice. Images of masculinity barred help. One respondent claimed that if he had revealed his injuries to the local Emergency Units, they would have responded by patronising him as an incompetent male. Other males would have made fun of him. Explanations had to be invented to conceal the abuse. Accounts of falling in a ditch, being bruised playing sport, bumping into a wall, spilling a kettle to conceal deliberate scalding, were offered to others rather than revealing the violence. Two talked of deliberate self-mutilation to conceal domestic injuries. Embarrassment was a further reason for concealment. Intimates might suspect but colluded in silence. Given the prevalence of attitudes unsympathetic to male victims of female abuse, the decision not to disclose may have been the most rational but also the most difficult.

Illustrations

- **It was messing me up inside, as my boss didn't even know then, I couldn't communicate any of it. "What's wrong with you today? Are you in an owl humpy mood?" I didn't even have the heart to tell him "I'm having problems at home." I never told my family. People were wondering why I was always on edge, cagey. I just used to go to my bed, out of the road, and try and lie and sort it all out myself. The more I tried to do that, the harder it got. I never even told my mother, father. Although they knew for some years, because every weekend, Saturday and Sunday night, I had to bring a Chinese meal or something round to their home or else sit out and try and hide in a restaurant sitting at a table by yourself like a fool. [Paul , plumber, 33 years]**
- **I put my arm into the sander before I went to the hospital? To cover up what she had done. It was sore. But it did the job. The sander was that quick anyway you wouldn't feel it, a second and it's all over. [Miles, farmer, 39 years]**

4.3 Management of Violence and Abuse; (2) External support.

Respondents resorted to a variety of sources for support. Some sought assistance from male intimates, from family and/or professional agencies ranging from the local General Practitioner to the police. Friends were the most obvious possibility. But their reaction could be double-edged. Support from a neutral party might break the silence. Particular individuals could become confidants, and a source of support. A few respondents later found, in a new relationship, acknowledgement and support, which had previously been absent

Illustrations

- **It was one optician I used to go to who eventually said to me straight out “Look, you needn't lie to me anymore about your broken glasses. I know what is going on. If I were you I would do something about it because she is putting you in danger of your own life.”[Bill 44 years]**
- **If it had not been for (new partner) I would not be sitting here talking to you, but she came at the right time and when she picked me up and she literally did do that. I was finished. [Gavan, technician, 51 years]**

4.3 Management of Violence and Abuse; (3) ‘Turning the Other Cheek’.

A few respondents claimed to cope with much of the abuse through a process of passive acceptance. They described how they became slowly immunised from escalating abuse and violence. Attempts at verbal reasoning proved ineffective. Locking oneself in the bathroom, or leaving the house, temporarily, were common strategies. But even escape had penalties. The respondent might be locked out of the house; sometimes leaving merely delayed an attack. Several men left for limited periods. But most respondents were at a loss to know how to cope with violent abuse. Short-term measures, such as leaving the scene of the conflict or escaping into other activities did not, in the long run, address the continuation of the abusive behaviour. Many felt that if they chose to leave permanently, they would be disadvantaged. The intervention of external agencies would not result in sympathy and assistance for their predicament but would intensify their difficulties. Consequently, most respondents confessed to bewilderment and hopelessness in considering their options.

Illustrations

- **I gritted my teeth and took it. She beat me into the bathroom, beating me into the bath, and I just lay there with my arms across my face, trying to protect my head until she physically beat herself out. Until she was so tired she couldn't beat me any more. I just stood and took it. [Joe, teacher, 53 years]**
- **I used to spend a lot of time in the garage with the car, I could keep away. The other place was the toilet. She'd never ever interfere with me when I was in the toilet. [Francis, ambulance driver, 32 years]**
- **I would leave the house, go out, walk about, take the dogs. Be away for a couple of hours, coming back to the house, put the dogs away, come in quietly up the stairs, into bed and the door would burst open, bang with whatever. [Connor, soldier, 38 years]**
- **I got out of the house and into the car and the first thing I can remember, I was just going into Dublin. How I drove there I can't even remember the road, couldn't remember it, as if I woke up. What actually happened, there was snow on the road and I think I came back to life when I seen a lorry coming out of control towards me. [Francis, ambulance driver, 32 years]**

4.3 Management of Violence and Abuse; (4) Alcohol.

Several initially survived the abuse through resorting to drink. Alcohol was a continuing palliative for a large minority of respondents, although only a short-term relief. Lonely contemplation in the pub merely induced further depression. One respondent, who developed a drink problem, felt that the part played by the abuse he suffered was not acknowledged. His apparent alcoholism and subsequent irrational behaviour, he claimed was a consequence not a cause. The diagnosis of it as the former, simply assisted concealment of its source.

Illustration

- **I would avoid coming home to make sure she'd be in bed and if anything happened, which was quite often at home, I'd be away out the door and down the local pub, down to the local. Just merciless, it didn't solve anything. [Tony, unemployed, 36 years]**

4.3 Management of Violence and Abuse; (5) Sport.

Physical exercise has been a traditional palliative for personal problems. Long walks, weight-training, and various sports were all offered as means of 'dealing' with the

problem. Several resorted to physical exercise to contain their experiences. Sport furnished both a major distraction and physical exhaustion. It provided a structure that allowed time to pass without contemplation. Other social life disappeared.

Illustration

- **Rather than turning to drink - I can understand why some people do that, and I can understand why some fathers or ex-husbands disappear completely off the face of the earth. For me I got into sport. I went out and I started to do a lot of different sports to occupy my mind, like a programme just to get through this. [Andrew, community worker, 50 years]**

4.3 Management of Violence and Abuse; (6) Work.

Equally, time could be structured through near-obsessive commitment to work-related activities. Some respondents found employment to be a device to keep them away from home and, like sport, to provide for an alternative form of mental exhaustion in which the domestic relationship could be submerged. While the impact of the abuse was often severely felt in the employment situation, engaging in it could also be a means of distraction. Work was used as a refuge from the abuse. Extra over-time could be sought though one penalty was that the children might complain about his absence.

Illustration

- **I had difficulty working and concentrating. I was spending longer and longer in work. Because work was a refuge. It was the one place which was safe. When you were on holiday, rows got that intense that you were always going to get a black eye or two. Then they were always gone before you went back to work. So work was an escape route. [Joe, teacher, 53 years]**

4.3 Management of Violence and Abuse; (7) Leaving the Relationship.

Decisions to end the abuse by leaving the relationship were multi-layered, complicated, and the advantages and disadvantages not always obvious in the short-term. Many respondents had faced the question “Why did you put up with it? Why did you not leave?” Among the reasons which emerged, were their relations with their children, their continuing obligations and care for the abusing partner, the seriousness with which they viewed the institution of marriage, their investment in the home and

family, the lack of an alternative, and the fear that their departure would be seen as an admission of their own guilt in the relationship. Several factors could overlap. For example, one man who sought help from his doctor and was advised to leave the relationship, emphasised that what he was seeking was not to escape, but to *endure* the abuse for the sake of his children. That concern could overlap with a commitment to the notion of marriage and the family. Decisions to continue were often a mix of feelings of religious duty and a moral commitment to the institution of marriage. For a few respondents, Christian belief was the determining factor. For others, the relationship might be a sign of personal integrity. Many respondents stressed their protective and supportive role towards their partner as well as their children. Often the respondents persevered in the hope that by so doing, relations would improve, and because leaving would be a sign of capitulation and failure. There was peer and child pressure to keep the relationship intact. Decisions were complex, with many factors interacting. But most respondents eventually left the relationship, some of their own volition, often through sheer exhaustion.

Illustrations

- **I daren't have said 'boo' to my wife because my marriage would have been over and I was concerned about my children. As long as I am there, I can look after them. [Michael, manual worker, 55 years]**
- **People are going to know my situation and look at me in a different way "Why did this guy stick this crap for this length of time? Why did he put himself through it? Is he mad?" I'm not mad, I'm a family man, and I respect the vows of marriage and because of that, I have stayed for the children but most of all I stayed for myself because I wanted our marriage to work, and I didn't stand by for the last fifteen years just to give in. [Steve, mechanic, 52 years]**
- **I would have felt I was letting her down, that I hadn't worked it through. If there was a chance of her getting better. I felt that I really should stay with her to the bitter end if there is a chance of her feeling okay. Not necessarily for me but for her. I suppose for me as well. She kept saying that she was feeling a bit better and that things were hopeful and my only concern was her and my daughter. To me it was like a test of my Knight in Shining Armour bit and I wasn't going to fail the test. [Eamon 45 years]**

4.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF PATRIARCHAL IMAGES

Within the partner relationship, patriarchal images have several effects. They may influence the relative power of each actor in the relationship – for example about the form of appropriate action or response. Secondly, patriarchal images may structure the abuse - for example, in traditional concepts of woman as *expressive household carer* and man as *instrumental wage earner*. They also crucially affect the actions of significant others – from friends to agencies, in their interpretations and reactions to the events. Finally, an important contribution to the relationship is the male self-image – especially the appreciation by some respondents of the close connection between the image of masculinity and of violence in relationships.

Key Points

- ❑ Paradoxically, patriarchal male respondents felt that they would have betrayed their own innate assumptions of superiority by reacting to what they saw as inferior female violence.
- ❑ Similarly, such males were easily wounded by attempts to control their household practices by a refusal of the female partner to conduct assumed traditional household roles.
- ❑ Disbelief by others about the male victimisation rested often on assumptions of the male physique and relative strength.
- ❑ Males as victims in the household created psychic problems for those respondents whose self-images depended upon traditional patriarchal assumptions.
- ❑ Articulate respondents believed that their victimisation was a direct challenge to the assumption that “violence is a male thing”.

4.4 Contributions of Patriarchal Images: (1) Considerations of Relative Power.

How do images of unequal power affect the conflict in terms of action and reaction? Are women disempowered by the association between physique and potential violence? Does the conflict reflect inherent inequality? Several respondents emphasized the relative physique differences between themselves and their partners. Their size could be used against them by decrying their manhood if they did not respond to the apparent female aggression. They believed that control of their own responses under such provocation was a re-affirmation of their own status as a male; to respond aggressively would have meant they had accepted the other's challenge and lost masculine status. Surrendering to that temptation would have meant surrendering to other's definition of the situation. Similarly, the respondents believed that the very fact of the size differential could impede any external support. One respondent considered that society regarded it appropriate for women to react with violence to patriarchal domination. He also believed that men are perceived as inherently dominant and that anything which lowered or removed that dominance is acceptable .

Illustrations

- **She is slight and small. One of the ways she used to scare me most was by pushing me in the chest backwards and asking “What size are you? What size are you?” I don't know why but I always used to reply “Yeah. I'm six foot two.” “You are afraid of me” and I was afraid of her. If you did actually hit her once she'd be dead. But pushing you back and you'd say, “Yes I am afraid of you.” “You're not a man because you won't fight back”. You have all that sort of gender thing going on. [Harry, shipyard worker, 39 years]**
- **I feel she took the Doctor into her confidence and said, “I am having problems”. I am sure the Doctor would have said, “(name) is big enough to look after himself. I don't think I need to get involved”. [Gavan, technician, 51 years]**

4.4 Contributions of Patriarchal Images: (2) Traditional Views of the Female Role in the Household.

These males possessed all the vices and virtues of any such group with regard to their perception of the 'woman's role'. In some cases, it appeared that perception of the failure of the other party to play out a traditional female role contributed to the

conflict. For example a few reported that one form of abuse by the female was refusal to provide them with meals – if that was not furnished the male had to forgo cooked food. Where equity of relationships is the norm, this is hardly abuse. But where both parties assume conservative notions of female roles, the action (or inaction) by the female in refusing food to her partner constitutes a perceived blow to the esteem of the latter. Similarly, a gendered view of the male role implied that he could not seek outside assistance to settle the dispute because that would have diminished his responsibility for family affairs. Where the woman failed to conduct ‘normal’ female responsibilities, such as giving the children breakfast and seeing them off to school, this was perceived by a respondent as an extension of the abuse.

Illustration

- **I thought it was my God-given right to sort all this out myself. Nor would I discuss it with any of my family. I thought it was just me that had to sort it out, I believed that when I met (partner) that I would move mountains for her, whatever I had to do in order to provide and make sure that things are okay. [Paul, plumber, 33 years]**

4.4 Contributions of Patriarchal Images: (3) Gender Stereotyping and Reactions by Significant Others.

Many respondents felt that acknowledgement of abuse suffered by women, while proper in itself, had fostered a prevalent attitude in which the woman was invariably assumed to be right and the man to be wrong. Especially in relation to the man’s physique, other parties could not contemplate the possibility that the smaller person could harm the larger. The respondents were acutely aware of public perceptions. The balance of doubt was to their detriment. The automatic reaction of third parties appeared to be one of assuming that the male was the aggressor. Such stereotypes and detrimental attitudes were as likely to be held by other men as well as by women. Several expressed anger at the way the media appeared to reinforce this view that violence was a male prerogative. They felt that the general picture that arose from television drama and talk-shows was that the normal aggressor in the household was male. Women, it appeared, rarely featured as the violent party.

Illustrations

- **People did not have open minds.** “There is a lie here somewhere. Somewhere in what you are telling me something is not true. Look at you and look at that wee girl. How could she possibly in a million years do those things? How could that be? You must have some part to play. There are two sides to every story.” I am not putting myself down as some archangel who was a joy to be with every minute of everyday. I wasn’t. No one is. But I certainly wasn’t someone who does that type of thing who hits a woman. It is just in built into me that it is wrong. [Richard, builder, 47 years]
- **This particular night, walking through the centre of the town where there was scaffolding on the buildings, two or three stories up, after having seen her hit me a slap on the mouth, the people assumed that this was a male/ female fight going on. This guy dropped his plank, this plank going through the scaffolding, missed me by half an inch. That was done in front of other people and that is what people automatically assumed, he must have hit her.** [Eamon 45 years]
- **Violence is accepted in females and unaccepted in males. If a man is violent to a woman, it is big trouble in my neighbourhood. Men who beat up on women, especially if they are pregnant, will get beaten up by the paramilitaries. Women, violence is part of their nature, just as it can be a part of a man's nature. The problem is violence. The issue of female violence is wrong and is allowed in society because in a few programmes, Jerry Springer-type things, where he would have a man who says “Yes, I beat up my woman”. He would be booed ferociously and then you have the woman who says “Yeah I hit him and slap him” and everyone goes “yahoo!”. [Mervin, shopworker, 43 years]**

4.4 Contributions of Patriarchal Images: (4) Masculinity and Self-Images.

Where one’s self image includes beliefs that are undermined in the abuse context, amongst other consequences, *reporting* of the abuse becomes doubly difficult. Perceptions of masculinity, of what is entailed or expected in being a man, are not homogenous either within these responses or in society at large. But a complex interplay of various views of masculinity had a strong bearing upon each of the cases. Frequently such views proved detrimental to the respondents themselves. Where attitudes in the wider society dismissed, denigrated and/or isolated male victims, it made little difference in terms of redress, whether the victims themselves rejected such attitudes or reproached themselves. To represent some of the attitudes revealed by the respondents with respect to ideas of maleness is not, therefore, to suggest any

view about what is inherently male. Rather, it is to display the different dynamics both within the respondents themselves and between the respondents and wider society.

It was not merely that others held these attitudes. Part of the problem for several respondents was they had been socialised in gendered terms themselves. Consequently, they had difficulty in handling their own victim status. Several respondents were proud of their masculine ability to confront other males. But being unable to deal with a woman in the same way was a major affront to their self-esteem. They were bewildered by their own apparent masculine-framed incompetence. While a small minority of those interviewed had responded with violence to their partner's violence, the majority professed an aversion towards violent behaviour. Indeed, resorting to force against a woman, even in self-defence, could itself be a betrayal of masculinity.

Illustrations

- **I was reared never to hit girls. I was also reared with what you'd call the "cut knee" syndrome. It's like because if I fall down and I cut my knee, it's 'Come on, get up. Soldiers don't cry. Boys don't cry'. I think that's why men don't talk. Men are afraid.**
[Rick, clerical worker, 46 years]
- **Could you imagine me going down to the pub and saying "Jesus lads, I've been beat at home, left, right, and centre." The interesting thing is some of them are probably the same. But you don't talk. No one wants to talk; no one wants to know you are unhappy. Girls, when they break up, they can all go around to their friends and have a little cry. We can't. You have to cry behind closed doors. So I had to cry in the bedroom. That's my room, so my son doesn't see it.**
- **Most men were reared never to cry or show their feelings, or show their feelings, "stiff upper lip and chin out" and I was brought up the same way, "don't show your feelings".**
[John, engineer, 50 years]
- **I was lying in bed sleeping, and I got bitten, teeth sunk into me so deep that it was a fortnight before it cleared. She nearly took a lump out of my leg. I also remember my face being so marked with nails, dug in, like wild animal behaviour; it wasn't like dealing with a human being at all. I am a big fella. I worked on the doors, in Belfast. I don't lie down easy.** [Paul, plumber, 33 years]

4.4 Contributions of Patriarchal Images: (5) Violence as Gender-neutral?

While the situation for abused males is not identical to that for abused females, it is important not to lose sight of the fundamental similarities. The more articulate respondents claimed that violence was a gender-neutral phenomenon – some people, independently of gender, were violent and abusive, others were not. While society might accept violence from a woman, as a reaction to the male's, there was a mental chasm between that acceptance and perceiving the woman as the source of violence and abuse. A few respondents argued that the gender issue was a major distraction from the concern with domestic violence. By focusing on gender, social policy has failed to recognise the importance of domestic violence in itself, irrespective of gender labels. Most regarded the disbelief in female violence as endemic in society.

Illustrations

- **I would say about her hitting me and the reaction I got “But what did you do for her to do that to you?” It was like a woman will never do that of her own bat, which is cobblers. [Tony, unemployed, 36 years]**
- **I’ll tell you what the most horrific thing is, apart from being abused by her being abused by the system, they won’t listen to me, they won’t take my word for anything. [Keith, teacher, 47 years]**

4.5 AGENCY REACTIONS

Key Points

- ❑ Social Services allegedly provided little of value to the male victims – at best viewing their claims suspiciously and at worse allegedly colluding with the female partner.
- ❑ Paradoxically, the same police who were accused until recently of ignoring violence against women were unanimously accused by the male respondents in this survey as being biased in their favour – perhaps due to recent training and legislative development focussed on helping female victims of domestic violence.
- ❑ Individual medical practitioners might offer some support if little actual practice.

Since the ‘re-discovery’ of domestic violence some thirty years ago, several voluntary agencies have emerged to support the victims. Statutory agencies have been sensitised to respond. Significant others, from priests to GPs, have added spouse support to their other referral duties. But the picture that emerged from this study was that respondents held the belief that there was a relatively new institutionalisation of attitudes and procedures within statutory agencies that was destined to label the male as the culprit. Respondents also contested that where relevant voluntary organisations existed, with one major exception, they were constructed around the notion of the male as the aggressor. With few exceptions, those interviewed found that voluntary and statutory agencies, which might be expected to provide assistance for abuse victims, were of little or no help where the victim was male. The respondents reported that they encountered unhelpful attitudes such as an implicit or explicit disbelief in the reality of their circumstances; a prior tendency to side with the abusive partner, often pre-judging the man as abusive himself; and a willingness to minimise the abuse suffered by the man on the grounds that he “must have deserved it”. This is especially ironic in that small number of cases where respondents had gone to agencies to seek help for their abusing partners.

4.5 Agency Reactions (1) Social Services.

In most cases, Social Services were viewed as reluctant to acknowledge or provide support for a male victim, suspicious of men in general, and predisposed to be supportive of the woman irrespective of the circumstances. The view was held that individual Social Workers might be supportive but the institution itself was often generally hostile to men. Those few respondents who had assumed a single parenting role, reported that they met a measure of disbelief from Social Services about their potential competence. Many respondents believed that Social Services, in ethos and practice, acted with a partisan view of abuse, of its victims, and of its perpetrators. The vast majority of respondents who had encountered Social Services expressed considerable disappointment in what they perceived as both its ‘ethos’ – the view of the male as a culprit – and viewed some of its practices as “horrendous” [Joe, teacher, 53 years]. Several cases were quoted in which Social Services, both as an institution and Social Workers as individuals, appeared to believe without question the female partner’s account. When a male victim disclosed abuse to Social Services, it was felt that the latter could be procedurally insensitive in revealing this confidential information to the man’s partner. While one effect was to prevent further violence, other consequences were to further isolate the man, and to withhold support from the victimised male.

Illustration

- **When I told the Doctor, the things that she had done, he threw the keys down and said, “Get that woman out of your house. Go to court and get that woman out of your house. I will call an emergency case conference with the Social Services and with the police. I will get them to support me as a GP to get the support that you need to get this woman out”. But not one of the authorities would back him, so I had to go myself and get it without any of their backing. He did ask for assurances from Social Services that this meeting wouldn’t be discussed, that the Social Worker on the case would not go out and speak to my partner because this could endanger my life. He got the assurance that she wouldn’t do that. Within an hour of the meeting, the Social Worker was straight out to my partner and told her. I rung my GP and he just could not believe it. The Social Worker admitted later that she had made a mistake doing this and apologised. [Joe, teacher, 53 years]**

4.5 Agency Reactions (2) The Police.

The majority of respondents held a low opinion of the part played by the front-line police in reacting to their experiences. There have been major changes in police training and procedures over recent years, from a time when domestic violence was frequently ignored to a stage in which most police forces have established Domestic Violence Units. However, the respondents believed that these units had been intensively structured around the assumption of female victims and of male abusers. For some respondents, police intervention was viewed as abuse by other means. Arresting the male appeared to be the primary form of intervention, independently of the circumstances. Respondents reported their view that even where the police might be occasionally sympathetic towards a male victim, it appeared that they were bound by procedure on how to handle perceived domestic violence, including links with other agencies, and by a new cultural practice. They also felt that male victimisation was confusing for police officers and that they had not been trained to deal with the situation where the male was the victim of domestic violence.

Illustrations

- **I went to the police once .. the gist was “Look at the size of you. Go home and sort it out yourself”. [Joe, teacher, 53 years]**
- **One day, she told me the police are coming here. Sure enough, at 11pm, I heard the wheels coming over the cattle grid and there was the squad car. Police ordered by appointment. They appeared and stayed for hours. “We can’t leave this house tonight.” I went to see the superintendent and he told me he knew what was going on. But he said, “We can’t take the risk. If that woman gets hurt, our jobs are gone and we would be charged as well, but I know what is going on.” But they still wouldn’t do anything about it because my wife was too much in with solicitors and lawyers and threatening people with courts and all the rest. [Harry, shipyard worker, 39 years]**

4.5 Agency Reactions (3) Medical Services.

Responses from the medical profession varied considerably – normally between a more sympathetic approach from the local GP to what was perceived as the more institutional partisanship of the larger medical services. The dilemma of the local GP was obvious – he or she might act for both partners and the resolution to the problem was normally outside their reach – beyond the placebo of a tranquilliser prescription.

Occasionally the doctor's response was more pro-active. Several respondents, who appealed to their doctor, were disappointed with the lack of understanding, with an occasional abrupt dismissal for the failure of the male to deal with his own situation. At best, the GP acted as a referral agent to a counselling organisation. A few of the respondents who entered counselling, found it beneficial. But these were more often men who engaged in counselling after separation from the abusive partner.

Illustrations

- **The Doctor turned round and said, because I was suffering from depression..."[name] you don't need a tablet, you need a frigging good solicitor". [Steve, mechanic, 52 years]**
- **The Doctor went out to see my wife. She (was) really embarrassed whenever he called to the house to tell her not to be hitting me, not to be violent, that it wasn't fair on the kids. It didn't go down well at all. [Bob, transport worker, 43 years]**

4.5 Agency Reactions (4) Solicitors and Legal Process.

The response of solicitors was found to be generally sceptical. Some were divided as family solicitors over client loyalties. Respondents believed that others expressed a lack of empathy and understanding. Many were perceived as being sensitive to the notion that there was an anti-male bias within the legal process. They appeared reluctant to offer assistance because of past experience with the courts and warned their clients about the hopelessness of attempting to persuade senior members of the legal profession that a male could be a victim of female violence and abuse. Most respondents considered that in the face of such perceived legal bias even sympathetic solicitors could offer little help. Some solicitors simply disbelieved their client.

Illustrations

- **I can remember pleading and the solicitors laughing and saying, "(Name) we're not laughing at you, but if you go to a Magistrate to get that woman removed, he's going to laugh at you, because you have no bruises, you're a six foot man and she's five foot". [Joe, teacher, 53 years]**
- **My solicitor couldn't believe, and frankly didn't want to believe that I was totally innocent. But it is the old thing - there is no smoke without fire. I went along part of the road, with this guy, felt that I was getting nowhere at all, so I changed my solicitor, and she listened and she does believe the story. [Gavan, technician, 51 years]**

4.5 Agency Reactions (5) Religion.

On those few occasions, where religious organisations were contacted, the respondents found the Churches generally unhelpful either because of their opposition to divorce, unwillingness to become involved, or as elsewhere, they appeared simply bemused by the problem. Some respondents felt unwilling to disclose to religious agencies, because the latter appeared to make family reunification, the price of support.

Illustration

- **The Church - they didn't understand where (wife) was coming from. I always felt they were keeping me at arm's length as well. Maybe they didn't want to get involved in someone's domestic problems. [Keith, teacher, 47 years]**

4.5 Agency Reactions (6) Voluntary Agencies.

A recurring theme among those respondents, who sought support from the various voluntary agencies, was the lack of an obvious forum - no voluntary organisation appeared to offer sympathetic provision. Often, they simply turned from one organisation to another without success. Several respondents had resorted to Women's Aid, seeing it as a publicly recognised body specifically concerned with domestic violence. Without exception, they found it unsympathetic to male victims and apparently unwilling to acknowledge the existence of female perpetrators of abuse. Many respondents repeatedly referred to the need for some acknowledgement of their plight. They felt that they invariably met a complete lack of understanding of their problem, of their needs, and of the potential resolution

Illustrations

- **I had been to Victim Support on many occasions. I had been to Citizens Advice, but I had given up on them because they couldn't really help me. It wasn't their fault; they had nothing there for me. [Joe, teacher, 53 years]**
- **If the responsible authorities had listened and hadn't been so anti. I have since discovered that the Probation Service, Women's Aid are specifically anti-male. It is not only in their ethos, it is not only individual workers, it is throughout their own offices. As far as they are concerned the agenda is not violence. That is totally unreasonable. The**

problem is one person imposing (his) will upon the other person. The problem is violence. It isn't men. [Mervin, shopworker, 43 years]

4.5 Agency Reactions (7) Seeking Help for the Spouse.

Given prevailing social attitudes, for a female abusive partner to openly come forward and seek help entails her breaking taboos about female behaviour. It may be easier to avoid such acknowledgement and take refuge in stereotypes which reinforce the abuse, and where the acceptance of blame and responsibility can be avoided. The allegedly abusive partners did not seek help. Commenting on those stereotypes, one respondent made the important point that the apparent refusal of many to acknowledge the existence of abusive women not only excludes the male victim from supportive structures but also militates against any form of assistance or provision for an abusive woman. There are many programmes for violent men but apparently none for violent women. Several respondents who contacted Relate were foiled by their partner's refusal to attend, or, after initial attendance, their refusal to return, although this agency was the only one to appear to have any recognition of the experiences of the male. One man expressed gratitude to Relate for their unique acknowledgement of the problem.

Illustrations.

- **I have been told by experts that the reason they want to hide it is because they don't understand why they are like that, and until there is more help for these sorts of people they will never be helped. Take the Probation Board. They try to help men who are batterers, but where do the women go who are seeking help? They have nowhere to go. They are not even encouraged to go, so if my partner was serious, she had nowhere to go to. [Joe, teacher, 53 years]**
- **My ex-wife went to Relate once but she wouldn't go back. But then whenever she did something extreme, it was always "I'll go next week or tomorrow but it never came." So it was an excuse for ducking out of it. [Steve, mechanic, 52 years]**

4.5.8 Friends as Support.

In general, the male victims did not disclose that they were being abused, even to close friends. Problems of shame, of betrayal of male stereotypes, and of revealing intimacies, compounded possibilities of disclosure. More often friends constituted a

place of refuge – if only a temporary breathing space - from the abuse. In any case, close friends might be generally aware of the problem - perhaps because of signs of violence on the person of the respondent, his loss of weight, or because of disturbances in the household. In some instances, even those the male victim regarded as close friends, chose to believe the partner's version of events. Respondents felt that disbelief relied on masculine stereotypes. Usually, though, friends were sympathetic and supportive, if given the opportunity. In such instances, the advice was invariably to leave the relationship.

Illustrations

- **A friend asked me and I told her, and she didn't believe me. No one believed me that this girl would beat me up. I'm not saying I'm Rocky Balbo, but I'm not a stupid fella, I wouldn't let anyone beat me up "No way, no way." But she did and that hurt that no one believed me. [Richard, doorman, 47 years]**
- **I have best mates who I told...they were shocked. These boys knew straight away and never laughed or joked about it. It is not hard to admit to my good mates. [Eamon 45 years]**

4.6 ABUSE IN GAY RELATIONSHIPS

Only three of the self-selected respondents were gay. Generalising and validating from such a small group is even more problematic than from the larger group of heterosexual respondents. While, as with the rest of the respondents, such cases involved the victimisation of males, the question arises as to whether or to what extent a different dynamic is involved given that the perpetrator of male domestic abuse is male rather than female. In the cases of those men involved in heterosexual relationships, gender-based expectations and perceptions are significant in militating against disclosure and provision. Where such attitudes are strongly reinforced within the wider society they may often, to varying degrees, be internalised by the victimised person.

Reliance on a patriarchal model of intimate relationships, encounters difficulties in fully acknowledging a male as an abused person or a female as a perpetrator of abusive behaviour. It also does not appear to offer explanations of abuse in lesbian relationships. The extension of such theory to violence occurring in relationships between gay men is problematic. Where assumptions exist that view abuse occurring in relationships between men as 'mutual combat', it is scarcely surprising that men in such relationships may remain ignored and their situation under-researched. Additionally, the prevalence of homophobic attitudes, which seek to invalidate and condemn gay relationships, may militate against acknowledgement of partner abuse within such relationships. If the relationship is condemned in itself there is likely to be a diminished concern for the dynamics within it. In the context of homophobia, gay communities may be reluctant to address the issue of partner abuse for fear that discussion will generate more negative images about homosexuality which may be seized upon by wider society as further indications of the undesirable nature of gay relationships. Finally, the gay community can be quite small and intimate - abused gay males may be deterred from disclosing to or using services and projects for the gay community. The partner in the relationship might also use the service or the project, might be known to staff working in it or, indeed, be a member of staff themselves.

In two of the three cases of gay men who came forward for interview the abusive partner functioned in an advisory or support role within the gay community and was well known and respected. In the third case, the abusive partner held a high

profile on the gay scene and was popular. Such a situation inevitably made disclosure more difficult. In all three cases, the abused men were not significantly smaller or weaker than their partners. They were, nonetheless, physically intimidated. Whereas they themselves claimed to have been non-violent, their partners were prepared to use physical force. Each of the three abused gay men was financially dependent upon his partner at the time of the abusive behaviour.

Inevitably, heterosexual and homosexual victim experiences are not identical. But familial relationships could affect both. Thus one such victim spoke of kin disapproval of his homosexuality as an additional reason for failing to disclose. Disclosure would only have reinforced his family's negative attitude and undermined the positive steps he had taken in 'coming out'. As with heterosexual respondents, they emphasised the mental or emotional harm which they had suffered. As in some of the heterosexual men's relationships, issues such as control and lack of concern for the feelings of one's partner could extend into the sexual domain. One of the three respondents had contemplated suicide. One of the men eventually had recourse to a supportive network of friends (both male and female).

They gave various reasons for remaining in the relationship. The need for some form of accommodation to be provided for male victims was seriously emphasised, although the exact nature of what would work best was less clear. The legal situation regarding housing was questioned. As with the heterosexual men, the view came through that a 'supportive' provision was also needed for the perpetrator.

Illustrations

- **He came in and saw me with the bottle and lifted the bottle and just whacked me over the head with it. I just remember waking up the next morning quite bruised and he must have kicked me as well and I had a big bruise down here and I was aching all over. We went to bed and I woke up about... about half past eight or nine o'clock at night and I was coming in and out of a dream, and he was sitting with his knees on my chest choking me. I thought it was a dream, coming in and out of consciousness. I was absolutely terrified and just jumped up out of the bed and run into the bathroom, burst into tears, washed my face. [Sean, community worker, 25 years]**
- **I did very much feel financially dependent on him. All of our finances were paid to him and I was permitted X amount of pounds depending on what he felt like or what we had that week out of the money that we had coming in. The money I had coming in from**

housing benefits paying towards mortgage relief and my income support was paying for the house and I was being given pocket money on top of that. It wasn't like a "here comes Saturday, here's your pocket money or whatever". It was on a daily basis. Every morning I got up and said 'Look, you know I need such-and-such". It was ten cigarettes I was allowed a day and there was quotas on what I was allowed and what I wasn't allowed to buy. I didn't really see that as domestic violence at the time but I would now. It got to the point where he was coming in and looking through my pockets, checking receipts to see how much I'd spent. [Ian, student, 32 years]

- The mental abuse, the hiding things, the denying that we had conversations, denying the things that I had trusted him with, that had taken me so much to do, and then him turning around and saying I was lying. That did the damage. The physical stuff, it took me the nine months to get rid of, and the emotional I know I'm still working on because that's a lifelong process. [Sean, social worker, 25 years]
- I didn't have anyone to go to. The most obvious place I would have gone to would have been the police station, to be honest. I would have had to have known or trusted where I was going, that I could just go and be received and to be looked after but not needing to know why or not needing to know answers, but someone to be there to support me, and just help me through it. [Sam, barman, 29 years]
- As single men, I think it's very important that there is provision of housing for single men. At the moment there is provision for housing. But the legislation needs to be changed and certainly the issue needs to be brought more importantly to the public eye and there needs to be some sort of service provider. There's no telephone number in the yellow pages that you can ring up. It might be good for an organisation to exist that actually acknowledges the fact that it happens and for that organisation to have the publicity that goes along with an organisation and having a telephone number that quite clearly states that this is a HelpLine for male victims of domestic violence to bring the idea to the forefront. [Ian, student, 32 years]

SECTION FIVE

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The material from the male interviewees suggests that a variety of forms of abuse are inflicted on them in such relationships. While such evidence is subject to major caveats over causality – who started the abuse in the relationships, over context – how was the abuse shaped by the particular circumstances; over frequency – how often such abuse occurred, over the degree of relative victimisation – whether males experiences can be equated to the experiences of female victims, and as with other ethnographic studies of both males and females – over the reliability of such oral accounts, it seems that males have many similar experiences to females in such relationships. In line with other such studies, it appears that there is a hidden population of males in Northern Ireland suffering from a gamut of victimisation experiences in partner relations - from direct physical abuse (including sexual), to emotional to a variety of extreme cases of directly related maltreatment.

All respondents described a range of serious and minor forms of violence by their partners. In the extreme cases (although a minority), these could be life-threatening. In others, the violence was limited to scratching, pushing and shoving. Household instruments could become weapons for inter-personal violence. Extensive injuries requiring medical care were recorded from a variety of assaults. Similarly, they recorded suffering various forms of emotional abuse - ranging from sexual innuendoes, denigration in front of children and friends, and isolation within the household. The vast majority of respondents regarded such emotional abuse as more significant to them in the long term than physical injuries. Sometimes independently of actual experience, many respondents recounted life-styles dictated by the unpredictability of their spouse behaviour – often in relation to unexpected violence. Nearly half the respondents described how they had become extremely accountable for the daily timetables to their partner and second, in several cases being evicted from the house without financial support or alternative accommodation. Children too might suffer from extremes of control. A large proportion of the respondents reported experiencing this unusual form of abuse. Deliberate prevention from necessary sleep was experienced as intimidation, and control. Where indirect deprivation occurred, respondents could still lose sleep because of concern with unexpected assault by their

partner. The partner gave various examples of destruction of household and employment property. A minority of respondents described how the children might also suffer direct violence from the partner – either as surrogates for the male or a part of larger violence practices by the female. Rarely appreciated in other such studies, the very fact of male control of family finances meant that that financial control was often targeted – the loss of bank accounts, credit cards, and so on.

Remarkably, a minority of respondents described the experience of sexual violations – some in the form of verbal denigration, occasionally through deliberate attacks on their sexual parts, and in two cases, claimed that they had in effect, been raped. Many respondents reported what they described as deliberate manipulation of their perceived behaviour in order to further the partner’s objectives – some claimed they had been wrongly accused of child abuse, other of possessing illegal weaponry, all apparently with the aim of banishing them from the household. A minority of respondents claimed that what might be construed patriarchally as traditional domestic responsibilities by the female had been deliberately subverted by the partner as a means of abuse.

A variety of coping strategies were utilised to respond to the abuse. Most respondents had initially attempted to conceal the abuse and violence from family, friends and from the outside world. In part this was due, to the fact that its revelation might affect their masculine self-image. Three respondents admitted concealing the violence by apparent explanations in terms – wrongly – of self-harm. Few had been supported by peers. A few respondents attempted to deal with the abuse and violence through either passive behaviour or by more commonly by seeking refuge elsewhere in the house or outdoors. Nearly all respondents resorted to alcohol as a means of surviving the experiences. A minority had attempted to submerge the experiences in physical exercise. Employment and overtime provided a temporary escape as well as a time-structuring device but such a resort could have by-products – such as absence from the children. Nearly half of the respondents had terminated the relationship, a conclusion that they nearly all attributed to the abuse. Very few were still in contact with their former partners and expressed regret at the ‘failure’ of the relationship.

The abuse had varying consequences for the victims. Of the emotional effects, the most prominent consisted of suicidal tendencies. Three had actually attempted that resolution. Emotional scars took a longer time than physical ones to heal. Feelings of inadequacy were common.

Many respondents described how the experiences had badly affected their work-lives – either by under-performing, job loss, or the humiliation experienced from colleagues who had become aware of their victimisation. Those who referred to material effects were the ones who had terminated the relationships. In the vast majority of such cases, they lost the shared home. There were major financial losses. Some were reduced to living in single men's accommodation. Legal effects were often seen to be devastating – several had Court Orders taken out against them, barring them from house and children. Legal personnel and legal procedures were normally seen as heavily biased against them even though they were the actual victims of the abuse. There were incremental effects – such as the reported refusal of the Housing Executive to accept their right to re-housing, and the experience of being publicly denigrated in law. The relationship with the children was affected in several ways – often an extreme version of 'normal' family break-ups. Most has lost easy access to the children. In some cases, ex-partners appeared to be frustrating that contact. Some of their children had been given a different version of their relationship with the partner and of their responsibility for the break-up. Those who entered into new relationships did so with trepidation, fearful of what "baggage" a new partner would bring with her. A small number had found satisfaction in that new relationship.

Inevitably, given the character of the male-female relation, stereotypical images and gendered ideologies played a large part in the dynamics of the relationship. Most respondents accepted that that male dominant role was part of the problem. For example, they claimed that assumptions about their physiques in relation to their spouses' constituted a challenge to their status rather than representing the overawing power of the male over the female. Images of physical superiority constituted a challenge to their partner. Respondents were influenced by traditional gender considerations – in their refusal to act aggressively to an 'inferior' female party and in their belief that it was their responsibility as the head of the household to 'sort out' the problem. All claimed that external parties approached the dispute with the predisposition that it must be the man who was at fault, a view that was felt was influenced strongly by media images. Respondents argued that a proscription from hitting females had been a key part of their socialisation process, and to engage in that violence themselves, would have affected their self-images as males. Violence by them would have been a sign of weakness, not of strength. Several repeated the theme that men or women, could be victims of violence independently of their gender. They

were especially anxious that their own experience should not be decried because of assumptions about their masculine power.

The central impression of agency support from all the respondents without exception was that they were imbued with an anti-male ethos, in which it was pre-supposed that the male rather than the female was to blame. There was no one agency that readily accepted their victim status and could offer support. Social Service procedures, and many individual Social Workers, were generally perceived to be predisposed to accepting the woman's account. It was alleged that in a small number of cases, Social Workers had apparently divulged materials to the partner, which exacerbated the victim status of the male. It was alleged that the new police training regarding domestic violence, whilst now positive towards women, had come to emphasise procedures and practices that structured the male as the offender. Despite any individual predisposition by particular officers to accept the male account, it was felt that procedures normally treated males as suspect. Only GPs emerged with any credit regarding the medical services and they were divided between those who acknowledged that they had no medical resolution to an accepted problem and those who denied the possibility of female violence. Most respondents stated that where lawyers were not actively antipathetic to their accounts, they still warned the respondents that few others in the judicial process would believe them and that they were likely to receive an unjust hearing, one which treated them as the offender rather than as the victim. Few respondents sought or received assistance from religious institutions. The experience of the voluntary agencies was viewed as almost entirely negative. It was felt that specialist agencies devoted to domestic abuse were directed towards support for the female rather than the male and few others, even where sympathetic, could offer little or no assistance. The more articulate and empathetic respondents had sought some assistance for their partner – primarily in anger-management. None had been successful in obtaining such assistance – either because of the lack of such materials or because the partner refused to be involved. Friends were starkly divided for most respondents in terms of their support role. In some half of the cases, they were described as supportive – normally encouraging the male to end the relationship. In others, they were disbelieving and sometimes mocked their erstwhile friend.

Because of the limited number of such respondents, there is indicative evidence only of similar patterns of violence and abuse in same-sex intimate relations.

Consequently, it is recommended

1. General

- a. That services dealing with *physical* injuries to male domestic victims be more sensitised to appreciate that such victims may need referrals for *emotional* effects.
- b. That listening and referral programmes be established with regard to dealing with the often severe effects of domestic violence on males – complementing similar services for females as appropriate – the latter to provide for counselling, advocacy, information etc as appropriate.
- c. Generally, there must be a commitment to raise consciousness over the effects of male victimisation amongst agency personnel through education and training.
- d. That a HelpLine be established to act both as a counselling service and as a referral agency with regard to those males who wish to have support when affected by such violence and abuse.

2 Management of Violence and Abuse

- a. That public information programmes be developed to enable victims of such violence to reveal the harm they had suffered without fear of humiliating consequences.
- b. Such programme might include the provision of referral leaflets or packages at potential referral points such as the GP's surgery.

3 Contribution of Patriarchal Images

At this level, recommendations are at a general level in relation to the influence of patriarchy and the need to dispose other actors and agencies to recognise the possibility of female violence and abuse of males.

- a. That all programmes of domestic violence with regard to public education, to agency training, and to individual awareness campaigns, should recognise the complex nature of the subject and include a component sensitising those bodies and personnel to evidence of female violence against males.
- b. That procedures for policing and other investigative and reactive personnel should be constructed to accept that the male is not necessarily the offender but sometimes the victim.

4. Agency Support

- a. That training packs be prepared for Social Workers within the context of existing programmes to both recognise and deal with accounts of male victimisation.
- b. That police procedures be structured in a way that avoids the possibility that male guilt is presumed in incidents of reported domestic violence.
- c. That GPs and similar personnel be supplied with a list of contacts for referral agencies, for use when forms of male victimisation are reported to them.
- d. That a 'drop-in' centre be established to deal with the totality of male victim needs - from advice on health to legal information on rights.

5. Further Research

That consideration be given the establishment of the *extent* and *context* as opposed to the *dynamics* and *qualitative* aspects of male victimisation.

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APPENDIX

Respondent details

Table 3.1: Age at point of interview

AGE AT POINT OF CONTACT	TOTAL	%
17 –29YRS	1	2%
30’S	13	28%
40’S	22	47%
50’S	10	21%
60’S	1	2%
TOTAL	47	100%

Table 3.2: Age when entered relationship

AGE WHEN ENTERED RELATIONSHIP	TOTAL	%
17 –29YRS	29	62%
30’S	17	36%
40’S	-	-
50’S	1	2%
TOTAL	47	100%

Table 3.3: Relationship Status

RELATIONSHIP TO PARTNER	TOTAL	%
MARRIED	41	87%
CO-HABITEE	6	13%
TOTAL	47	100%

Table 3.4: Present Relationship Status

PRESENT MARITAL STATUS	TOTAL	%
SEPARATED	28	60%
DIVORCED	10	21%
SINGLE	5	11%
MARRIED	3	6%
CO-HABITEE	1	2%

3.5: Years spent in Relationship

YEARS IN RELATIONSHIP	TOTAL	%
≤ 5 YRS	5	11%
6 – 10 YRS	15	32%
11 – 15 YRS	12	26%
16 – 20 YRS	11	23%
21 –25 YRS	1	2%
26 – 30 YRS	1	2%
31 – 35 YRS	2	4%

Table 3.6: Employment Status when entered Relationship

EMPLOYMENT STATUS WHEN MET PARTNER	TOTAL	%
FULL-TIME EMPLOYED	41	87%
UNEMPLOYED	3	6%
STUDENT	1	2%
RETIRED	2	4%

One of those classified as retired was due to medical injuries at work.

Table 3.7: Employment Status at point of interview

EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT POINT OF INTERVIEW	TOTAL	%
FULL-TIME EMPLOYED	29	62%
UNEMPLOYED	14	30%
RETIRED	4	8%

Table 3.8: Socio-economic class

SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS	TOTAL	%
PROFESSIONAL	10	21%
SKILLED NON-MANUAL	13	28%
SKILLED MANUAL	18	38%
UNSKILLED MANUAL	6	13%

Table 3.9: Housing Tenure during Relationship

TENURE	TOTAL	%
HOME OWNER/ OCCUPIER	34	72%
COUNCIL HOUSE TENANT	9	19%
CHURCH ACCOMODATION	1	2%
RENTED FLAT/OTHER	3	7%

Table 3.10: Present Housing Tenure

PRESENT TENURE	TOTAL	%
HOME OWNER / OCCUPIER	26	55%
COUNCIL HOUSE TENANT	7	15%
RENTED FLAT	12	26%
WITH FAMILY	2	4%

Table 3.11: Religious Affiliation

RELIGION	TOTAL	%
PROTESTANT	20	43%
CATHOLIC	25	53%
OTHER	2	4%

Table 3.12: Location: Urban /Rural

REGION	TOTAL	%
URBAN	39	83%
RURAL	8	17%

Table 3.13: Children

CHILDREN	TOTAL	%
YES	44	94%
NO	3	6%