

# **PATRIARCHY: THE PREDOMINANT DISCOURSE AND FONT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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## Declaration

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I, Catherine Gilda Bettman, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Patriarchy: the predominant discourse and font of domestic violence*, contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

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Catherine Gilda Bettman

July 21<sup>st</sup> 2005

# Table of Contents

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<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>PREFACE: THE RECONNAISSANCE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS .....	13
<b>CHAPTER 1: MAPPING THE TERRITORY .....</b>	<b>16</b>
CLASS.....	16
GENDER.....	18
CULTURE, ETHNICITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY .....	19
SOCIAL DISCOURSE AND DISCURSIVE PHENOMENON .....	21
PATRIARCHY .....	22
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE .....	24
<b>CHAPTER 2: ORIENTATION .....</b>	<b>29</b>
MALE VERSUS FEMALE VIOLENCE .....	29
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH .....	32
THE PHYSICAL/BIOLOGICAL APPROACH .....	37
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES .....	42
THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	67
MULTIVARIATE APPROACHES .....	76
ETHNOGRAPHICAL STUDIES .....	80
<b>CHAPTER 3: THE ROAD TAKEN.....</b>	<b>83</b>
MAKING PLANS .....	83
THE FIRST LEG .....	92
<b>CHAPTER 4: FELLOW PASSENGERS.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: BEING MALE .....</b>	<b>111</b>
ADVANTAGES OF BEING MALE .....	112
Innate Differences to Women.....	112
Male Superiority and Power.....	115
Professional and Financial Advantage .....	118
Personal Autonomy.....	120
Mateship and Protection.....	123
DISADVANTAGES OF BEING MALE .....	126
Innate Differences to Women.....	127
Competitiveness .....	129
Social Expectations .....	132
Emotional Dis-ease .....	140
Inadequacy .....	145
Denial.....	147
Identity Crisis.....	150
ATTITUDES TO WOMEN .....	154
Being Women .....	154
Women's Roles .....	160
RELATIONSHIPS .....	167
Relationships with Fathers .....	167
Relationships with Mothers.....	172
Heterosexual Relationships .....	175
Relationships with Men.....	182
Relationships with Children .....	184
CONCLUSION .....	187

<b>CHAPTER 6: THE CONSTRUCTION OF VIOLENCE.....</b>	<b>190</b>
NATURE.....	190
NURTURE .....	192
Family .....	194
School .....	198
Sport.....	205
Visual, Audio and Electronic Communications .....	210
Pub Culture .....	215
Church.....	218
Armed Forces .....	220
THE END PRODUCT .....	222
The Acceptability of Violence.....	223
Inconsistent Messages .....	223
Unacceptable .....	225
Acceptable .....	227
Necessary .....	231
Inevitable .....	233
Taking Responsibility .....	234
Associated Feelings.....	241
Effect of Violence .....	245
CHANGE .....	250
Accomplished Change.....	250
Change Needed .....	257
CONCLUSION .....	262
<b>CHAPTER 7: REFLECTIONS.....</b>	<b>264</b>
VIOLENCE: A DISCURSIVE PHENOMENON .....	266
PATRIARCHAL DISCOURSE: THE FONT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.....	273
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE .....</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>APPENDIX II: RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA PERMISSION.....</b>	<b>329</b>
<b>APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE.....</b>	<b>330</b>
<b>APPENDIX IV: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM.....</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>APPENDIX V: UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY ETHICS APPROVAL.....</b>	<b>336</b>
<b>APPENDIX VI: DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES ETHICS APPROVAL .....</b>	<b>338</b>
<b>APPENDIX VII: BROCHURE .....</b>	<b>342</b>

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## **Abstract**

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Despite the progress human beings have made in medicine, science and technology, domestic violence continues to occur in many intimate heterosexual relationships. Yet, according to ethnographic accounts of largely indigenous peoples, it is evident that as recently as the twentieth century, there have been societies where domestic violence was absent or minimal. This knowledge prompted an investigation into how discourses of different cultural groups shape men's understandings of masculinity and sense of entitlement to use violence in a heterosexual relationship.

The study was qualitative, based upon grounded theory and narrative principles. Men from as many different cultural groups as possible (eg. ethnic, religious, age, and class), who had used violence in an intimate heterosexual relationship, were sought to participate in in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Twenty four men agreed to take part. After an analysis of their narratives, by far the most overwhelming discovery was that cultural differences seemed to be eclipsed by the pre-eminence and strength of gendered discourse in keeping with Western patriarchal dictates in regards to masculinity and violence. Androcentric and hegemonic masculinity, and a tolerance of violence, were consistently evident. Based upon the men's conversations, and drawing upon ethnographical accounts to provide the opportunity of a broader outlook and different perspective on the inquiry to hand, it was concluded that violence is a discursive phenomenon and that patriarchal discourse is the font of domestic violence.

## **Preface: The Reconnaissance**

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Cases involving domestic violence are not a rarity at relationship and family counselling organisations. Shaw, Bouris and Pye (1999) report that one in four cases presented at one such organisation in Australia, involved some level of domestic violence. They also suggest that this is not solely an Australian phenomenon and cite Myers Avis (1992), who claimed that 50% of cases at a similar centre in the United States had a past or current history of physical and sexual abuse; and that this figure rose to 80% if other forms of coercion and control were taken into account.

From my experience as a family counsellor, it seems that exposure to the pain and suffering experienced by men, women, and their children in violent relationships is constant and inescapable. The initial feelings of astonishment that I felt as a rookie counsellor at the incidence of domestic violence have never waned. Furthermore, added experience has brought with it an understanding of abuse in a broader sense. Knowledge about power and control issues inherent in domestic violence have become clearer and, as a result, even greater numbers, and more subtle cases, of psychological, financial, social and religious abuse, and intimidation, have become more evident in my practice.

Taking my experience as a starting point and extending this to the broader context, I began a quest to discover why domestic violence is so often a feature of intimate heterosexual relationships in contemporary society. It seems crucial to determine the reason for human beings perpetuating this misery; for seeming at such a loss to prevent it despite having made such huge advances in science, technology and medical practice. Humans have walked on the moon, developed lightning fast global communication techniques and developed bionic human parts. Yet, so many intimate relationships seem little different to comic strip depictions of Neanderthal times and women being dragged around by the hair.

Embarking on this journey proved frustrating in that so many took the view that domestic violence has been researched to the hilt. Unquestionably, there is a huge body of literature on the subject and a smorgasbord of differing perspectives based upon wide research in the area. However, the harsh reality is that despite all this research, a



national survey of Australian women conducted in 1996 found that almost half a million had experienced an incidence of violence in the twelve month period preceding the survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1997). Men's violence to women has also been identified as a major public health issue in Britain, Canada and the United States (Ellison & Anderson, 2001) and the American Medical Association and the US Surgeon General have been quoted as saying that family violence is one of America's most critical health problems (Barnes, 2001). The Office on Women's Health (OWH) in the US Department of Health and Human Services estimates that four million incidents of domestic violence occur each year; that one in four women in the United States will be assaulted by a domestic partner in her lifetime (Barnes, 2001). Furthermore, in 1998, the National Advisory Council on Violence against Women in the United States of America stated, that though not all women experience violence directly, few live their lives unaffected by the pervasiveness of violence in our society.

Many writers on the subject have claimed that the true magnitude of domestic violence in Western society is not known and the indications are that its incidence is under-reported (Bagshaw & Chung, 2000; Barnes, 2001; Bittman & Pixley, 1997; Malik & Lindahl, 1998; Nussbaum, 2000) and on the increase (Goldscheiber, 2001). These statistics, and the incidence of domestic violence in clinical practice, indicate that there certainly is a need for further research and/or for a different approach to be taken. It seems that any other approach smacks of the silencing of victims, survivors, their advocates and those who believe their stories (Breckenridge & Laing, 1999).

Another concerning indication of the gaping questions still to be answered in the area of domestic violence, is the argument by some that women's violence against men is as much a social problem as men's violence against women; that victimisation, as well as fear of victimisation, should not be seen as the exclusive domain of women (Hogg & Brown, 1992). Petrachek (1999), for example, asserts that the reality of women who batter cannot continue to be ignored by the media and by researchers. Likewise, McNeely, Cook and Torres (2001) claim that domestic violence is not a gender issue but a human issue and that women are as likely to engage in physically abusive acts as men are. Based upon nationwide sample survey data, Strauss (1993), in the United States, as well as Headey, Scott and de Vaus (1999) in Australia, even suggest that women initiate and carry out physical assaults on their partners as often as men do. In addition, there are suggestions that men are the hidden victims of domestic violence and

that women's violence towards their male partners is either underreported, ignored or covered up (Bagshaw & Chung, 2000; Heady et al., 1999); even that the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Office for the Status of Women have falsified and suppressed statistics that would otherwise have shown the true extent of women's violence against their male partners (James, 1999). McNeely et al. (2001) also claim that reports in the press and scholarly articles have enshrined a false and inaccurate perspective of the problem in people's minds and that this has had legal and policy ramifications for men.

It is true that men are predominantly the victims of violence, but equally so that most violent crimes are committed by men (Beynon, 2002; Bittman & Pixley, 1996; Douglas, 1993). Based upon data for the years 1976 to 2002, Fox and Zawitz (2004) report that in the United States, males represent three-quarters of homicide victims as well as nearly 90% of offenders; that in terms of rates per 100,000, males are 3 times more likely to be killed and almost 8 times more likely to commit homicide than are females. Mouzos and Segrave (2004) state that in Australia, males accounted for 67% of homicide victims during 2002/2003. Although there had been a decrease in homicide rates for both males and females from the previous year, male victimisation continued at twice the rate of that for females. By the same token, 87% of offenders were also male who offended at a rate of seven times that of females.

However, of particular relevance here, and especially pertinent to my argument that further research in the area of domestic violence is vital, is the assertion by Stanko (1990) that men are, for the most part, able to predict that women will not endanger their physical and sexual well being on the street or in their homes, whereas this is not the case for women. According to her, criminologists have created a public-private dichotomy which associates public space with danger and private space with safety when, in reality, the idea of a safe home is a myth (Stanko, 1990); for women, unlike for men, the home is a dangerous place.

Figures substantiate this claim (See Bagshaw & Chung, 2000; Bittman & Pixley, 1997). Mouzos (1999) found in her study for the Australian Institute of Criminology, that male offenders were guilty of killing 94% of adult female victims; that the killing of women in Australia is an overwhelmingly male-dominated act (Mouzos, 1999). Moreover, the likelihood of a woman being killed by a man she does not know is very slight. When a

woman is killed, says Mouzos, it is likely to be in a private residence by an intimate male partner and as a result of a domestic altercation; three out of five femicides occur in this way. On the other hand, she affirms that a man is more likely to be killed by a friend, or an acquaintance, as a result of an alcohol-related argument. Just eleven percent of men were reported by Mouzos (1999) to have been killed by an intimate partner, with 84% of these offenders being women.

Bagshaw and Chung (2000), Devery (1992), Flood (1999), Jacobsen and Gottman (1998), James (1999), Johnson (1995), Kimmel (2000), Kurz (1993) and Taft (2002) are examples of those who contend that it is fictitious that women's violence to men is equivalent in terms of intent, frequency, severity or outcome; that even if statistics show that the frequency of male and female violence is about the same, these statistics have neither taken the impact nor the function of the violence into account. I believe these arguments are more convincing than the aforementioned and therefore pursue those of Jacobsen and Gottman (1998), James (1999), and Flood (1999) more fully in my literature review in Chapter 2.

The argument should not be that women are never violent or that they never use violence against their intimate male partners. It is, rather, that to understand violence between heterosexual intimates, it is necessary to understand how gender shapes the exercise of power in heterosexual relationships (Kurz, 1993; Scutt, 1991). It seems, as Kurz (1993) maintains, that those people who define violence simply as a conflict tactic, fail to convey the connection between the use of violence and the exercise of power, as well as the inequality and power differences between men and women that is the context of battering.

Another significant discovery in the early stages of the journey, which influenced its direction and the eventual choice of research methodology, was that men's perspectives in the debate at large, have received minimal attention from researchers (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; James, Seddon & Brown, 2002). Reitz (1999) qualifies this. She maintains that the focus of domestic violence has changed over the last 2 decades and that the perpetrator is now scrutinised as often as the victim. However, she believes that these enquiries tend to be quantitative by nature and "cannot substitute for systematic documentation of the experience of being violent from the perspective of those who are

so”; that in so doing part of the puzzle is being missed and “attempts to ameliorate the violence may be missing their mark” (Reitz, 1999: 144).

A reason for the dearth of qualitative research has been proffered by Cavanagh, Dobash, Dobash and Lewis (2001: 695). They state that it is evident from their studies with women partners that “men erect complex justificatory stories and strategies to which abused women must respond”; that men attempt to define their violence in “exculpatory and expiatory” terms. As a result, Cavanagh and Cree (1996) indicate that in its efforts to highlight gender blindness and to advocate for women, feminist response, most certainly in social work, has been to ignore the issue of working with men and instead to concentrate attention on women. This approach was not confined to social work alone. For example, a radical feminist, McLellan (1995), was adamant that psychotherapy had a lot to answer for in terms of the oppression of women and called for a therapy to be developed that offered a radical and political alternative for women. It is not enough, she argued, to name men’s war against women and to rebel against it; rather, that “it is incumbent upon us as a movement to respond with some urgency to the pain and distress of individual women, both feminists and non-feminists” (McLellan, 1995: 135).

It seems that this argument is now being seen, even by some feminists as limiting because men are so obviously involved in the issue. For instance, feminist researchers, Cavanagh and Cree (1996), have stated that women’s oppression cannot be understood and changed by focusing on women alone. Similarly, I, and others like Hearn (1998) and James et al. (2002), am left wondering how violent behaviour can be understood without speaking to those who are accused of using it the most. Bearing witness in clinical practice to the pain and confusion experienced by male perpetrators of domestic violence also suggests that simply condemning them for their behaviour, and explanations thereof, seems to be missing the point. When people do not feel themselves heard or understood, their reactions often become more extreme. An individual feeling backed against a wall, will try, more often than not, to justify his/her actions and will become more reactionary, defensive, verbose and loud. Was this what was happening for men? If so, who was responsible? And how could one prevent this? One possibility, with which Kaufman (2001) agrees, seemed to be to involve men and to invite them to tell their stories in order to better understand their use of violence without accepting their justifications or excuses.

There was another issue that had a huge impact on the direction taken by this journey; namely the realisation that, according to some anthropological reports, there have been societies where domestic violence was absent or minimal (Lyons, 1999; Noble & Bettman, 2003; Sanday & Goodenough, 1990). This suggests that “the subjugation of women by men is not a human universal and is not inevitable” (Lepowsky, 1990: 214). The importance of these findings ought not to be minimised because these societies were largely, but not entirely indigenous tribes, and unschooled in the manner of Western societies; nor by the fact that the anthropologists concerned had in some cases begun recording their data over thirty years ago, and that subsequently the situation in most of these societies has changed dramatically. These accounts uphold the possibility of intimate heterosexual relationships being devoid of violence and it is intriguing that research of this nature is not more commonly known by members of the general community. Why are these societies not being held up as possibilities for change by the leaders of Western, and developed societies, feminists and researchers of domestic violence?

Certainly, it needs to be acknowledged that no matter how well trained and perceptive an anthropologist may be, they are not able to “see” it all; that despite endeavouring to adopt an objective stance, the anthropologist is unable to be as neutral about his subjects as a chemist might be about chemical compounds (Mitchell, 1987: 16). Notwithstanding, anthropological research seeks to uphold the spirit and method of science, and therefore its “versions of the truth” ought to be accepted, at the very least as a window of opportunity to approach old problems in a new and imaginative way (Mitchell, 1987: 16). It would seem that though these accounts are without doubt stamped with the personal and theoretical proclivities of the anthropologists concerned, and represent what was seen and heard by them at one point of time (Mitchell, 1987), they are surely, even so, an exhortation to look beyond the individual, and to take into account the culture and discourse of the society to which the individual belongs. As these studies stand outside Western culture, they invite questions about how much the social discourse of cultural groups defines and determines the behaviour of individuals because it seems that neither violence nor domestic violence are necessarily an unchangeable factor of human nature (Lyons, 1999).

I was well aware that some people object to the cultural and environmental contextualisation of domestic violence, arguing that it rationalises, minimises, excuses

or even denies violence against women (Perilla, 1999). The very motivation behind this research was to keep men's violence against women high on the political agenda. But, like Johnson and Ferraro (2000: 950), it seemed, increasingly, to me that there was a "need to make distinctions based upon unique ways in which each particular racial and ethnic context shapes domestic violence, its consequences: and community responses to it". Surely, I thought, further work, which explores the interface of culture and social discourse, will ensure that the spotlight remains on men's violence, because the community at large will be asked to collectively explore the way men's violence is discussed and defined as a cultural and social discourse. Investigating the links between domestic violence and other social influences embedded in different cultures might suggest patterns, "continuities and discontinuities, commonalities and differences" (Hester, 2000: 152) which could play a major role in the "global" understanding of a "worldwide social problem" (Lyons, 1999: vii). This did not have to sanction the adoption of simplistic notions of culture or erase the need to focus equally on structural power (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005).

My growing awareness of a gap in this area of research was confirmed by a number of writers. Malik and Lindahl (1998) noted that "Indeed, ethnic variations in the causes and effects of domestic violence is our least sophisticated area of understanding in the field". Bograd (1999) confirmed this. She stated that a review of the growing, but still small, field of family therapy literature on domestic violence, revealed only one article that concerned itself with the salience of the intersection of race, class, sexual orientation and gender. Almeida and Dolan-Delvecchio (1999), Barnes, (2001), Crichton Hill (2001), Laing (2000), Locke and Richman (1999), Nguyen (1999) and Yoshihama (2000) were others calling for research to focus upon domestic violence, ethnicity, gender and culture.

Sokoloff and Dupont (2005: 40) state that "of the three interlocking systems of domination [i.e. race, class and gender], class analysis is arguably the least developed". In this respect, and yet another factor which influenced the direction the research was to take, was that colleagues had noticed differences in the responses of men attending therapy and/or the men's program at two different branches of the counselling service. These differences were chiefly in the length of attendance at counselling and in the likelihood of the men completing the six month long men's program. Both programmes had the same basic approach and were run by facilitators with similar skill levels. It is

well beyond the limit of this dissertation to discuss either methods of intervention or the evaluation of programs. However, what appeared significant (and generalising appears to be necessary here), was that the clientele at one branch were of a lower income group, had lesser tertiary qualifications, and consisted of a wider range of ethnicities than the men participating at the other. It was the members of the former group who appeared to attend fewer counselling sessions and to more often discontinue their attendance at men's group.

It seemed to me that class difference was significant and begged the question whether there are differences in how diverse men, who are subject to variations in discourse through membership of different social groups, conceptualise masculinity and violence. It seemed necessary to know what it is like to be a man in society today; what masculinity means to men and whether men believe there are qualities they have to demonstrate as men. Do they feel advantaged or disadvantaged by being men? How do they view women, femininity and relationships? In addition, it seemed necessary to investigate whether there are differences in the way they experience the rules, messages and views of their social groups around violence in general, and domestic violence, in particular. Do they, as individuals, believe that violence, and domestic violence, are ever acceptable, justifiable or even inevitable? In fact, what do they understand by domestic violence? What, if anything, do they feel needs to change?

In asking these questions, I placed myself firmly into the framework of intersectionality. I became aware, as stated by Bograd (1999: 276) that we exist in “social contexts created by the intersections of power and oppression”; that:

Intersectionalities colour the meaning and nature of domestic violence, how it is experienced by self and responded to by others, how personal and social consequences are represented and how and whether escape and safety can be obtained.

Intersectionality theory focuses on simultaneous, multiple and interlocking oppressions of individuals (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Therefore, scholars adopting intersectionality theory challenge the primacy of gender as an explanatory model of domestic violence (Bograd, 1999; Evans, 2005; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). They believe that no dimension is privileged; that all systems of power and oppression intersect and modify each other. The working title I formulated for my thesis shows how comfortably I fitted into this

school of thought at that time. It was *Class, gender and ethnicity: how these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship*.

In Chapter 1, I clarify the manner in which terms such as gender, social discourse, discursive phenomenon, culture, ethnicity, class, patriarchy and domestic violence are used in this dissertation. I am aware that my definitions reflect the clinical and theoretical environments to which I belong and the way I have been influenced in making meaning of them. Most particularly, the influence of training as a family and relationships counsellor needs to be identified. This training was in the school of *post* Milan Systemic Therapy, where much emphasis was placed on the word *post*. The reason for this was that Milan Systemic Therapy had been heavily censured by feminists. Current disciples wished to clearly identify themselves as having taken this criticism on board and having done something about it. The primary focus of the feminist critique on Milan Therapy, in fact on most schools of family therapy, had been that they were devoid of an analysis of gender and power (Myers Avis, 1996). Based upon the ideas of cybernetics, the study of self-regulating systems (Jones, 1993), family systems theory likened the family to machines, which function according to specific systemic rules, such as circular interaction or recursiveness, feedback and homeostasis (see Guttman, 1991; Jones, 1993). Family systems theorists, therefore, were accused of overlooking the influence of socio-political contexts on family functioning, family structure and the gendered division of labour (Myers Avis, 1996).

The concepts of circularity and neutrality were particularly problematic with respect to the issue of gender and power in families. Myers Avis (1996: 225) explains that circularity, often referred to as “circular causality, implies that family members engage in a never-ending, repetitive pattern of mutually reinforcing behaviours, without regard for differences in power or agency”. This meant that in cases of rape, incest and domestic violence, the aggressor was not regarded as totally to blame, as individuals were seen to be both responding to feedback and eliciting it in others with whom they were interacting (Myers Avis, 1996; Jones, 1993). Therefore, the victim was viewed as being co-responsible.

The term, neutrality, was originally coined by the Milan associates, to express the idea that it was necessary for a therapist to actively avoid accepting one position as more correct than another (Cecchin, 1987); even to find logic in situations that are repugnant



from a moral point of view (Luepnitz, 1988). Neutrality was described as “the ability of the therapist to see, in a systemic manner, the whole thing” (Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman & Penn, 1987: 98). This is an admirable stance to take in many situations, but unacceptable in cases of incest, rape and domestic violence. For example, an account by Boscolo et al. (1987), of their handling of a case they entitled “The Family with a Secret” is a clear example of a father’s incestuous behaviour. The account well illustrates the efficiency of the Milan associates with the language of circular questioning. However, instead of demonstrating the concept of neutrality, which they claim to have upheld, it is instead a striking example of the therapists’ collusion with the father. The mother is made the source of the problem and the daughter’s voice is silenced.

Luepnitz (1988) has a good critique of cybernetic epistemology. However, the purpose in flagging Milan Systemic Therapy at this point, is because *post* Milan teachings so strongly emphasised these shortcomings and not only integrated gender into the family therapy curriculum, but took a fervent, and proactive, feminist perspective. Family interaction was seen in the context of patriarchal culture and the different power bases experienced by men and women in families were recognised (Urry, 1990). It was made very clear to us students that a therapist can never be entirely neutral because of their own life experiences; also that when dealing with domestic violence, rape or incest, rather than being neutral, it is imperative that the therapist does not allow someone using violence to justify and excuse it. Rather, it is necessary for the therapist to create a situation where abusive behaviour is challenged at the same time as the client’s experience and feelings are encouraged and validated.

It is also necessary to identify the influence *post* Milan teachings has had on my views of culture and ethnicity. For just as Milan Systemic Therapy was criticised for its lack of attention to gender and power, it was also recognised as being conceptualised by, and for, white, heterosexual, middle class, educated people. Whilst I am cognisant of the fact that I, personally, fit this description, I was forced to consider my position in relation to my “others” (see MacKinnon, 1993). This is because, *post* Milan training programs recognised that in order to be competent, therapists needed to have both cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity (Hardy & Lazloffy, 1995). The course, therefore, included a component which involved the study of culture and diversity and required rigorous self-examination as well as theoretical input.

The issue of class in *post* Milan systemic training is more complex. “Having a place called home” by Monica McGoldrick (1994), has become required reading. This has not always been so. In it, McGoldrick (1994:140) states that class is the most toxic area of all. She claims that:

On the surface, Americans tend to maintain that if class exists at all it relates to “the poor” as distinct from “us” in the middle class, or a little bit the upper class – which usually means someone else.

Within the therapeutic environment, it seems that there is not quite the same desire to embrace all “others” in the area of class, as is demanded of cultural and ethnic diversity. There does not seem to be the same emphasis on transparency and openness around class as there is around culture and ethnicity. For example, at no time was class vocalised amongst my colleagues as being a contributing factor to the differences previously referred to in the outcomes of the men’s programs at different branches of the counselling organisation. It still seems that the “poor” and “upper” classes are regarded as “other”; that whereas in therapeutic circles (of all places), sympathy rather than empathy is felt for the “poor”, the “upper” class is regarded with distrust; their privileges suspected of being gained at the expense of those they consider below themselves. Moreover, there is the sense that class is also linked with politics; the upper class linked to conservatism; the lower, to left-wing movements. Certainly within therapeutic corridors, the espousal of conservative views carries a price. The point being made here is that my understanding of the term class, my interest in its covert discourses, its obscurity, and its relevance to domestic violence, was also a legacy of my training, and position, in a *post* Milan therapeutic environment.

As this chapter concludes, it is apparent that what began as an inquiry into the prevalence of domestic violence in intimate heterosexual relationships, developed into an exploration of how gendered discourse and the discourses of different cultural groups intersect to shape men’s understandings of masculinity and sense of entitlement to use violence in an intimate heterosexual relationship. However, after conversing with 24 male participants and subsequently transcribing and analysing these discussions, the striking pre-eminence of gendered discourse became apparent to me. The quite overwhelming discovery was that whilst class and cultural differences were articulated, these were eclipsed by the pre-eminence and strength of gendered discourse in keeping

with Western patriarchal dictates in regards to masculinity and violence. The espousal of patriarchal stereotypes in the way these men spoke of being male, and in their understanding and use of violence, was noteworthy.

These results convinced me, overwhelmingly, that whilst class, as well as culture and ethnicity are significant and worthy of further attention, gender remains a far more overreaching and all consuming factor which, although given lip service, is yet to be adequately addressed by modern societies with dire consequences in terms of violence, and, particularly, domestic violence. As a result, rather than the aforementioned working title, *Class, gender and ethnicity: how these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship*, I adopted the title *Patriarchy: the predominant discourse and font of domestic violence* as a more accurate reflection of the research and its findings.

My conclusion, as will become evident in the final chapter, is twofold. In the first place, I maintain that violence is a discursive phenomenon and that social discourses influence, if not determine, the level of acceptance and manifestation of aggressive and violent behaviour. Secondly, I assert that violence in heterosexual relationships will occur, not simply when the prevailing discourse sanctions violence and promotes an idealised masculinity, but when patriarchal ideology is paramount; when women are defined as inferior to men, and their attributes both held in contempt and devalued of their intrinsic worth. This appears to put me at odds with intersectionality, where equal emphasis is laid upon the significance of gender, race and class; where the focus is the intersection of systems of power and oppression, unique to each cultural group.

I do not suggest that every person regardless of their race, class or religion, experience domestic violence equally (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Nor am I guilty of failing to see race, class and gender as interlocking social structures rather than purely individual human characteristics (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). My approach remains a multivaried one. I see the need to consider psychological, sociological, even biological frameworks alongside feminism. Most importantly, I argue that behaviour is a discursive phenomenon and that patriarchal discourse is the predominant discourse (and font of domestic violence) almost universally today. This does not mean that I dispute the significance of the intersection of cultural discourses, such as class and ethnicity, in reconciling what is accepted as truth; what it is possible to say or not say; and by

extension what it is possible to do or not do (Talbot, 2003). I do, however, see these as operating beneath the umbrella of patriarchal discourse; shaping and defining unique rules for behaviour, and therefore domestic violence, within patriarchal guidelines.

However, this represents the endpoint of the journey. Below is an overview of the stages that led there.

## ***Overview of the Thesis***

This thesis comprises a preface and six other chapters. The preface has contextualised the research by describing the clinical and theoretical environments in which I came to be interested in domestic violence and subsequently, developed my knowledge of it. It also explains the formulation of questions that, to my mind, required investigation and which led to the undertaking of this journey. A brief synopsis of ensuing chapters follows.

### **Chapter 1**

Chapter 1 is called *Mapping the Territory*, a title thought to be apt because it reflects postmodernist debate on what constitutes reality, our knowledge of it and our active role in constructing it (See Jones, 1993). This chapter describes, and justifies, the manner in which the terms class, gender, culture, cultural identity, ethnicity, social discourse, discursive phenomenon, patriarchy, and domestic violence are used throughout the thesis.

### **Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 is entitled, *Orientation*. In it, the current literature in three different areas of relevance to this thesis is reviewed. The chapter begins by looking at some of the writings comparing male and female violence which strongly influenced my position in the debate. This is followed by a critical evaluation of some perspectives on the causality of domestic violence and a précis of the anthropological studies which were so influential.

### **Chapter 3**

Chapter 3, *The Road Taken*, has two parts. In the first, *Making Plans*, the choice of methodology for this project is described and justified. This was to be a qualitative

approach, based upon grounded and narrative theories, and with strong pro-feminist leanings. In-depth interviews were to be semi-structured with a number of open-ended questions used as prompts for the narratives. Thereafter, in *The First Leg*, attempts to recruit participants, and the difficulties that were experienced, are described.

## **Chapter 4**

The aim of this chapter, *Fellow Passengers*, is to introduce the men who finally agreed to participate in the study. A brief, but personal, history of each individual is provided.

## **Chapter 5**

Both this chapter and the next are dedicated to a presentation of the data. It needs to be acknowledged that its organisation involved my own interpretation and selection of material. However, every effort has been made to represent the men's narratives as accurately as possible and to portray their experiences genuinely. The first six questions on the interview schedule invited the men to position themselves in discourses around masculinity (See Appendix I). Chapter 5 is a presentation of what was said in this regard and has therefore been called, *Being Male*. It includes sections: Advantages of Being Male; Disadvantages of Being Male; Attitudes to Women; and Relationships; and concludes with the disclosure of the most striking discovery of this journey. This is the pre-eminence of gendered discourse which appears to supersede other cultural discourses, like those pertaining to class and ethnic groups. Perceived cultural group differences appear to be dwarfed by patriarchal notions of idealised, androcentric and hegemonic masculinity.

## **Chapter 6**

Chapter 6 is called, *The Construction of Violence*, for it attempts to describe the manner in which these men spoke about violence. The data is largely the outcome of questions 7 to 15 on the schedule (See Appendix I). It is divided into four sections: *Nature*, *Nurture*, *The End Product* and *Change*. This chapter concludes in similar fashion to chapter 5; with the realisation that, based upon the data to hand, cultural difference is totally belittled by the blatant embodiment of Western patriarchal codes of violence in the narratives of these men, in which violence is an acceptable means of showing that one is a man. Therefore, at this point of the journey the title, *Patriarchy: the predominant discourse and font of domestic violence* seemed a more accurate reflection of the research findings.

## **Chapter 7**

This final chapter is called *Reflections*. In it, I expound upon what I am left with as the end of this journey draws nigh; a journey begun in response to the number of incidents of domestic violence presenting in my clinical practice. In this last chapter, based upon my conversations with the men, and drawing upon ethnographical accounts of societies in which domestic violence is deemed not to have occurred, or to have been minimal, I argue that violence is a discursive phenomenon, and that patriarchal discourse is the font of domestic violence.

## Chapter 1: Mapping the Territory

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The purpose of this chapter is to clearly define and further contextualise the parameters of the research focus. At this point in the journey, the working title was: *Class, gender and ethnicity: how these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship*. The goal was to explore how discourses of different cultural groups shape men's understandings of masculinity and sense of entitlement to use violence in an intimate heterosexual relationship. Therefore, in this chapter, the meaning made, and the manner in which such terms as class, gender, culture, cultural identity, ethnicity, social discourse, discursive phenomenon and domestic violence are used throughout this thesis, will be clarified.

### **Class**

It seems that class is a contentious issue because prejudice and marginalisation are implicated. Acceptance of the notion of class is an admittance that hierarchies of power and superiority exist. Sadly, it all too often seems too challenging and revealing for honest appraisals to be made of who defines and makes the rules, and who has access to resources (McGoldrick, 1994). Therefore, it is not altogether surprising that questions about variations in the level of risk of domestic violence for different class groups are controversial (Devery, 1992; Hogg & Brown, 1992). Yet, studies in both the United States and Australia suggest that domestic violence is not spread equally throughout the population (Ferrante, Morgan, Indermaur, & Harding, 1996; Markowitz, 2001). For example, a higher rate of domestic violence has been found amongst women with lower socio-economic status (Devery, 1992; Evans, 2005; Heise, 1998; Markowitz, 2001; Swan & Snow, 2002), and those who are poorly educated, unmarried, separated, divorced (Taft, 2002) and unemployed (Heise, 1998). In short, the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, which carried out a regional analysis of domestic violence in NSW, claims that there is a relationship between domestic violence and class (Hogg & Brown, 1992; Devery, 1992). Heise (1998) also reports that this has been shown to be true in studies in Cambodia, Nicaragua, Peru, Chile and Thailand.

In this thesis, whilst the intention is not to suggest a reductionist class analysis, a class group is understood to be a collection of people who share common social and

economic characteristics, which define and position its members in relation to other groups in society. The view taken is that it is a “myth that we are a classless society” (McGoldrick, 1994: 140). I believe that class pertains to everyone; that no-one can escape economic, social or political standing, nor the discourses these groupings accept and make function as true. Hence, in accordance with McGoldrick (1994), it is held that human beings are constantly locating, comparing and defining themselves by their class and that even within families, class differences are apparent. Class changes are inevitable because, for example, financial, educational, occupational and marital circumstances vary over time. In fact, as McGoldrick (1994) states, whilst you cannot change your gender or culture, changing class is actually an expectation of Western society.

In the preface, it was mentioned that fellow counsellors and group leaders had noticed variations in the responses of men to the services provided by different branches of the organisation. The reason for pointing this out was not to support prejudice or to suggest one class group is superior to the other. Rather the view taken is that, as there can be no doubt that there are indeed differences amongst the men referred to in terms of income, employment and level of education, failure to identify these differences is patronising, insensitive and unhelpful. Closing one’s eyes to class difference is like ignoring a pink elephant sitting in the lounge room (to borrow a metaphor used in family counsellor training). Failing to acknowledge, and to respond to class differences, must surely result in the very alienation of those who it is necessary to join with. If, as an example, the contents, or the manner of presentation, of a men’s program is financially or educationally at odds with a prospective participant, it is foolish to expect them to identify with it, to be amenable to working with it for any length of time; in short for a positive outcome to be achieved.

Furthermore, it is contended that the culture of the class group and its dominant discourse, together with the cultures and discourses of other diverse groups to which a person belongs, such as ethnicity and gender, constructs that person’s cultural identity. More will be said about this in the section on cultural identity below. Suffice to say, at this point, that it seems that the exclusion of the notion of class results in an incomplete and inaccurate description of cultural identity.



## Gender

Two ideologies influence the conceptualisation of gender in this dissertation. These are social constructionism and feminism. Postmodernist teachings, and the concepts of constructivism and social constructionism, were huge influences in the development and practice of *Post* Milan Systems Therapy and were therefore explored extensively as part of the training curriculum already referred to. This thesis identifies with the version of social constructionism that “does not negate the possibility of a world or reality outside our constructions of it, but rather *focuses on the process by which we come to understand and know the world*” (Flaskas, 1994: 145). Therefore, it is held that gender is not the anatomical property of individuals fixed by nature (Connell, 2002) but is rather an “emergent feature of social situations” (Lorber & Farrell, 1991: 14); that societies through the ages have constructed the meaning of gender, and that it is gender, not sex, that determines sexual stereotypes (Kaufman, 1993). Therefore, when the term, masculinity is used, like Beynon (2002), it is assumed that maleness is biological and masculinity, cultural. As Beynon (2002: 2) states:

Masculinity can never float free of culture: on the contrary, it is the child of culture, shaped and expressed differently at different times in different circumstances in different places by individuals and groups.

The following quote is a rather lengthy one from Hare-Mustin (1991: 65), but in it she accurately encapsulates what has been described above:

We construct the world around us, not from an idiosyncratic view, but from the meaning community in which we live. The meanings we use are not simply a mirror of reality or a neutral tool, but are a shared way of viewing the world that influences our experiences of it. The way we represent reality depends on these shared meanings that derive from language, history, and culture. Men have had greater influence over meaning throughout history through privileged access to education, through higher rates of literacy, and through control of the print and electronic media. These advantages constitute the power to create the world in the image of their desires.

In this work, gender is viewed as performative, although herein lies a dichotomy. Like Butler (2004:1), I believe that gender is “a kind of doing, an incessant activity

performed, *in part* (my italics) without one's knowing and without one's willing". It seems that dominant gender discourses (discourse is discussed below), which seem to be almost exclusively patriarchal in modern society, "are embedded in language, culture, and experience, and [are] thus subtly communicated and (my use of italics) *internalised from the moment of birth*" (Myers Avis, 1996). Hare-Mustin (1994) maintains that dominant discourses are so familiar that they are taken for granted and even fade from view. So much so, that it appears that culturally defined gender norms permeate understanding in a subtle and taken for granted manner. Gender, then, can almost not be untangled from one's worldview (Connell, 2002; Karner, 1998) and is almost performed unconsciously.

The words *in part* are italicised in the paragraph above. This is to emphasize that gender is seen as a social construct and therefore not entirely imposed; least of all on those men fitting dominant definitions of masculinity. Being pro-feminist, it seems to me that gender fundamentally organises human experience, and that dominant gender discourses produce, and sustain, an unequal gender order that privileges men, even though not all men benefit equally and there are some men who are marginalised and subordinated by class, sexuality, ethnicity and culture (Connell, 2002; Pease, 2000; 2002). In addition, there seems little doubt that even those men who conform to dominant definitions of masculinity pay a price; that with the power and privilege comes pain and anxiety as well (Kaufman, 1993). However, it seems that as a social construct, it ought to be possible for gender to be deconstructed, transformed and reconstructed with new shared meanings (Myers Avis, 1996), for being masculine or feminine is, after all, not a fixed state determined by nature.

### ***Culture, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity***

Hardy and Lazloffy (1995) point out that there appears to be a great deal of confusion about the relationship between culture and ethnicity among some authors, particularly those in the family therapy literature. Some authors describe culture as a broader concept than they do ethnicity and others use the terms synonymously (Hardy & Lazloffy, 1995). The stance taken in this research project, and the manner in which culture, cultural identity and ethnicity are defined, beg clarification.

My understanding of the notion, *culture*, was also influenced by the writings of a number of people outside family therapy literature, namely Bruce (1995), Hardy and Lazloffy (1995), Knudson-Martin (1997), Nazneen (1998) and Robarchek and Robarchek (1998). “A culture” is taken to mean a group of people, who both individually and collectively, share information and knowledge. They are subject to shared “social heredity” (Nazneen, 1998: 79) or legacies of past, but currently operative, human behaviour which both allows them to make sense of, and informs the way they deal with, “other contexts that inform their realities” (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1998: 4). Because the social heredities, legacies, knowledge and information, i.e. “the culture” is available to be learnt and is encoded in social discourse, members of “a culture” have a degree of homogeneity to their perspectives (Knudson-Martin, 1997).

However, *cultural identity* is seen as a broad, complex and multidimensional concept. Like Hardy and Lazloffy (1995), I believe that an individual’s cultural identity is formed by the convergence of the different cultures of diverse groups to which that individual belongs, such as, but not exclusively *ethnicity*, gender and class. Therefore, ethnicity “constitutes a means to the end rather than *the* end” (Hardy & Lazloffy, 1995: 229). Gender and class, for example, are equally, but again not exclusively, fundamental to a person’s cultural identity.

As with class, it is my belief that “ethnicity pertains to everyone and influences everyone’s values, not only those marginalised by the dominant society” (McGoldrick, Giordano, & Pearce, 1996: ix); that, in giving prominence to ethnicity, the intention was, once again, neither to reinforce prejudice nor to suggest that one group of people is superior to another. Like Hardy and Lazloffy (1995: 225), ethnicity is considered to be “the group(s) from which an individual has descended and derives the essence of her/his sense of peoplehood”. It seems that each ethnic group has its own culture which shapes the thinking, feeling and behaviour of its members.

In this analysis, “a” culture is a group of people who, by virtue of their association, assume both consciously and inadvertently “the” culture of the group; the shared information, knowledge and codes for appropriate ways of being. Ethnicity provides one such group membership. Gender and class are other examples, as are memberships of national, religious, age, sporting and interest groups. Therefore, an individual’s

cultural identity is formed by the convergence of all the cultures of those groups to which the individual belongs.

## ***Social Discourse and Discursive Phenomenon***

Discourse is understood in this thesis as the use of language by people to disclose their thoughts, feelings and perceptions, so that they are able to make sense of the world they inhabit and are, in turn, understood, accepted and responded to. Medrado, Lyra and Monteiro (2001) speak of discursive practice as language in action. They say that people produce meanings which have consequences. In this way, social discourse is “both the medium and the product of human activities; it is the way a certain world view is sustained” (Hare-Mustin, 1991: 64); the means with which communities are defined and maintained (Bruce, 1995).

Sanday (1996a) maintains that social discourse reflects cultural norms, roles, identities and ethos; and that a connection exists between discourse, behaviour and relationships. Therefore, to my way of thinking, social practices are ordered by the rules inherent in what is being written or said at a particular time. Behaviour is not arbitrary but derived from dominant discourses and is, therefore, a discursive phenomenon. Pease (2002: 28), speaking of masculinity, for instance, explains:

It is within discourses that we are offered subject positions ... men learn the discourses of masculinity in society and work out how to position themselves as a “male” of a certain type ... the masculine sense of self is historically provided in a series of social practices within different frameworks.

Different and competing discourses circulate in a culture. Not all are considered of equal importance and some are privileged over others, therefore having greater influence on the language, thought and action of that culture (Hare-Mustin, 1994). Foucault, as discussed in Hare-Mustin (1991), drew attention to the way language and meaning-making are important resources held by those in power. Foucault (1980: 131) declared that:

Each society has its regime of truth, its “general policies” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true;

the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

As was alluded to in the section on gender, being pro-feminist, I will argue that the “regime of truth” in Western and developed societies, is androcentric and hegemonic; that whilst discourse *imposes* meaning on individuals, it is predominantly white Caucasian males who are charged with saying what counts as true. Whilst all may improvise within a “scene of constraint” (Butler, 2004: 1), and whilst power does have its costs (Kaufman, 1991; 1993; 1999), the restrictions are borne unequally. It appears that as a result of “machinations of power” (Foucault cited by Love, 2002), certain discourses are marginalised and others contain hidden meanings. How else and why has masculinity come to be understood as that which is not feminine? (Kaufman, 1993; Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994) How else and why did violence become a means to display one’s manhood? (Kimmel, 2000)

## ***Patriarchy***

Patriarchy is a long contested term amongst feminists (Mills, 2001). Gittins (1993) maintains that feminists have spent considerable time trying to define and analyse it, but on the whole, states Banks (1986: 227), “The movement is united in its opposition to what it sees as patriarchy or women’s oppression by man”. She explains that division amongst different groups and individuals arise out of the alternative answers they give for the *source* of man’s power over women.

For Marxist feminists, patriarchy arises out of the structures of economic production (Pease, 2000). They focus on the dismantling of capitalism and its ethos of producers and non-producers (Charles, 2000) for the liberation of women. Most Marxist feminists agree that feminism without socialism is impossible and priority is given to issues of class (Banks, 1986).

It is perhaps not surprising that I lean towards radical feminism after my initial interest was raised during my training to be a family counsellor. Gittins (1993: 35) was compulsory reading and she states that “by definition the family has been an unequal

institution premised on paternal authority and power ... Patriarchy ... is essential in understanding families". Therefore, Marxist theories seem inaccurate as patriarchy not only pre-dates capitalism but continues even after it has been superseded; its demise simply meant replacing one dominant group of men with another (Banks, 1986). Nor do I believe that blaming legal systems (liberal feminism) for the oppression of women is adequate. Rather, my viewpoint is that human relationships are arranged upon women's oppression or patriarchy.

Therefore, I cannot endorse the definition of patriarchy by Beynon (2002: 165). He maintains that patriarchy is:

The social system by which men enjoyed economic ascendancy and power over women, who were as a result, confined to the private world of the home.

Rather, two definitions by Mills (2001) and Pease (2000) seem congruent. Mills (2001: 20) states that patriarchy is a "term that is useful as an indicator of how relations of power within Western countries are balanced in favour of men"; Pease (2000: 12), that patriarchy is "an 'umbrella' term for describing men's systemic dominance of women".

I disagree with Beynon's (2002) use of the word "enjoyed" as quoted above. I am influenced by Gittins (1993: 36) who maintains that:

Power relations between men and women cut across every aspect of social existence and, being located historically, are subject to change.

However, as was borne out by the narratives of the men involved in this study, men's lives continue to be located in the context of patriarchy (Pease, 2002). This means that their interests are also "formulated and constructed within the context of patriarchal discourses" (Pease, 2000: 14) and explains why men resist change in gender relations (McMahon, 1999; Pease, 2000).

It is false, though, to suggest that all men benefit equally from the oppression of women (Kaufman, 2001; Pease, 2000; 2002), or even that those that do, do not pay an enormous cost. Dominant men use hierarchical social power to control non-dominant men as well as women, and, violence says Kaufman (2001), is a mechanism to establish that pecking order. Therefore, men's violence to women, and even violence amongst men, is a

structure of patriarchal relations (Hearn, 1998); an outcome of the discourses of patriarchal dominance which are internalised (Kaufman, 2001; Myers Avis, 1996), individualised and reproduced. As violence is a discursive practice, it is able to be redefined (Pease, 2000). I am of a mind that what is socially constructed can be reconstructed (Lorber, 1991), and like radical feminists, suggest that eliminating patriarchy, will benefit not only women, but men, who today experience its power and privilege but also its pain (Kaufman, 1993).

Pease (2000: 32) states that “Clearly, forms of bonding *across* class, race and ethnic lines operate at the expense of women”. I suspect that patriarchal discourse is the predominant discourse (and font of domestic violence) almost universally today; that whilst there may not be a single patriarchal discourse of masculinity (Pease, 2000), cultural discourses operate beneath an umbrella of patriarchal discourse. The intersectionality or simultaneous experience of the discourses of, for example, race, class and religion, shape and define unique rules for behaviour, and therefore violence, within patriarchal guidelines.

## ***Domestic Violence***

The terms violence, abuse, spousal abuse, domestic violence, intimate violence, family violence, wife bashing, wife battering and woman abuse are often used interchangeably (Gelles, 1993). The preference of many Australian Indigenous people for the term, family violence, is acknowledged and respected. Indigenous people believe that it reflects extended family relationships based upon mutual obligation and support. However, in the light of the feminist argument that some generic terms can obscure the dimensions of gender and power, which are so important in understanding domestic violence (Bograd, 1990), the terms, family violence, intimate violence and spousal abuse as generic terms for wife abuse, have not been used on purpose. In fact, it is necessary to make a point of raising an objection to their general usage. At times, the phrase, men’s violence against their intimate female partner, has been employed as there can be no doubt with this statement who has carried out the act of violence. No objection is held against the use of the words, wife bashing and wife battering, although these connote meanings of physical, rather than non-physical, violence. Therefore, it is preferred that they be utilised in their correct context. *Mostly, the term, domestic*

*violence, has been used because it has become synonymous with wife abuse* (Yllo, 1993). However, I believe that even this term does not represent adequately the context, nature and consequences of domestic violence. At times in this thesis, the word, abuse, is substituted for violence. This is not an arbitrary action but an attempt to illustrate a broad, and inclusive, definition of domestic violence. Wife abuse, or husband abuse, are probably more precise and explicit terms than the words, domestic violence, although they still do not reflect the context, intention or nature of the violent act. As will be argued in Chapter 2, husband abuse is not similar to wife abuse in terms of gender and power. This is another reason the term domestic violence has been used specifically as wife abuse in the analysis, even though intimate partners may not be legally married. The efforts of Johnson (1995) (see below) to define more specifically the terms used to describe domestic violence are much needed and ought to be applauded, even though the distinctions he makes are inadequate. It seems that this is another area of research that should be pursued further.

In accordance with Websdale and Chesney-Lind (1998), it is contended that domestic violence is the consequence of hetero-patriarchy; that gender and power are fundamental to the understanding of man's violence against his intimate female partner. Heterosexual intimate relationships cannot be regarded as equal. Power within them is even today not gender neutral, but structured into the institution of marriage and intimate heterosexual relationships to the disadvantage of women (Kurz, 1993). Therefore, in this dissertation, men's violence to their intimate female partner is seen as an issue of power and control; a means of claiming, legitimising and enforcing his socially prescribed dominant position over her and the family. It seems that the internalisation of dominant gender discourses results in men feeling both entitled, and obligated (if they are to be regarded as masculine), to maintain this dominant position. This viewpoint is supported by the words of Kaufman (1993: 29), who maintains that men's efforts to squeeze themselves into the tight pants of masculinity are never fully over; that:

Men before us have defined as the basic quest of manhood, the acquisition of power. This quest is the heart of the project of becoming a man. With this power comes the capacity to control: perhaps ourselves, perhaps others, perhaps the social and physical environments in which we live.



If domestic violence is about power and control, when deciding what is to be regarded as violence and what is not, the *intention* and the *effect* of the action ought to be considered. Johnson (1995:284) differentiates between what he calls patriarchal terrorism, on the one hand, and common couple violence, on the other. He is of the belief that patriarchal terrorism is a product of patriarchal traditions which give men the right to control their women. He states that patriarchal terrorism is “a form of terroristic control of wives by their husbands that involves the systematic use of not only violence but economic subordination, threats, isolation and other control tactics”. On the other hand, he believes that common couple violence is less the product of patriarchy, and more a situation where things get out of hand; where there is less chance, he says, of violence escalating into life threatening forms. In contrast, this thesis takes the view that domestic violence does not have to be systematic, or repeated, to be either deadly or terrorising and that Johnson’s use of the word “common” normalises the violence, minimises its effect (intimidation and submission), and hides the intention (control).

In making his distinctions, it seems that Johnson (1995) overlooks the fact that whilst, in most cases, women use violence in “self-defence and as a pre-emptive strategy to prevent further brutalization or death” (Websdale & Chesney-Lind, 1998: 57); or because they feel powerless and desperate for a way to be heard; there is an added dynamic within men’s use of violence. It is not suggested that men do not also feel powerlessness or desperation. Constant references to Kaufman’s (1993; 1999; 2001) ideas about men’s experience of power and pain bear testimony to this. However, generally speaking, men’s violence has the added *intention* of exerting power and authority; of controlling, limiting, shaping and directing (Almeida & Durkin, 1999) the lives of intimate female partners through intimidation.

Johnson (1995: 285) appears to minimise the *effect* of the “minor” forms of violence he attributes to “common couple violence”. He does not identify that the effect of witnessing a man kick a door, or bash a wall, can be as intimidating, and as long lasting, for a woman as being punched. The intention behind these behaviours is the same, and even if it happens once, the message is clear – behave or else. The possibility and probability of this behaviour reoccurring, is then established in the woman’s mind; the fear that it could even get worse is planted. She walks on egg shells all the time. Websdale and Chesney-Lind (1998) maintain that men have many areas of control open to them and that these vary between those that are coercive and those that are

consensual. It is not unheard of that a man only has to put his finger up to engender fear in his intimate partner and result in her being totally submissive. Therefore, this thesis supports the idea that both lethal and non-lethal methods, physical and non-physical ways, of inflicting harm upon a woman should be regarded as equally perilous.

Hearn (1996: 34) states that the most accepted or usual interpretation of interpersonal relations is that of the “‘rational individual’, with a ‘unified self’, who conducts ‘his’ affairs in a liberal and reasonably tolerant way”. Violence is usually, and wrongly, portrayed as occurring in isolated exceptions to normal life. So when a man is violent to the woman he loves, is married to or has a sexual relationship with, his violence is considered aberrant. Peterson del Mar (1996: 174), likewise, criticises the whipping post laws instigated in Oregon in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century as a punishment for men who physically abused their wives. He argues that to identify a handful of marginalised men, hit them and declare the problem solved, is absurd and that defining perpetrators as deviants hides the reality that:

The wife beater is not out there somewhere on the margins of society and history. He is instead our close companion. He is at the centre of our culture. He is at the centre of our past.

In truth, this thesis maintains that violence is fundamental to gender and power, and a factor within all social relationships in Western society (Hearn, 1996). In accordance, with Boyd (2000), Brownridge (2002), O’Leary (1993) and Ptacek (1990), I believe that all men are on a continuum of violence and controlling behaviour. The viewpoint of Kaufman (2001), who warns that establishing a false dichotomy between those men who use violence and those that do not, is also upheld. Kaufman’s (2001: 50) suggestion that those men who do not actively use violence “certainly engage in various dominating and negative practices however subtle or accepted these might be”, is valued.

Supporting these views might result in this work being written off as that of a researcher who is a man-hater or irrational feminist. Both of these labels are far from the truth, however. After all, as a systemic theorist, my aim is to steer away from pathologising individuals and to look instead for systemic causes, and positive functions behind human behaviour. It is for this reason that the word, perpetrator, is not favoured and used sparingly. It seems to pathologise and label the very being of a person rather than

condemn the behaviour that has been used. After all, the whole point of this research is to inquire about the effect, and demands, of cultural discourses on men; to determine whether they influence men's use of violence in heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, like Kaufman (1993), I believe that gender is as much about the lives of men as women and that feminist analysis provides us with useful tools and insights for understanding the lives of men. As a clinician, it seems that true intimacy is impossible in an environment devoid of both emotional and physical safety. Men, as well as women, lose out in this respect and the aim of relationship counselling is to facilitate the acquisition and enjoyment of a state of true intimacy for both sexes.

It seems insufficient to speak of the misuse of power, and domestic violence in particular, without identifying a link between gendered social discourse, patriarchy and behaviour. Consequently, though the presentation below of my own definition of wife abuse or domestic violence is anachronistic in that it in no way represents the manner in which I would have defined it at this stage of the journey, to do otherwise, seems tantamount to inaccuracy.

Wife abuse or domestic violence, is behaviour on a continuum of power and control used both consciously and unconsciously by a man to coerce or dominate his partner. It reflects and upholds dominant patriarchal discourses of Western and developed societies which have both formed, and restricted, masculine identity. The most obvious dominant discourses inherent in domestic violence are firstly, that the maintenance of the dominant position in a relationship is both a man's entitlement and what is socially expected of him as a male; and secondly, that the use of violence is socially acceptable when a) demonstrating masculinity or b) in the case of provocation, duress, self-defence, self-protection and heroism. Domestic violence takes many forms, including physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, emotional, linguistic, cognitive, social, spatial, religious and financial forms of abuse.

## Chapter 2: Orientation

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I acknowledged in the preface that there is, indeed, a substantial amount of material available on the topic of domestic violence. Therefore, I concede that the work reviewed in this chapter is limited to those publications which have influenced and developed my thesis. I begin with a review of what I believe are three essential, and accurate, contributions to what Johnson and Ferraro (2000: 949) have called “the long-standing debate about ‘battered husbands’”. This is followed by a critical evaluation of some of the current literature offering psychological; physical/biological; feminist; sociological and multivariate explanations for the causality of domestic violence; and, finally, a review of some anthropological studies that I consider to be of particular significance to the argument.

### ***Male versus Female Violence***

Whilst I do not believe that the typology of violence put forward by Johnson and Ferraro (2000) adequately reflects inequality and power differentials between males and females, I salute them for their contention that the ability to draw firm conclusions about partner violence, and to make effective policies, is handicapped by a failure to make distinctions among types of partner violence. To my mind, three arguments that do much to address the issue fairly and convincingly are those of Flood (1999), Jacobsen and Gottman (1998) and James (1999).

James (1999) acknowledges that women’s violence to men is more common than most therapists believe but she points out that whilst women can be violent, and their violence can be problematic for their male partners, “it is a fiction that their violence is equivalent to men’s in intent, frequency, severity or outcome” (James, 1999: 161). She states, and this is in keeping with my own clinical experience, that women’s violence is likely to occur in self-defence and usually in response to frustration and stress; that it is sometimes a refusal to accept a less powerful position. I endorse her view that women’s violence is a reflection of dependence, whilst men’s is a reflection of dominance (James, 1999). “Apparently”, says James (1999: 158), “it is clear to many men that they are ultimately in control, even when their wives are violent”. This is a conclusion that was also reached by Umberson, Anderson, Glick and Shapiro (1998), who assert that

“experiencing violence at the hands of a partner has significant adverse effects on a sense of personal control for women, but not for men”. James (1999) adds that, whilst women fear men’s violence, not only are men not usually afraid, but they even mock and laugh at their partner’s outbursts.

Flood (1999) posits that men’s violence is more prolonged, more extreme and more likely to cause injury. He suggests that the claims of husband battering by men’s and fathers’ rights groups, stem more from political and anti-feminist motives than they do from genuine concern for male victims. He argues, and I totally agree, that there is a need to provide services and resources for both men and women, which are gender-just and oriented towards enhancing their lives, rather than making false claims and inciting and pitting one against the other.

Flood (1999: 3) also challenges the claims about husband battering on the grounds that the advocates of men’s rights movements have used material selectively and have either ignored or dismissed “a mountain of other evidence which conflicts with their claims”. He says that they draw upon a body of American studies which use a particular methodology for measuring violence. This methodology is called the CTS (Conflict Tactic Scales) and was developed and used by Murray Strauss, Richard Gelles, Suzanne Steinmetz and others (Flood, 1999). Flood (1999) claims that the CTS has serious methodological flaws.

Firstly, he so correctly points out, it excludes important forms of violence such as sexual assault, choking, stalking and scratching. CTS studies also fail to include incidents of violence that occur after divorce and separation even though Australian data shows “that women are as likely to experience violence by previous partners as current partners” (Flood, 1999: 4). Bagshaw and Chung (2000) also comment that men rarely experience post-separation violence whereas most women, whose partners are violent, live in fear of them before, during and after separation. For example, it seems that whilst a woman may attempt to limit her ex-partner’s contact with his children, it is unlikely that she could keep him isolated in the home (Swan & Snow, 2002). Men too, are more likely to be socially and financially independent. Therefore, there are very few women who are able to deprive their male partners of financial autonomy (Flood, 1999).

Secondly, Flood (1999) rightly says that the CTS studies do not differentiate between acts of violence i.e. whether they were offensive or defensive; whether they occurred as a single incident or were part of a pattern of violence; and that fear and intimidation are often ignored. It is chilling to think, for example, that these scales make no distinction between the actions of one of my clients and those of her husband. After he had punched her to the ground, she kicked him in an attempt to ward off his ensuing blows. The paralysing fear that another woman described to me after her husband had threatened to bury her alive in a coffin filled with spiders would not be evident either.

Flood (1999), thirdly, condemns the CTS for depending on reports that are given *either* by the husband *or* the wife, when other studies have shown that spousal reports about the frequency and manner of violence differ noticeably, and the wife is more likely than the husband to admit her own violence.

Finally, Jacobsen and Gottman (1998), like Flood (1999), are openly critical of Murray Strauss and Richard Gelles. Jacobsen and Gottman (1998) speak specifically of the statistics gathered by Gelles, Strauss and colleagues in two national surveys in the United States. They state that even if these statistics show that the *frequency* of violent acts is about the same, the statistics do not take into account the *impact* of the violence and its *function*, and these, they believe, differ somewhat for men and women. According to them, battering is not just physical aggression, but physical aggression with a purpose. Its purpose is to control, intimidate and subjugate one's intimate partner through the use of threat and intimidation. Fear, they say, is the force that provides the power and therefore, in their opinion, it is hard to find women who are capable of battering their husbands.

In drawing this section to a close, I acknowledge that the convictions of Flood (1999), Jacobsen and Gottman (1998) and James (1999) have influenced me on a number of levels. I have concluded that whilst it is necessary to be open to the possibility that women are abusive at times in domestic relationships, it is erroneous to suggest that women and men are violent towards each other in equal rates, with similar intentions or with equal effects. Consequently, I decided to confine this research to a study of men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship.

However, it is also important to reiterate at this point, that the arguments of Flood (1999), Jacobsen and Gottman (1998) and James (1999) are fully supported by my own experiences in clinical practice where accounts of women's violence occur far less frequently, have less physical or emotional impact, and seem mostly defensive in nature. Seldom do male clients claim to be physically intimidated by their wives, whereas women constantly report that they walk on egg shells and are afraid of their husbands.

Another controversy around domestic violence is the failure of researchers to agree on a conceptual framework to explain the causes of men's violence towards women. Five different perspectives will be reviewed briefly, although clearly these categories can, and do, overlap. Examples of overlapping categories are the psychoanalytic feminism of Nancy Chodorow and Juliet Mills (Branaman, 2000), and the psychological/biological and evolutionary approaches of Belsky (2001), Silverstein (1999) and Wilson and Daly (2001).

The order in which the different perspectives are presented is not arbitrary. The first two approaches, psychological and biological, focus on the characteristics of *individual* men who have used violence against their intimate female partners; the following two, feminist and sociological, offer *socio-political* perspectives; and finally, a number of multivariate approaches are reviewed. It seems fitting to begin with the psychological approach because this framework is the oldest (Gelles & Loseke, 1993).

### ***The Psychological Approach***

A psychological approach to understanding domestic violence, as opposed to socio-political perspectives, tends to describe behavioural problems as individual pathology. It focuses on understanding the characteristics of individual men (Laing, 2002) and purports that personality traits and psychological disorders of individuals are instrumental in causing acts of violence (Gelles & Loseke, 1993).

Laing (2002) states that the literature on individual/psychological perspectives follows two lines of inquiry. The first compares those men who perpetrate violence in intimate relationships with those that do not. The second attempts to identify the different types

of domestically violent men. Beginning with the former, both of these will be expanded upon before I then point out what I suggest is a glaring weakness in these purely individual/psychological approaches.

Holtzworth-Munroe, Bates, Smutzler and Sandin (1997) review the research on maritally violent versus non-violent men. They assert that early researchers reported high levels of psychopathology in those men who used violence domestically. Indeed, even recent studies involving comparison groups (earlier studies were criticised for their absence) propose that as a group, violent men show more psychopathology, psychological symptoms and personality disorders than do their non-violent counterparts. Examples of psychopathology that have been reported, and shown to be higher, amongst men who have used domestic violence, include anxiety, hysteria, depression, low self esteem, hostility, anger and aggressiveness (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997). In terms of personality disorders, antisocial and borderline personality disorders, dependency and attachment issues, as well as a lack of social skills, have been linked to men who abuse their wives (Dutton, 1998; Gondolf & White, 2001; Hilton, Harris & Rice, 2001; Holtzworth-Munroe, 1997; O'Leary, 1993). O'Leary (1993: 25) whose view, that patriarchal society is not a sufficient risk factor in the development of spouse abuse, differs substantially from my own, believes instead that "as the level of physical aggression increases, the greater the likelihood that some personality style, trait or disorder will be associated with the physical aggression".

There are also studies that have demonstrated a relationship between alcohol abuse and domestic violence (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997). For example, Copenhaver, Lash and Eisler (2000: 406) investigate the connection between stress, anger and substance abuse in male intimate abusiveness. They hypothesise that many men, who are strongly committed to the traditional male role, experience masculine gender-role stress (MGRS) "in the context of situations they appraise as a challenge or a threat to their masculine identity". They believe these men then turn to substance abuse as a means of managing their insecurities and that this increases their risk of engaging in abusive behaviour.

I think Paymar (2000) and Peterson del Mar (1996) offer valid, if not one-sided arguments, to this contention. Paymar (2000: 106) states that society erroneously blames alcohol and drugs as the primary problem for abusive behaviour, and that



“people who abuse alcohol or drugs and act violently have two problems – not one. They need to address both”. Peterson del Mar (1996: 125) concurs. He says:

Drunken people in some sense use their inebriation to overstep boundaries selectively ... The decision to drink, then, can be understood as a decision to participate in a ritual in which the inebriate and the community conspire to sanction acts that are ostensibly but not truly unacceptable.

I think, for example, what is missing from their comments is an acknowledgement of the strength of social discursive practices; or rather the unconscious internalisation, individualisation and reproduction of discursive inequitable gender relations; idealised masculinities and the dire consequences of violating prescribed role requirements. A point made by Dentan (1968: 57) supports this argument. He stated that:

One might expect that a drunken Semai would show the startling transformation that sometimes occurs in Euro-American society when a normally meek person gets drunk and becomes violent. Although aboriginally the Semai had no alcoholic drinks, now west Semai men can buy beer or a kind of palm wine called toddy. Sometimes on a special occasion ... a man will drink enough to get noticeably drunk. Drunk, he becomes extremely talkative, noisier than usual, but apparently never violent.

I will introduce Perry (2006a: 1) in the section on biological approaches, but his comment that the neurobiology of fear “holds as many important clues to prevention and treatment interventions related to violence as the neurobiology of aggression” also springs to mind here.

The second line of inquiry identified by Laing (2002) attempts to identify different types of domestically violent men. Laing (2002) offers the work of Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) as an example of research falling into this category. These researchers developed a typology based upon the severity and frequency of the violence, its context, and the psychopathology or personality disorders of the abuser. They identified three sub-types: the family only perpetrators (FO); the borderline-dysphoric group (BD) and the generally violent anti-social type (GVA).

Jacobson and Gottman (1998) provide another typology of abusive men. They make a distinction between Cobras and Pit Bulls. Cobras, they suggest, have themselves often been victims of either physical or sexual abuse in childhood, and have come to accept violence as an inescapable factor of life. They are severely violent as well as belligerent, defensive and contemptuous and remain cool and collected even when inflicting pain and humiliation on their partners. In fact, Jacobson and Gottman (1998) have gathered physiological data which proves that Cobras become internally calmer, their heartbeats decreasing, as they become more abusive. On the other hand, Pit Bulls are men who are volatile, deeply insecure and highly dependent upon their partners. They often find relationships difficult to let go of and, as a result, are known to become stalkers. As Pit Bulls become more aggressive, physiological data indicates that their heartbeats tend to rise accordingly.

James et al. (2002) provide the final example. They appear to be influenced by Jacobson and Gottman (1998) above, and also Goldner, Penn, Sheinberg and Walker (1990). The latter suggest that men's violence is simultaneously an instrumental and expressive act; both a conscious strategy of control and an impulsive act of expression, or loss of control. After conducting qualitative research, interviewing twenty-four men who were mostly attendees at a men's domestic violence program, James et al. (2002) identified two styles of violence used by men in intimate relationships: tyrannical violence and exploder violence. Those men, who described their violence in instrumental terms, were described as tyrants. They wanted to assert domination and control over their partners, and employed, and felt justified, in using violence to get their own way, particularly if their partners did not comply with their wishes. The second group described their violence in expressive terms as being beyond their control, and more often in response to their partner's criticism or challenges. Therefore, these men were called exploders and the function of their violence, was understood as a means of silencing, and gaining distance from, their partners.

I certainly do not wish to discount totally the relevance to the causes of domestic violence of such factors as individual psychological pathology, attachment needs, personality traits and disorders, attitudes and levels of personal control. However, I have been encouraged by the ethnographical accounts of non-aggressive societies, to believe that there have been societies where wife-beating is non-existent or infrequent. Surely, the categorical acceptance of a psychological approach gives credence to the

notion that men of these societies must possess if not superior, then unique, psychological traits? As I do not believe there is evidence to support this, there still remains the possibility, to my mind, that the cause of domestic violence is dependant upon the social programming of members of cultural groups by current socially accepted discourses (Sanday, 1996a). Speaking specifically about sexual violence, Sanday (1981: 25), a proponent of discursive theory, says, for example, that “Rape is not an integral part of male nature, but the means by which men programmed for violence express their sexual selves”. I will expound upon her beliefs more thoroughly in the section on sociological perspectives.

The difficulty in attributing some frameworks, which explain the causality of domestic violence, to a single category has already been noted. Psychoanalytic feminism is an example of this. This perspective seemed to me to have merit in that it argues against purely deterministic or biological explanations for gender differences in personality whilst continuing to accept psychological underpinnings to gender identity, gender inequality and the gendered, and exploitative, nature of interpersonal relationships (Branaman, 2000).

My interest was not so much linked to the specifics of psychoanalytic argument; for example, Nancy Chodorow argues that gender differences become deeply rooted in the *psyche*; Juliet Mitchell, that patriarchal laws of human society are internalised by individuals through the *unconscious mind* (Branaman, 2000). I was more intrigued by the suggestion that gendered social discourse could become internalised; that as a result, intrapsychic processes mediate behaviour in relationships. I speak here, for example, of Chodorow’s (2004) application of object-relations theory to an individual’s developed sense of self-in-relationship. A thought provoking claim, for instance, was that mothers experience their daughters as being like themselves; their sons as different and that children consequently transform these unconscious maternal communications through their own intrapsychic processes, and develop different senses of self-in-relationship (Chodorow, 2004: 106); that as a result, women “experience a sense of self-in-relation that is in contrast to men’s creation of a self that wishes to deny relation and connection”.

By the same token, Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994), Branaman (2000) and Chodorow (2004) are but a few who state that to be masculine is to be seen as being “not

feminine”; that even in the absence of fathers as role models, a young boy is forced to suppress his connection to his first love object, his mother. Consequently, argues Chodorow (2004), men are more anxious and more preoccupied with asserting their independence and masculinity. Similarly, Heise (1998) is of the belief that in father absent cultures, boys are from an early age reared by peers and that this probably promotes intense and aggressive competition, antagonism towards women and the need to be dominant in relationships. She cites Dutton (1995) who says that “cold, rejecting, and abusive fathers may do more than model abusive behaviours; they may contribute to the formation of a personality pattern that is associated with adult abusiveness, anger, depression, and mood cycles” (Heise, 1998: 269).

I suggest that psychoanalytic feminism does not emphasise sufficiently the strength of social discourse. Certainly, the gendered nature of relationships is acknowledged but then the emphasis seems to be on intrapsychic processes and their behavioural manifestations, what I would consider the symptoms, rather than the cause of men’s violence. Whilst it seems credible, if not imperative, to consider intrapsychic processes to explain men’s positions on a continuum of violence and controlling behaviour, this does not explain how masculinity and femininity have become so polarised. I am still left wondering why, for example, fathers were so often absent as role models and what has caused this to have changed somewhat, if not entirely, today; why it is that so many men are preoccupied with asserting their independence and masculinity. My argument is that social discourse defines what it is to be a man or a woman; that “we learn the discursive practises of society and work out how to position ourselves” accordingly (Pease, 2000: 35).

### ***The Physical/Biological Approach***

It is not the aim of this dissertation to claim that biological and physiological factors ought not to be taken into consideration (Turnbull, 1978). However, it seems necessary to point out that this approach appears to assume that like gravity, violent behaviour is inevitable. It overlooks the reality that there are societies in which it was absent or infrequent. It also does not explain how the introduction of Western technology and materialistic lifestyles, very often brought about rapid change and the occurrence of domestic violence to these societies.

Mainly physical/biological approaches focus primarily on the correlation of individual biochemistry, physical attributes and the occurrence of domestic violence. The effect of head injuries on marital violence has also been researched. Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (1997) believe that little attention has been given to this area of research for fear that attributing domestic violence to physical causes allows men who abuse to excuse their behaviour. Whilst I could not agree more, researchers need to be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water. However, the studies that have been conducted in this area have been reported as having seemingly inconclusive results.

Greene (1999), himself an advocate for intra-individual factors as the cause of violence in interpersonal relationships, acknowledges that many of the conclusions and inferences of genetic, endocrine, neurotransmitter and brain dysfunction research are speculative, and have not often focused on domestic violence per se. Greene (1999) also states that evidence for genetic links is unsubstantial; that it appears that genetic factors alone do not explain or determine violent behaviour. Some research has linked high testosterone levels with aggression, dominance and anti-social behaviour (Greene, 1999; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997). However, Greene (1999: 59) draws the following conclusion:

Testosterone is apparently related to aggression in some manner for men and women, and multiple androgens appear to be involved for women who commit violence. However, because the hormones appear to influence both sexes equally with respect to aggression, hormones are not thought to differentially explain the higher prevalence of battering among men.

Conversely, Greene (1999) postulates a possible link between neurotransmitters and domestic violence. He claims that there does appear to be an inverse relationship between serotonin levels and impulsive acts. However, he explains that ethical and methodological constraints restrict progress in this area because the only way to examine neurotransmitters more accurately is to do a spinal tap, a procedure which would be unethical under most circumstances for research purposes.

There have been indications that a history of brain damage may be correlated with relationship aggression (Greene, 1999; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997). However, both Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (1997) and Greene (1999) remain somewhat sceptical; the former cites the fact that not all men who have used domestic violence have head injuries; the latter questions whether the fact that men commit most violent crimes and are also predominantly the victims means that men and women suffer head injuries disproportionately.

The work of Belsky (2001), Silverstein (1999) and Wilson and Daly (2001) combine psychological, biological and evolutionary approaches to the cause of domestic violence, and reflect an affiliation to socio-political frameworks as well. Whilst I endorse the need to consider the latter, when Wilson and Daly (2001) flag the importance of male sexual proprietariness as a motivational factor in severe couple conflict and claim that domestic violence occurs as a result of a mixture of proprietary entitlement and perceived threats to male control and exclusivity, like before, I argue that entitlement could well be a symptom rather than a cause; that social discourse makes “positions available for individuals and these positions are taken up in relation to other people” (Pease, 2000: 34). This holds as strongly with Belsky’s (2001: 34) view that:

Denying the evolutionary basis of the strong emotional proclivities of men to serve their reproductive interests will only undermine any effort to reduce the scope of violence in legitimised and de facto marital unions.

Silverstein (1999) argues that these evolutionary psychological approaches are not effective because they propose hypotheses that are unable to be verified empirically. She says that cross-species and cross-cultural data are not taken into account and that little emphasis is placed upon systemic variables. She believes, on the other hand, that a feminist socio-biological analysis is effective because according to her, it does not disregard information provided by other species, and that by being linked to currently observable non-human primate behaviour, is able to be tested empirically (Silverstein, 1999). I suggest, in addition to my previous criticism of biological explanations for domestic violence, that studies on non-human primates must be limited; that whilst she argues that they explore the interplay and adaptation of biology and the environment

that point to social change, I do not believe that it is possible to equate a population group of non-human primates with a human one in regard to language and discourse.

Silverstein (1999) claims that a socio-biological approach looks in a systemic fashion at the evolution of social behaviours throughout evolutionary history. For example, she (1999: 73) posits that once human beings included meat in their diets, the importance of hunting enhanced male power; and that:

The sedentary lifestyle of agricultural production made it easier for men to control the resource base that women depended upon for both survival and reproduction, and ultimately, the women themselves.

In this respect, I think Gilmore (1990) makes a valid point. He states that any evolutionary argument is demonstrably false as a universal explanation; aggressive hunting, for example, has not been the priority universally. In addition, the significance of anthropological studies ought not to be minimised. The fact that domestic violence was absent, or minimal, in indigenous societies, and that this has changed with globalisation and the influx of Western consumerism, suggests that an evolutionary explanation for the cause of violence is demonstrably false as a universal explanation.

I am aware that Gilmore (1990) has been criticised for failing to recognise the plurality of masculinities and men's practises but I concur with his suggestion that masculinity is culturally defined and that different societies lay different emphasis upon what is, and is not, important in demonstrating manhood. I would suggest that it is more accurate to argue as does Pease (2000: 35) that "Our masculine sense of ourselves is historically provided in a series of social practices within different discursive frameworks".

In terms of a biological approach to the causes of domestic violence, perhaps, Montagu (1978: 5) is accurate when he suggests that there is a "complex interaction between genes and environment, with social experience playing a crucial role". He (1978: 9) claims that there is evidence that:

Whatever genetic potentialities we may have for aggressive behaviour, early conditioning in co-operative behaviour and the discouragement of anything resembling aggressive behaviour serve to make an individual, and a society, essentially unaggressive and co-operative.

This statement is extraordinarily significant, and supportive of the argument I make in the final chapter of this dissertation, but it also measures favourably against the far more recent, and scientifically based, work of Perry (2006a; 2006b), whose contribution to a biological explanation for domestic violence is significant.

Perry (2006a: 2) asks the question whether violent children are conceived or created. He concludes that it is imperative to avoid the “False God of Simple Solutions” when seeking to understand “the plagues of violence in our society”; that “the biological properties of the brain are the result of genotype and developmental experiences” (2006a: 1). However, he highlights the negative effect caused by child mental trauma on brain development as of major significance.

I question, particularly in the light of Dr. Perry’s assertions, whether much of the complexity about the cause of violent behaviour, is as a result of overlooking the need to revisit the prevalent discourses around violence in our society. Whilst it might seem simplistic, clearly the environment of the aforementioned non-aggressive societies, where domestic violence was absent or minimal provides the optimal experiences for children, and therefore, prevents neurobiological damage and the activation of maladaptive response processes. And that is precisely where I agree, and am enthused, by the contentions of Perry (2006a; 2006b).

He says that the brain is most receptive to environmental input in early childhood; that with “optimal experiences, the brain develops healthy, flexible and diverse capabilities” (Perry, 2006b: 2). However, disruption in normal developmental experiences may have a devastating impact on neurological development. He speaks particularly here about the millions of abused and neglected children whose brains are in a state of fear-related activation during the traumatic experience, which leads to “adaptive changes in emotional, behavioural and cognitive functioning to promote survival” (Perry, 2006b: 2). Such changes are adaptive during a threatening event but maladaptive when the threat has passed. Furthermore, the persistent activation of this adaptive fear response can result in the maladaptive persistence of a fear state (Perry, 2006b) and, as I have mentioned previously, Perry (2006a: 1), claims that the neurobiology of fear ‘holds as many important clues to prevention and treatment related to violence as the neurobiology of aggression’. Again, my views here are anachronistic because I was not



privity to Dr. Perry's work in this early stage of the journey, but when I now hold the example of the Semai against the experiences of my clients, and the narratives of the male participants of this research, in the light of Dr. Perry's argument, my belief in a connection between discursive practices, social environment, brain functioning and maladaptive behavioural responses is strengthened.

Socio-political arguments contrast markedly from the individual approaches discussed above. These frameworks recognise that domestic violence is a social issue rather than an issue of individual pathology; that answers need to be sought at a group and social level; that violence against women can only be understood in its social context (Laing, 2002). Two such approaches to the cause of domestic violence will now be reviewed. The feminist approach will be followed by sociological perspectives.

### ***Feminist Perspectives***

At the outset of this section, I acknowledge the work of pro-feminist men: Bowker (1998), Boyd (2000), Dolan-Delvecchio (1998), Douglas (1993), Hearn (1996, 1998), Pease (2000; 2002), Kaufman (1999; 1993; 1999; 2001), Kimmel (2000) and Schacht (2001), to name a few. Their contributions to the understanding of domestic violence were largely made as a result of their studies on masculinity. As this thesis focuses particularly on domestic violence, I have chosen to embed their findings where relevant rather than devote them to a section on masculinity. This does not discount in any way from the significance of their work.

Second wave feminism had an enormous impact upon the visibility of men's violence against women and the way it was thought about and defined as a serious social problem (Breckenridge and Laing, 1999; Charles, 2000; Laing, 2002). Whilst feminist and sociological perspectives share a common belief that domestic violence is a social rather than an individual issue, there is great disparity between the two frameworks.

Gelles (1993), who holds a sociological viewpoint, criticises the feminist movement for focusing only on the influence of gender and gender-structured relations to explain violence and abuse within the family. He claims that whilst concentrating on patriarchy, dominance and control to explain violence towards women, it excludes other

meaningful and important aspects of social structures and institutions. He describes the feminist perspective as being a telephoto rather than a wide-angle lens approach; a single variable explanation in a multivariate world.

I consider myself unashamedly pro-feminist because, akin to Bograd (1990: 19), I believe that deviant structures “cannot adequately account for the empirical reality that it is women as wives who disproportionately are the targets of physical abuse and coercion”. Whilst I do not propose an exclusively feminist approach to explain domestic violence, and will outline my perspective more thoroughly in the conclusion at the end of this chapter, I, nevertheless, am convinced as a result of conducting this research, that patriarchy is the predominant discourse and font of domestic violence in our society. It is clear, therefore, that I place more emphasis than Gelles (1993) does on what he describes as consistent empirical support for the proposition that gender inequality explains violence towards women. I also find his comment that feminist scholars are sociologists and, hence, qualified as researchers of family violence offensive because it appears to minimise the experience and voice of all women.

It is true that feminists agree that domestic violence has to be understood within a framework of gender and power; that power is not gender neutral. Gender, they hold, is essentially a social construction and the linchpin of social order (Lorber, 1991: 355); an “integral part of any social group’s structure of domination and subordination” (Lorber & Farrell, 1991: 1). Gender creates and maintains male power within the family and society (Yllo, 1993) in such a way that women are disadvantaged (Kurz, 1993). “Men”, says Laing (2002: 2), “as a social group have greater power than women and violence is an important way by which men maintain their dominant position”.

Two examples of such feminist writers are Golden (1992) and Schechter (1982). Golden (1992) is adamant that men are violent towards women because of a sexist and patriarchal culture. She maintains that men do not commit acts of violence because of intrapsychic problems, problems on the job, drink, education, sadomasochism, religion or financial stress. Nor is it because of their problematic relationships with their mothers or fathers. Rather Golden (1992: 29) argues that:

Men hit because we all live in a sexist and patriarchal culture which not only allows and tolerates such behaviour, but which historically has encouraged it. A man’s home has been his castle, his wife and children

have been his property and his duty has been to keep all of them “in line”.

Whilst I support the link Golden (1992) makes between patriarchy, sexist attitudes, male entitlement and power, I question her dismissal, for example, of such factors as education and, by implication, discursive practises. Again, my belief is that she describes the symptom rather than the cause. It seems to me that men can only regard their home as their castle and women as their property if this is socially sanctioned; if these rules are encapsulated in social discourses, and the social institutions which are both the product and the sustenance of human activity (Hare-Mustin, 1991).

Susan Schechter (1982: 210) stated that asking, “Why are men violent?” is not the same as asking why men act violently towards a specific target, women, and within a specific context, their home, nor does it explain why men are often solely violent towards their wives. Her notion was that the abuse of women could be viewed as “an historical expression of male domination manifested within the family and currently reinforced by the institutions, economic arrangements, and sexist division of labour within capitalist society” (Schechter, 1982: 209).

I mention the work of Schechter (1982), and her views on capitalism, as evidence that contrary to what Gelles (1993) has said, feminist views on domestic violence are complex and varied. In fact, Bograd (1990) has made the point that that given the wide range of feminist philosophies, there is no unified perspective on domestic violence although there are four common dimensions. Those cited by Bograd (1990: 13-14) are:

- (1) the explanatory utility of the constructs of gender and power;
- (2) the analysis of the family as a historically situated social institution;
- (3) the crucial importance of understanding and validating women’s experiences;
- (4) employing scholarship for women.

Schechter’s (1982) citation is flawed by her allusion to capitalism. Domestic violence is not exclusively a factor of capitalist society. It is interesting that Horne (1999: 57) reports that in Russia:

During the Stalin era the state refused to punish crime statistics, claiming that crime rates were decreasing and that some types of crime had ceased to exist altogether; therefore, it is impossible to

roughly estimate the incidence of domestic violence during much of the Soviet period in history ... Post-Stalin, the Soviet state admitted there was indeed violent crime but that it was diminishing as the Soviet Union became a mature communist state. Even with the advent of openness during the Gorbachev era when domestic violence first began to be researched, it was still not a topic to be found in the public discourse even as controversial subjects such as prostitution, child abuse, sex education, and abortion took the public arena.

Barnes (1990) maintains that it is questionable whether capitalism, and property ownership, has caused the difference in status between men and women. I agree that a gendered power differential is a definitive factor in the occurrence of domestic violence; but now also suggest that domestic violence is a discursive phenomenon. It occurs when patriarchal ideologies and violent behaviour are sanctioned by social discourse; the degree and conditions will be mitigated by membership to a particular cultural and ethnic group. As Pease (2000: 35) states “There is no single patriarchal discourse of masculinity”. For example, Miller (1999) states that in India earning an income is not sufficient guarantee that a woman will be able to use her financial status to bargain for better treatment. Women who work outside the home and earn an income are beaten, as are those that do not. Likewise, McKee (1999) reports that in the Andean community, Las Flores, in Ecuador, when young wives inherit land as a result of a land-inheritance custom, it can exacerbate wife beating. Wives may have an illusory sense of equality and it may lead a man to “dominate his wife through compensatory and violent displays of his masculinity” (McKee, 1999: 169).

I have already stated that the interest of those feminist researchers who seek to understand why men beat their wives generally does not lie in individual psychopathology but in the social factors that support such behaviour. Therefore, their inquiry is not about why a *particular* man beats his particular female partner, but rather about why men as a group use physical force against their spouses. The word, generally, has been used in the sentence above, because within feminist realms there appears to be some division on the relevance of individual traits, and psychological factors, to the causality of domestic violence. For example, whilst Yllo (1993) believes that feminist theory has been fruitfully applied to domestic violence, she is also of the opinion that feminism does not explain why a relatively small percentage of men batter,

given there is so much to gain; that feminism has little sense of the psychological dynamics that lead to the decision to use violence. Bograd (1990) disputes this. She avows that the widespread prevalence of domestic violence points towards it being a function of normal psychological and behavioural patterns rather than the aberrant actions of a few men.

It seems necessary to make a number of points here. Approximating Websdale and Chesney-Lind (1998), this thesis argues for the all inclusive understanding of men's violence. Any behaviour that is "designed to control, dominate and express authority and power" (Hanmer cited in Websdale & Chesney-Lind, 1998: 56) over women is deemed violence and its impact and intention ought not be minimised (Paymar, 2000). I have already stated in Chapter 1, that I believe, like Boyd (2000), Brownridge (2002), Hearn (1996), Kaufman (2001), O'Leary (1993), Peterson del Mar (1996) and Ptacek (1990), that all men are on a continuum of violence and controlling behaviour. In the vein of Bograd (1990), Bart and Moran (1992) and Lockhardt (2001), I do not accept that men who use violence are sick individuals who are psychologically incapable of understanding the consequences of their misogynist domination of women. I do believe, as they do, that the notions of power and control are gendered and ingrained in societal and cultural values, beliefs and norms. I go further in saying that these in turn are embedded in prevailing social discourses (Sanday, 1996).

Furthermore, like Sanday (1981; 1996a; 1996b), I disagree that it is a universal truth that women hold secondary status within all cultural groups (Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999; Moore, 1994; Osier, 2001), for one cannot disregard the absence, or minimal occurrence of domestic violence amongst the Semai, the Waorani, the Djuka, the Wape and the Iroquois. Sanday also found it totally inconsistent with her own research amongst the Minangkabau; a society she describes as rape-free and dissimilar to other rape-prone Western societies she has observed (Sanday, 1996b). Sanday and Goodenough (1990) show that describing women universally as the second sex obscures the complexity of gender relations in many ethnographic studies; that women can, and have been actively involved in economic and political negotiation, and have been role models in some societies. I argue that in this respect, credence ought to be given to discursive theories. As I said in chapter 1, behaviour is not arbitrary but derived from dominant discourses. This would also counter the argument of Gelles (1993) that feminist ideology does not provide a useful theory to explain the complex nature of

family violence and phenomena like sibling abuse, elder abuse, child abuse and abuse by women.

I would also suggest, similar to Kaufman (2001: 41), that the feminist approach does not adequately acknowledge the paradox of men's power and "men's contradictory experiences of power". It seems necessary to see men as having some inherent goodness; that whilst any aberrant behaviour against women must be condemned categorically, men ought to be regarded as having the capacity to regard women as equals and to be worthy of love and respect (Kaufman, 2001). I do not believe that men will be inclined to listen to the anger and pleas of, albeit understandably, angry women (Kaufman, 2001). Therefore, I encourage feminist researchers to involve men in the campaign for change.

I contest another claim of Gelles (1993). I do not believe that feminist perspectives fail to account for the lack of variance across time and cultures. In fact, I suggest that one further contribution of feminist writings to domestic violence research is their attempt to "grapple with the 'intersection' of gender with race, class and ethnicity in order to more fully understand all the dimensions of the socio-political context in which violence against women occurs" (Laing, 2002: 2). This fact was eluded to in the preface, and the examples mentioned here, though minimal by necessity, serve as an indication that this trend has been seen far and wide.

In the United States researchers like Almeida and Dolan-Delvecchio (1999), Almeida and Durkin (1999), Barnes, (2001), Bograd (1999); Laing (2000), Locke and Richman (1999) and Nguyen (1999) identified the need for research to focus upon domestic violence, ethnicity, gender and culture. Singh and Unnithan (1999) looked for cultural clues for lethal violence among Asian Indians in the United States, as did Almeida and Dolan-Delvecchio (1999); Hamby (2000) analysed community influence on domestic violence amongst American Indians; Yoshihama (2000) investigated the ways socio-cultural factors influence the responses of women of Japanese descent living in America to their partner's violence; and Faizi (2001) studied Muslim communities in the United States. Peggy Reeves Sanday (1981; 1996b) argued for the socio-cultural context of rape and Anderson (1997: 667) in calling for an integration of feminist and family violence approaches, concluded that "Gender interacts with structures of race, marital status, and socioeconomic status to influence power within relationships and

propensities for domestic violence”. Sakalh (2001) researched the attitudes of Turkish students at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara to domestic violence; Crichton Hill (2001) challenged ethnocentric explanations of domestic violence for the Samoans in New Zealand; Nayak, Byrne, Martin and Abraham (2003) compared undergraduate students from four different countries (Kuwait, United States, Japan and India); Rabin, Markus and Voghera (1999) compared Jewish and Arab battered women presenting in the emergency room in a hospital in Israel; and Brownridge (2002) compared Quebec with the rest of Canada for cultural variations in male partner violence against women. Three examples to represent the work done in Australia in this area are: Eastaer (1994; 1996), who investigated domestic violence against overseas-born women; Cunneen and Stubbs (2000), who more specifically investigated the disproportionate level of violence against Filipino women; and Kimm (2004), who argued that Australian law places too much emphasis on Indigenous culture and too little on the rights of Aboriginal women; that Aboriginal women are caught, to their disadvantage, between two cultures and two sets of laws.

Ethnicity, class and domestic violence were key elements of a study by Weis, Centrie, Valentin-Juarbe and Fine (2002: 286). They studied poor and working-class Puerto Rican men living in the United States and found that violence was often the means with which these men established and maintained hegemonic masculinity when all the “costumes and accoutrements that enable ‘men to be men’” have been stripped from them. Likewise, Weiss, Fine, Proweller, Bertram and Marusza (1998a), and Weis, Marusza and Fine (1998b) conducted studies among poor and working-class white girls and women living in two cities in North-Eastern America. Significantly, in terms of my argument for the significance of discourse theory, they found that “Domestic violence is deeply etched into how generations of females in poor working-class white communities construct a sense of self, community, family and possibility” (Weis et al., 1998a: 67). Weis (2001) added another component when she explored the difference between African American and White, young adult, working-class and poor women. Weitzman (2000), on the other hand, concerned herself with women of means, who she maintains are the hidden victims of domestic violence bound to silence by the culture’s tribal rule.

Feminists also question the function domestic violence serves for a given society in a particular historical context (Bograd, 1990; Laing, 2002; Yllo, 1993). Recognising that

domestic violence has existed through the centuries, they stress the influence of the historical socio-political environment which they maintain is endorsed and maintained by social institutions such as the family; the media; political, financial, educational, religious, judicial and sporting organisations (Bograd, 1990; Lockhardt, 2001). In his analysis, Connell (1994) also includes both the state and the street as gendered social institutions. As Yllo (1993: 59) insists, "Violence is a means of social control of women that is at once personal and institutional, symbolic and material". Feminists agree that meaningful and permanent change will only be possible in the presence of wider social action and fundamental changes to women's rights (Yllo, 1993).

It might be that feminist approaches are not so much guilty of lacking to explain variance over time as Gelles (1993) contends, but rather are simply documenting the status quo. Aronson and Buchholz (2001) in a paper entitled "The Post-Feminist Era: Still Striving for Equality in Relationships", conclude that despite changes in both society and the attitudes of men and women towards their roles, inequality still exists between the sexes to the detriment of intimate relationships. Lois Bryson (2001) reveals that if she reflects upon the lives of women in Australia since federation, she is struck by how much has changed but also how much has stayed the same. As far as she is concerned, the gender revolution is far from complete. Classical male roles, even now, offer more power, status and economic rewards. Women's skills continue to be under-valued because value continues to be defined from a male perspective.

Kimmel (2000), on the other hand, is of the view that women are no longer cast in the role of helpless domestic helpmates, but that there are no comparable changes afforded to men. He feels that men are still not portrayed, in media and television depictions of their lives, as demonstrating nurturing or caring behaviours. Women, he points out, can leave home (although it is implied that they will then always experience problems in achieving a satisfactory home life). Men, however, still cannot find a way into the home without being emasculated. I have to question whether this is genuinely the case or whether it reflects resistance by those with the power to resist. Whilst Pease (2000) states that there are a number of contradictory discourses of masculinity currently available to men, I do not believe one ought to discount McMahon (1999: 31). He claims that:



Men, on the whole (an important qualification) perceive that their interests are best served by maintaining the sexual division of domestic work, and use considerable resources to defend it.

A comment by Segal (1993) cited by McMahon (1999: 206) is revealing in this regard. “She pointed out that most change in men’s lives occurs when ‘*women’s power to demand change in men*’ has been the greatest” (emphasis in original). ”.

The amount of feminist and pro-feminist literature which points towards the role of social institutions and other agencies in sustaining a culture which condones violence, and violence towards women, is striking. These had enormous influence upon me and the direction this journey took. In fact, many of the questions I used, and describe in the methodology section, were shaped by these publications. Therefore, I provide examples but at the same time wish to embed the discussion within discursive theory.

My point is that these institutions reflect the gendered social discourses of the time; that they are both the product and the sustenance of human activity (Hare-Mustin, 1991: 64) for they specify sets of rules and define what is, or is not, acceptable and valued. I agree with Connell (1994: 30) that gender relations are present, and systematically important, in all types of institutions; that it is the “gender regime” in any given institution that determines the “state of play”. Mills (2001: 77) uses the word brutality to express the consequences of existing gender arrangements. He states that:

The brutality of existing gender arrangements has been normalised within various institutional frameworks through the construction of “normalised” masculine and feminine subjectivities.

Bryson (2001), Delamont (2001); Delphy and Leonard (1994); Dempsey (2000); and McMahon (1999) are some of those that argue that women remain the subordinate gender in respect of the division of labour within the family. Whilst Delphy and Leonard (1994) suggest that the deliberate withholding of emotional support for wives’ jobs and voluntary activities is an important form of control and psychic violence towards their wives, McMahon (1999) actually links domestic violence to the division of domestic labour. He maintains that the division of domestic labour has not been sufficiently politicised and that it remains a problem without a name; that women’s struggles to alter the division of domestic labour have remained a private battle causing

private despair, lacking in the kind of collective support and legal remedies available to women facing labour market inequalities. He suggests that men on the whole believe that their interests are best served by maintaining the gendered division of household labour and use considerable resources to maintain the status quo. Not unlike Connell (1994: 33), who argues that “domestic patriarchy is dependent upon support from its environment”, Dempsey (2000) maintains that wider cultural and structural forces facilitate men’s power; that women are not only battling resistant husbands but also powerful traditions and even contemporary norms.

As men’s narratives shape knowledge, women’s experiences are subjugated or become invisible. Therefore, I wholeheartedly agree with Gelles (1993) that feminist theory is useful because it is “dedicated to advocacy *for* women” (Bograd, 1990: 15). It is paramount that feminist writings validate the experiences of women and the way they have coped in abusive situations (Bograd, 1990; Laing, 2002); it is crucial that they monitor bias against women as well as being vigilant that battered women are not re-victimised.

The media, and all forms of mass communication, are indeed a powerful means of creating, configuring and circulating discursive practice (Dempsey, 2000; Medrado et al., 2001). The participants consistently identified them as sources of learnt behaviour and made reference to television, films, story books, advertising, comics, pornography, newspapers and pop music. This reinforces my belief that as Beynon (2002) states, men and women are not free agents but rather like actors with pre-scripted roles; that codes of manhood (or womanhood, for that matter) are derived rather than arbitrary (Gilmore, 1990) and that masculinity is a performance of a script that men learn to perform (Beynon, 2002).

It is concerning, on the one hand, that Beynon (2002: 64), speaking of cinematic masculinity, states that it comes in “visually crafted, carefully packaged, and frequently idealised forms”, and that these representations often have a more powerful impact than the ordinary people with whom boys and men have contact with in their everyday lives. On the other hand, there is room for optimism in that if one conceives the notions of masculinity and violence as discursive phenomena, then the possibilities for change are opened up (Pease 2000). Institutions such as broadcasting stations and the media can

help to promote violence, but on the other hand can just as well help to reduce it, and they need to recognise their own civic responsibilities (Sunstein, 1999).

Unfortunately, according to Kimmel (2000: 157), television, films and the media, habituate viewers to a culture that accepts and expects violence. They encourage the acceptance of current gender arrangements as though they were natural, right and preordained. He states that “in our real lives and on TV, gender difference and gender inequality are mutually reinforcing ideologies”. Likewise, Douglas (1993) says that hegemonic masculinity is embedded in media content.

O’Keefe (2000) points out that historically in boy’s adventure story books, males were typically brave, dominant, ambitious, resourceful and independent. They took risks, faced danger and hardship; they were fiercely competitive, heroic, goal oriented and instrumental. On the other hand, certainly before the 1950’s, girls were portrayed as submissive, passive, saccharine sweet and helpless. They all engaged in approved girlish activities, deferred to elders, observed proprieties and accepted conventional suitors. Even feisty tomboys gave up their dreams and independence. It is concerning that although O’Keefe (2000) is pleasantly surprised by some of the newer literature, where girls have become more whole and take more initiative, she cautions that old images and influences remain strong and may still be producing conflict and distress. A study by Sobieraj (1998: 26) confirms that “rigid gender dichotomies continue to be depicted in children’s toy advertisements”, and that whilst girls are shown to be over concerned with their physical appearance, boys, and only boys, are shown to be demonstrating aggressive behaviour.

Beynon (2002) is of the belief that for children and young people, comics are an important means of exploring masculinity through the characters, their narratives and the visual effects presented. He says that there is evidence that American comics are making a dramatic departure from normative models of masculinity. This might be a somewhat optimistic view because Johnson (2003) argues that whilst the superhero in tights and having superpowers is being replaced by regular heroes, today’s comic books have darker and more intricate plots than ever before. Brown (1999) also maintains that comic book masculinity has become almost exclusively hyper masculine. Whilst a black-owned and controlled comic book publishing company has attempted to introduce gentler masculine qualities to the dominant codes of masculinity, Brown (1999) reports

that the company's line of comic books continues to struggle for a sufficiently large slice of the comic book industry. It appears to him that heroism and power continue to be essential elements of masculinity and that black masculinity is still seen as inferior and "other".

Crossen (2004: 3) adds that whilst comics have to a large extent disappeared from newsstands, America's children have become addicted to a far more "sinister medium: television". The American Psychological Association (2005) says that research has drawn attention to three major effects on children of watching violence on television: they become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others; more fearful of the world around them; and are more likely to behave in aggressive and harmful ways towards others. The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (2004) add that children exposed to violence on television, have also been shown to think that violence is inevitable and that it is an acceptable means of solving conflict. Children develop a sense of mistrust, employ self protective behaviour, avoid taking action on behalf of victims when violence occurs and use violence themselves. This affirms the aforementioned contentions of Perry (2006a; 2000b)

It is indeed sinister if one considers that children's television shows contain about 20 violent acts each hour (American Psychological Association, 2005); that the typical American child will be exposed to 12,000 violent acts on television a year (University of Maine Cooperative Extension, 2004); that by the time they are 18, they will have seen 16,000 simulated murders and 200,000 acts of violence on television alone (The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, 2004). According to the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (2004), 53 percent of Australian children between the ages of 8 and 18 have television in their bedrooms and it is likely that Australian and New Zealand statistics emulate those of the United States. Making this even more disturbing is that, whilst the original work on this topic included violent television and films, more recent work is linking violent outcomes to video games as well (The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, 2004).

Clive, a participant in this research project, spoke about the enormous influence and depressing effect that the music of Eminem, a popular rap artist, had on a young person he knew. My curiosity about this in relation to the institutionalisation of violence, led to the discovery that Eminem, has a video clip that includes a scene of himself killing his

pregnant girlfriend and a song whose lyrics are a graphic description directed to his little daughter about the disposal of her body into a lake so that there will be “no more fightin wit dad, no more restraining order”. Sternberg (2001: 1) admits that “his raps are undoubtedly violent, homophobic and misogynist”. Yet, Eminem appears to have “edged his way into the mainstream” (Anonymous, 2002). His music has even been broadcast by the US Government to the Middle East as a propaganda campaign to enhance the American image to Middle Eastern youth (Sternberg, 2001) and he has been anointed as pop’s chosen one by some eminent artistes (Anonymous, 2002).

Beynon (2002) stipulates that masculinity in war films is strictly heterosexual; that men are constantly forced into displaying and proving their masculinity and are forced to suppress their feminine side. Kimmel (2000) also claims that the majority of films contain violence. Violent acts, he states, are typically justified and presented in humorous ways with little concern for their consequences. Moreover, they are usually perpetrated by unremorseful men whose activities go unpunished.

Pease (2002: 69) claims that most men are exposed to pornography “at some stage in their lives and that it seems to play an important role in constructing men’s sexuality and influencing their relationships with women”. In current times, easy access to the internet allows men to download pornography and engage in online sex in the privacy of their homes and offices. Mansson (2001) is concerned that most clients on the internet are indeed younger and in a better socio-economic situation than those that procure prostitution on the streets.

An anti-pornography position is not universally accepted within the feminist movement (Boyle, 2005). Whilst no feminist would actively support or identify themselves with it, and agree that it is misogynistic, one of the bones of contention lies with censorship (Boyle, 2005). Anti-censorship feminists argue that their anti-pornography colleagues exaggerate the amount of explicit violence and the agency of the women involved. Two of the most well known anti-pornography feminists are Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon. Dworkin (1999: 131) argues convincingly that pornography constitutes culturally sanctioned contempt for women and that it:

Functions to perpetuate male supremacy, and crimes of violence against women because it conditions, trains, educates, and inspires men to despise women, to use women, to hurt women. Pornography exists

because men despise women, and men despise women in part because pornography exists.

Whilst my conviction in discursive theories allows me to accept Boyle's (2005) statement that pornography does not cause rape in a straightforward way, I do not believe we can simply discount the view of anti-pornographic feminists who say that pornography *is* violence against women. At the very least, I argue this is one more illustration of accepted social discourse that is produced by, and sustains, a culture of violence. It seems necessary to debate more thoroughly the difference between State control and sexual repression and a stance of intolerance towards violence against women. I also think it is far too simplistic to suggest that women are willing agents when they, too, are subject to the discourses of their time and, more specifically, are subject to behind-the-scenes sexual harassment and gendered violence. There is no doubt that a considerable amount of evidence has been amassed by anti-pornography feminists showing the ways in which women and children are abused in its making.

In line with this argument, Renzetti and Curran (2003) discuss the issue of whether such cultural practises as foot binding, suttee (widow burning) and genital mutilation amounts to custom or crime. There are many ethnographical accounts of women being voluntary participants, if not orchestrating these events. Renzetti and Curran (2003) point out that it is necessary to consider women's status in these societies; that they are viewed as innately inferior to men and are deprived of valued resources. These cultural practises are the limited means by which some women can exercise power and achieve status. Renzetti and Curran (2003: 294) observe that:

It can hardly be surprising that women would cling to one of their only avenues of power and status, regardless of how damaging it may be. It may be argued, in fact, that their behaviour is no less rational than that of Western women who very frequently seek harmful surgical procedures, such as breast implantation, or follow unhealthy diets for the sake of "beauty".

Kandiyoti (1991: 104) argues, as I do, that:

Women strategise within a set of constraints that reveal and define the blueprint of what I will term the *patriarchal bargain* of any given

society, which may exhibit variations according to class, caste and ethnicity.

I believe these patriarchal bargains are determined and sustained by social discourse and social institutions and, as stated by Kandiyoti (1991), they determine gender ideology; women's gendered subjectivity; and the potential and specific forms of active or passive resistance open to them in the face of their oppression; that these patriarchal bargains, being discursive, are not timeless or immutable. By the same token, and where I might open myself to the wrath of some feminists, I contend that men are similarly subject to society's patriarchal bargains and that whilst in Western society these are androcentric and hegemonic, not all men benefit equally and there are some men who are marginalised and subordinated by class, sexuality, ethnicity and culture (Connell, 2002; Pease, 2000).

Further evidence of the media's failure to act definitively and take a stance against violence towards women is given by Howe (1997). Howe (1997) critiques a series on domestic violence, which was published in a leading Australian newspaper. The series was entitled "The War against Women" and was reported over a three-week period. Howe's criticism is not about how much was reported but rather the manner and attitude towards the information. She makes known her doubts about the ability of the media to translate information into digestible material for mainstream readers and is of the belief that reporters merely take up the public voice when the chasm between feminist knowledge of men's violence, and the public understanding of it, is so large. She comments that ultimately the effect of the series was the reinforcement of mythical views of domestic violence and a message that "domestic violence is a war that cannot be won" (Howe, 1997: 201).

Kimmel (2000: 263) comments accurately that the media, for example, does not protect women from a culture of violence that so often targets them, nor does it protect boys "from a culture of violence that exploits their worst tendencies by reinforcing and amplifying the atavistic values of the masculine mystique". This appears no less true of educational organisations, which might be stating the obvious as reference is being made to another social structure that organises relations of power and human agency within Western patriarchal society.

Kimmel (2000) argues that school is an example of institutionalised power and control; that even if it aims to be non-sexist, patriarchal notions of power, hierarchy and authority form the basis of its structure. Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2000: 59) agree that whilst schools do not exist on their own as “locations for the creation and contestation of masculinities”, they are nevertheless “masculinity-making devices”. The Department of Education in Tasmania, Australia (2002: 8) openly admits that

Regimes of truth are set up within the normative practices that operate within schools to produce particular versions of femininity and masculinity which clearly prescribe specific patterns of learning.

Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, it appears that gender relations amongst the students are hegemonic; that aggressive heterosexual masculinity reigns supreme (Connell, 1994), a situation that Connell (1994) claims still reflects the balance of sexual politics in Australia.

Mills (2001) is fully in agreement with Connell. He states that in Australian society, like most others, violence has been masculinised. He firmly believes that “schools in both their formal and informal organisation serve as powerful gendering and violencing agents” (Mills, 2001: 66); that “schooling cannot be separated from sexualised violence that permeates societal relationships” (Mills, 2001: 77).

In Australia, a report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training 1994, claimed that, for many boys, being tough was the way they believed they had to be, to be male (Mills, 2001); that aggressive play by boys towards girls was frequently described as typical and was very often encouraged. The Committee was also told that one of the largest unrecognised features of violence in schools is gender harassment; that girls in co-educational classrooms and playgrounds suffer sexual harassment from boys and sometimes even teachers. Mills (2001: 3) concludes that, at the present, the state of play at school is such that women and girls are often placed in threatening and dangerous situations and that situation can be worse for female Aboriginal students, those with disabilities and gay, lesbian and bisexual students.

It is true that boys also experience bullying and violence from their peers. However, Mills (2001) draws attention to the results of a study by Collins, Batten, Ainley and



Getty (1996). They believe that violence by males against males, which is often interpreted as boys being boys or as bullying, is gender based. Mills (2001: 4) urges that:

Such violence is often a form of boundary policing, usually with a homophobic edge, which serves to both normalise particular constructions of masculinity while also determining where a boy is positioned within a hierarchical arrangement of masculinities.

Mac an Ghail (2000) caution against colluding with a backlash against feminism by suggesting that boys are the real victims. Rather, they encourage a critical examination of heterosexual masculinities so that gendered schooling regimes are not assumed to be natural and inevitable.

Gender regimes, the social organisation of masculinity and the masculinisation of violence are not confined to schools alone. For example, college fraternities in the United States of America also provide a socio-cultural context where women often experience coercion and aggressive behaviours, usually for sexual favours. Mechanisms to control the violence are minimal or even absent (Lockhart, 2001; Sanday, 1996b).

The literature identifying the existence of a gender regime within religious institutions, and the abusive consequences thereof for women was particularly illuminating in the light of the views of one particularly devout Christian participant, Raymond, who declared that:

The world's going to stay distorted until it gets back into focus with what God says is the way to do business, and He says there is an order of things. And He says the man is to be the head of the household.

Yalom (2001: 14) states that in both Christianity and Judaism it was simply accepted that females were inferior to males and needed their continued guidance and direction. She cites St. Paul who decreed: "Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5: 22); and "women should keep silence ... If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home" (I Corinthians 14: 34 – 35). She comments

that advocates of patriarchy would quote the words of Saint Paul for the next two thousand years.

Young (1993) is of the belief that in the Catholic Church, the institutionalisation of male domination and violence is accomplished through promoting stories of the virgin martyrs. She claims that women are regarded as merely sexual beings, and portrayed either as seducers or Madonnas. She continues that the spiritual importance placed upon virginity makes Roman Catholic women particularly vulnerable following rape or incest. With the loss of virginity in a rape situation, a woman's spiritual life is also tarnished and diminished. She relates the horrifying story of a modern saint, Maria Goretti, a 12 year old girl who was stabbed to death by her assailant for resisting him, to illustrate how Catholic women's lives are regulated by the church, how patriarchal biases are reiterated and how violence against women is condoned. Young (1993) maintains that if Maria had been raped, rather than stabbed to death, she would not have been glorified today. Not only did Maria exemplify "the glorification of chastity and the duty of women to uphold family purity, but, claims Young, she had an additional use – to forgive men their sins. "Maria Goretti forgave her attacker before she died" (Young, 1993: 111).

Smith (1996: 78) speaks of the Church's "pathological loathing of women". She tells that a curate, answering the question of why women cannot be Church of England priests, suggested that a pot of anchovy paste might as well be ordained as a woman. She insists that he accurately reduced centuries of hostility against women into one statement. He described the sexual disgust, fear of female sexuality and "desire for sexual apartheid" that is at the core of church practices. Smith (1996: 67) is also totally against using the Virgin Mary as a defence against charges of women hating by the church. Rather than celebrating the power of women, she says that Mary "will be cherished, admired and even ... worshipped as long as she stays in line. Her very place in history is contingent on her docility". She states that the idea of the virgin birth and Mary's continued virginity, which is adhered to by both Catholicism and the Church of England, indicates the sexual disgust and loathing felt about women. Mary, argues Smith (1996), is a pretty hopeless role model for women. No woman can become another Mary; rather every woman is like Eve, "not only the repository of lust but its instigator in men" (Smith, 1996: 80).

Dworkin (2000) contends that in all three of the great religions of monotheism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, women are thought of as inferior, stinky, dirty and polluted. Even being born of women, she says, has offensive connotations. The child needs to be taken from the mother and washed clean, “becoming reborn as a figure of a divine, authoritarian father”; in Christianity through baptism, in Judaism through circumcision and in Islam with resurrection after death when immortality, the antithesis of the mortality borne of being his mother’s child, is achieved (Dworkin, 2000: 186-187).

Faizi (2001) is of the belief that the Islamic prophet, Mohammed, abhorred hitting women. He apparently said “never hit the handmaids of Allah” (Faizi, 2001: 211) and in his last sermon, preached that men ought to be kind to their women; that wives were to be well treated as their husband’s partners; and that “the strong man is not the one who can use the force of physical strength, but the one who controls his anger” (Faizi, 2001: 211). Writing about domestic violence in a Muslim community in the United States, she states that Muslim men manipulate verses of the Koran and Sunnah, on which Islamic law is based, to keep their wives subservient and obedient. The most misinterpreted verse, she claims, is Sura, Chapter 4, Verse 3. “As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them” (Faizi, 2001: 211). She opines that some believe that “beat” is not an accurate translation and that men are using Islam to justify their behaviour. Violence, she argues, is not Islamically ordained but abusive men are manipulating women’s spirituality and faith to reinforce their own power and control.

Cook and Bessant (1997: 9-10) believe that a less overt but equally insidious and misogynistic form of violence was perpetuated by religious organizations in the name of virtue. By this they refer to the many women, who were forced, in the name of morality and being good Christians, to relinquish their children if they were conceived out of wedlock. They stress that the pain and damage is as great as that of physical abuse.

The current controversy over women’s ordination in the Church bears witness to the rigidity of Christian institutions and the continued denial of equal rights to women. This is particularly so within the more conservative denominations, such as Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and some Protestant denominations like the Church of

the Latter Day Saints and some of the Baptist churches. Schlumpf (2005) is adamant that the issue of ordination is more than just academic.

The literature citing court licensed abuse was particularly interesting because of the views expressed by the men about their legal rights. Whilst one man, David, suggested that as his mother was best friends with the High Judge of the Family Law Court, “one phone call could see the situation corrected; one phone call could make sure this is now kosher”, most of the other men who commented in this regard held similar views to Peter who said:

As far as the Family Law Court is concerned ... there’s a lot of disadvantages ... when it comes to the actual separation of whatever’s been built up, the wife walks away with the lot.

However, there is an abundance of material suggesting the continued androcentric nature of the Criminal Justice System; its seeming reluctance to enforce and accept domestic violence as a criminal activity; its apparent insensitivity to the gendered nature of power and control; its lasting uncertainty around the public-private debate; and its persistence in demanding that victims take responsibility and action for the abuse they have suffered. My citations are again limited, but from my work experience and my involvement in domestic violence programs, the subject matter is both relevant and significant.

Ferraro (1993: 167), an Associate Professor of Justice Studies at Arizona State University, states that feminist activists agree that there has been a beneficial shift for women in the definition of battering; that rather than being described as a domestic problem, it is now defined as a criminal activity. However, she believes that the implementation of a “get tough” approach has been fraught with difficulties and contradictions.

She maintains that whilst feminists define domestic violence within the context of patriarchy, and focus on male domination within social institutions, criminal justice personnel continue to understand wife bashing in gender-neutral terms and see it as a product of dysfunctional family interactions. Even though policies and laws have been put into place to reduce discretionary action amongst the police, and with the intent of making arrest mandatory, action remains dependant upon the attitude of the officers

involved. Very often, maintains Ferraro (1993), police hold stereotypes of battered women that work contrarily to these policies.

As an example, Ferraro (1993) speaks of women who commonly do not follow through with the prosecution of their abuser. Criminal justice personnel fail to recognise that there are many reasons why women drop charges; for instance, they appear not to understand that women are often dependent upon men economically and that especially when children are involved, they might fear the loss of financial security. Not only does their partner's incarceration mean that he might lose his current job, but that future job opportunities might also be endangered. Furthermore, there is often a break between the violent incident and the court appearance when the man is allowed to go home on bail. This gives male offenders the opportunity to manipulate or intimidate women into dropping charges. Furthermore, she criticises the criminal justice system for concentrating on specific incidents rather than paying attention to the complex social and economic conditions of women. She urges that battering should not only be seen as a crime but as "a manifestation of structured gender inequality" (Ferraro, 1993: 175). Simply arresting and gaoling perpetrators of domestic violence has no positive effect upon women's economic status, nor does it improve and expand health options, reproductive options, child care and wage labour. Ferraro (1993: 175) goes on to say that the prospect of victim cooperation should not be a consideration when making an arrest; that it is an "andocentric, positivistic worldview" that promotes the idea that women are:

Responsible for clearly and consistently demonstrating to police, attorneys and judges that they have been severely injured, have not fought back with greater violence than they received, and do want their abusers arrested and prosecuted.

Scutt (1991; 1993), an Australian barrister, concurs. She insists the onus ought to be on the police rather than the battered victim when it comes to prosecution. She also believes that contemporary legislation does not advance the cause of battered women, nor does it eliminate gender imbalances. A woman, she points out, whether victim or accused, is incredible in the face of the law. If a woman, for instance, does not complain promptly about rape, there is an assumption at law that she has not been raped at all; that even complaining promptly is still no guarantee that she will be believed anyway (Scutt, 1993). She contends that new laws consign criminal violence against

women to a civil, or at the most quasi-criminal, category; that violence against women continues to be perceived as a truly domestic problem, different and less serious than violence by men against men, which is defined as criminal activity. She also criticises intervention order provisions for concealing the criminality of domestic violence. For example, she points out that a man may be arrested for breaching court orders rather than for abusing his wife. She claims that numerous examples are available of the difficulties women experience in getting protection from intervention orders: disbelief, irritation and ambivalence on the part of clerks of the court; delays in the application for interim orders being heard; police not taking out intervention orders on behalf of women; and dismissive magistrates, to name a few (Scutt, 1993). In addition, she believes that many courts continue to act on the criminal standard, granting court orders when circumstances can be established without doubt. In her mind, it would be far more beneficial to grant orders on the grounds of probability. As it stands, to her way of thinking, women's rights at civil law are ignored and the status of the court, a male institution, is elevated.

Patricia Easteal (2001), an adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Canberra, says that the Australian legal system is dominocentric in the sense that it is dominated by men, but she adds that it also fails to both account for and recognise diversity. It is an ethnocentric, racist, heterosexist, able-ist and gendered legal system. She particularly stresses the difficulties that Aboriginal women, disabled women who are victims of forced sterilisation, migrant women and those that are from non-English speaking backgrounds, as well as gay women who are mothers or victims of violence, have in accessing, using and gaining protection from such a system. She concludes that the legislative changes of the last two decades are only as effective as they are allowed to be by those that apply them.

A far more recent comment on Aboriginal women and the criminal justice system has been made by Kimm (2004: 87) in her book "A Fatal Conjunction: Two Laws Two Cultures". A solicitor and PhD student in the faculty of law at Monash University, Kimm explores the "inimical environment" that Aboriginal women find themselves in because of the interaction of the laws of two patriarchal societies. She believes that the safety of Aboriginal women is marred because current laws and policies place more emphasis on the exercise of Indigenous rights than on their rights as women. She points out that even though strong cultural forces and loyalties prevent and dissuade

Aboriginal women from seeking external protection, their desperate situation often makes this necessary. However, this help is frequently not forthcoming because of disparity in black and white expectations of normative behaviour for women in domestic violence situations. This is particularly in respect to Aboriginal women's perceived responsibility to their spouses, and their ongoing attempts at reconciling their relationships. As a result, police may be cynical and indifferent when called to attend reoccurring domestic violence incidents. Kimm (2004) states that some Aboriginal women have been humiliated, as well as racially and sexually devalued, by police and even had their rights to protection from violence ignored; that in addition, once Aboriginal women enter the actual processes of law, it has been found that they are more disadvantaged than any other group in Australia. Apart from cultural and language barriers, it seems that even the Aboriginal Legal Services, formed in the 1970's to meet the need for Aboriginal legal representation, champions Aboriginal men's rights leaving Aboriginal women with limited legal protection.

Taylor (2004: 19) has a strong feminist voice. She argues that:

The public discourse and rhetoric of the courts is that of an objective and neutral forum whose purpose is to seek and provide justice. However, ... the law may be understood as a legal cartel deliberately designed to promote a male elite class system of power and dominance.

She states (Taylor, 2004: 290), too, that the legal system is underpinned by the notion that women and girl children possess a dangerous sexuality which predisposes them to lie about the sexual crimes committed upon them; that the dialogue of the courts is one of disbelief; that ritual humiliation of women and children is rife. It seems most concerning when one considers women's safety that Ms Taylor (2004) suggests that truth is not honoured in law; that law does not seek to know truth intimately and legal outrage is preferred over open investigation.

Sports organizations and the military are two other areas where, according to Kurz (1993), violence is culturally approved. The men I spoke to were very descriptive about the violence prevalent in sport. Clearly, according to Lenskyj (2003) and McGinnis, Chun and McQuillan (2003), sport is dominated by a gendered regime. Lenskyj (2003:

145) speaks of the heterosexist bias, discrimination, sexual harassment and homophobia found in sport arguing that:

In women's sport circles, while much has changed, much has stayed the same. As was the case in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, issues of appearance and propriety, defined according to white, middle-class heterosexual values, are the key to public and media approval of sportswomen.

McGinnis et al. (2003) conclude that whilst gender significations are less limiting in some ways than they were in the past, in terms of sport and leisure activities, gender still matters; dichotomies still persist; heterosexuality continues to be reinforced and masculinity valued over femininity. Women players, for instance, are portrayed as wives and mothers.

Karner (1998) links violence and the military to male identity. She points out that war has been regarded as what the "good man" did for the benefit of society; that society was made stronger by righteous, and just, wars; and that these sentiments were reflected in the aspirations of the Vietnam veterans she spoke with for her study. Golden (1992) agrees that war continues to be glorified and seen as just, and cause for celebration, when it ought to be seen as the failure of human possibility.

Whilst it seems that women have been admitted to this male enclave, their membership is at times fraught with difficulties. For example, Cohn (2000: 133) in her article, *"How Can She Claim Equal Rights When She Doesn't Have to Do as Many Push-ups as I Do?": The Framing of Men's Opposition to Women's Equality in the Military*, shows that "the discursive context in which male officers utter the PT protest reveals strong feelings of loss and anger about changes in the way the organisation is gendered".

Walker, Gleaves and Peart (2003) speak of the lack of access, training, harassment and discrimination experienced by women in the United Kingdom Merchant Navy. They say, for example, that women are being under recruited; that they are not allowed to be mediocre in the way that the men are; that they feel they are being tested and constantly placed under scrutiny for having the audacity to think they could be successful; that



women are more accepted in gender neutral positions, but accused of acting out of character when they exhibit more male gendered identities.

Cynthia Cockburn (2000), in a lecture at the International Feminist University, Hanover, stated that in terms of militarisation, gender differences remain; that, for example, men continue to make up the majority of militarised personnel; whilst women account for the majority of refugees. She said that men and women die different deaths and are tortured and abused in different ways because of physical differences, but also because different meanings are ascribed culturally to male and female bodies. She adds that women's efforts for peace are not always recognised.

Summers (1999; 2003b) alludes to a "khaki ceiling for military's women" and claims that banning them from combat positions is merely an attempt to reduce their pay packets. In a newspaper article in 2003, she also asks the question why men are not called bad fathers for going to war but women, and mainly mothers, cop the flak.

The medical system is another institution that has been identified as structurally and institutionally supportive of violence (Lockhardt, 2001). Kurz (1993: 264) identifies research that has shown that because of patriarchal ideologies, medical practitioners often fail to recognise wife battering and label women as having psychological problems. The medical system itself "reinforces the patriarchal structure of the family". Medical staff also identify cases of battering as social cases rather than medical ones and feel they make extra and unnecessary work for the emergency services. In New South Wales, Australia, The Domestic Violence Policy Review Committee, which was convened in 1999, recommended that screening for domestic violence become routine in particular areas of the health service where women were shown by research to be more at risk. The areas that were pinpointed were emergency departments, antenatal services and alcohol and mental health services (ADFVC, 2001). Unfortunately, there is still much to be done before it can be said that policy recommendations and standard practice across health services, actually correspond (ADFVC, 2001:2).

Finally, Connell (1994) is of the opinion that is easy to find reasons to address the state as a gender regime. State personnel, he says, is divided on the grounds of gender; state elites are the preserve of men; diplomatic, colonial and military policies are based upon ideologies of masculinity that place a premium on toughness and force. The state is

engaged on ideological issues on sex and gender that range from birth control to the sexual division of labour. He argues that “the state both institutionalises hegemonic masculinity and expends great energy in controlling it” (Connell, 1994: 35). He makes the point too, that the state is not inherently patriarchal; rather that it has been historically created and its gendered structures maintained by a selective bureaucracy. Furthermore, he says, the street is not often thought of as an institution but it has the “same structures of gender relations as the family and state; a division of labour, a structure of power and a structure of cathexis” (Connell, 1994: 37).

I conclude this section with a statement by Douglas (1993: 9) who states categorically that:

If we are seriously committed to ending the organised and unorganised violence and injustice that is endemic in our society at individual, collective, and institutional levels, then the structures and forces which maintain and reproduce our masculine dominated system must be contested and transformed ... Men must be willing to support and align themselves with women in a joint project aimed at dismantling the masculine equation, which exists not at the level of the individual, but in the social manifestation of patriarchal relations of power.

These institutionalised structures, and the discourses that produce and sustain them, will be reflected in the narratives of the men. The above review and the transcripts to come make mockery of the view of those family violence researchers who promote a gender neutral view of power in relationships and claim that violence is used by the most powerful member in the family, male or female, to legitimise their dominant position (Kurz, 1993). Rather, they support the idea of a social order being legitimated and perpetuated by social discourse; a gendered regime that constitutes, and is constituted, by its social institutions.

### ***The Sociological Perspective***

The main thrust of all sociological perspectives is that social structures and social institutions affect people and their behaviour. Gelles (1993) uses four primarily sociological theories to illustrate the application of this perspective; general systems

theory, resource theory, exchange/social control theory and the subculture of violence theory.

General systems theory subscribes to the notion that domestic violence is a product of systems rather than the result of individual pathology. Not unlike feminist theories, sociological approaches argue that the family system is subject to the dynamics and conditions of the larger society; that structural arrangements within a family produce stress and conflict. However, Gelles (1993) posits that a sociological approach offers a wider explanatory framework than feminist theories and does not exclude psychological or social psychological concepts. I contend that the explanations of domestic violence by Gelles (1993) and other sociological researchers, are largely gender neutral when, in fact, domestic violence is profoundly shaped by gender and power at both the interpersonal and social levels (Yllo, 1993). Their use of the term, family violence, rather than domestic violence or wife abuse to describe men's violence is indicative of this. I believe, akin to Yllo (1993: 48), that:

Although a feminist lens may not be sufficient for seeing the full picture of domestic violence, it is a necessary lens without which any other analytic perspective is flawed.

Anderson and Schlossberg (1999) claim, for example, that the majority of perpetrators are not violent against others outside the family; that therefore it would seem that men are able to control their violence and that the "locus of violence is in the relational context, rather than within the individual" (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999: 139). This highlights, rather than explains, the fact that men so often act violently towards a specific target, women, and within a specific context, their home (Schechter, 1982). In patriarchal society, it is also simplistic, and dangerous to declare, as Anderson and Schlossberg (1999) do, that the actions of both partners need to be taken into account *because both are active individuals capable of changing their own behaviour*. Any suggestion of a universal availability of freedom, power and happiness simply ignores the fact of oppression (McLellan, 1995). It is not a foregone conclusion, rather often the reverse, that women in Western, and other patriarchal societies, have equal power to men in the home. Unless there are alterations to institutionally built-in socio-economic forms of oppression in society, attempts for individual power for women will result in more blaming of the victim (McLellan, 1995: 93). Almeida and Durkin (1999) point out that such accepted cultural behaviours as courtship rituals and rites such as dowries,

arranged marriages and the demand for male children reinforce the sanctioned power of men in relationships. Men learn from early on the traditional norms of masculinity as women do about femininity. Socially defined norms of behaviour therefore result in women and men entering relationships with different standards to measure the quality of their relationship.

I do not argue against the importance of systems, the principle of recursiveness or circularity in family systems theory (Jones, 1993) and the notion that individuals are seen to both respond to and elicit feedback in relation to those with whom they are interacting; that no person in a family acts in isolation but rather in relation to one another (Cecchin, 2001). My clinical practice is also very much influenced by the notion that behaviour has a positive function; that problems are often an attempted solution to other problems or an endeavour to keep the system in balance in the face of change (MacKinnon & James, 1987). However, like James (2001), I believe it incorrect to see the responsibility for men's violence as solely situated in the couple relationship; as purely being a man's response to his wife's actions, without considering gender and its broader social contexts.

It is true that not all family violence researchers refute feminist opinion. As already stated in the preface, Post Milan systemic theory is a case in point. James (2001: 42) acknowledges that things have changed and that there has been "a huge shift of thinking in the field and a lot of space is now available for all sorts of discussions about oppression, justice, abuse and diversity". Notwithstanding, it is concerning that her conclusion is that "Even today in the mainstream journals there is not a lot of attention paid to these issues".

Gelles (1993) also speaks generically of family violence and excludes an analysis of patriarchal constraints on power and gender in the family when he contends that a number of factors cause the family to be a violence prone social institution. He states, for instance, that the family is a private organisation, shielded from involvement of the wider society with membership that is involuntary and cannot be terminated; that whilst its members assume a right to influence family attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, roles are usually ascribed through age and sex differences rather than competence or interest. He goes on to say that the family is constantly undergoing changes and transitions and is prone to stress. Its members have an intimate and extensive knowledge of each other;

spend more time together than they do interacting with others; and interaction takes place over a far wider range of activities, and with more intensity, than other relationships.

By identifying age and sex differences together in the ascription of roles in a family, Gelles (1993) normalises and approves what, in reality, conforms to gendered discursive practice; the still prevalent hegemonic hierarchy of power within families. From what he says, intense conflict within a family appears almost inevitable; an act of violence not totally incomprehensible. Bentovim (1995: 1) states that the theoretical position taken by Gelles and his colleague Murray Strauss is not to ask if the family is a violence prone institution, “but how violent, and what are the factors that make for more, rather than less, violent interactions”. No attention is given to the fact that Eskimos, for example, are able to live for months on end during the winter period confined to small igloos without any eruptions of aggressive behaviour (Briggs, 1970; 1978). Briggs (1978) explains that the Utku, a small tribe of Eskimos living in the Canadian Northwest Territories have strict rules around permissible forms of expressing hostility (Briggs, 1970; 1978). People who scold others are called “hujuujaqnaqtuq”, which means a feeling one has when alone and wishing for other people (Briggs, 1970: 203). This observation supports a connection between discourse and the occurrence of domestic violence.

Bentovim (1995) is not exempt from censure. I support his beliefs that the individual, the family and society are distinct but dependant upon each other; that the family is embedded in a social context and that culture is a critical constraint. However, it is his manner of describing a trauma-organised system that I take umbrage with. He asserts that when there is abuse or victimisation in the family, a trauma-organised system is created and includes not only the individual and the family, but also any professional and community support as well. Trauma is perpetuated and responded to and becomes the organising reality of the family; the dominant story so to speak. Gender is not entirely ignored. He does address the difference between men’s and women’s violence and in fact, quotes Bograd (1990) who said that it is necessary to describe violence simultaneously as a human and gender issue. However, in calling families trauma-organised systems, it seems all its members are subscribed some responsibility for the violence. Bentovim (1995; 109) says that there “has to be work with each individual involved in the trauma-organised system, as well as the system as a whole”. I do not

dispute the value of some aspects of this approach but believe that Bentovim (1995) dilutes the responsibility of the abuser and minimises women's experiences of men's violence. In much the same way, I think caution needs to be taken when suggesting a connection between *self-fulfilling prophecies* and *family* violence, as well as a "trickle down" model (Bentovim, 1995: 9). The occurrence of domestic violence must not be excused by theories of inter-generational transmission of violence (Boyd, 2000).

Studies have indicated that men who experienced violence in their family of origin, both in witnessing marital violence and being abused as a child, are more likely to be abusive in their own adult relationships (Barnes, 2001; Bentovim, 1995; Heise, 1998; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997; Markowitz, 2001; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001). Social learning theorists propose that a child in a violent home learns to be violent by witnessing and experiencing violence whilst not experiencing other more constructive methods of resolving conflict (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997; Jenkins, 1990). Perry's (2006a; 2006b) neurobiological explanation has already been described and I do not believe that they have to be seen as disparate viewpoints. However, social learning can only claim to be social if recognition is given to the fact that the family is only one of the places where boys learn about masculinity and relationships (Boyd, 2000). Boyd (2000: 4) believes that there are many invitations in our culture for young men to participate in violence and that for "violence to be reduced, significant structural, cultural, political and economic changes need to be made". I argue that this stops a little short of the mark; that there is a need, in coming to grips with domestic violence, to consider the exercise of social power in/through discourse; and to see discourse as social practice. It seems that the constitution and government of individuals through discourse and social institutions cannot be overlooked (Talbot, 2003).

Resource theories assume that all social systems, including the family, function to some degree on force or, at least, the threat of force. The person, who has access to the most resources, whether these are social, personal or financial, will hold the most power. The more resources the person holds, the less power they will need to use overtly. Therefore, a husband who wants to be the dominant party in the family but who has no resources such as income, prestige or interpersonal skills, might use violence to maintain his position of dominance (Gelles, 1993: 37).

Anderson (1997), like Flood (1999), criticises past resource theory studies. She says they were limited by reliance on information from one partner only. With more recent work, she points out that men are more likely to underreport violence than their female partners. More striking is her (1997: 657) point that:

Resource theory would suggest that women should be more violent than men within the home because they typically have fewer socioeconomic resources from which to achieve power, relative to male partners.

It seems that resource theory does not stand upon firm ground and there are many contradictions. In India, for instance, the well being of women varies dramatically by region, class or caste (Miller, 1999). Here it can be said that upper-class/caste females usually have a lower status to males than do women of lower status/class. This is particularly true of upper class females in the North. The more propertied upper class very often live in extended families, which might be the reason, particularly in patrilineal situations, that greater control is levied upon the wife, especially when she is young and childless (Miller, 1999; McClusky, 2001). Miller (1999: 208-209) reports that “bride burnings” in both the north and south of India, generally involve middle and upper class households. A young bride may be constantly pressured to bring in more money from her family of origin. If she refuses, she may be murdered by being doused with kerosene and then set alight. Her husband is then free to marry again and in the position by so doing, to receive a new dowry and gifts. Divorce is also an option that is limited mainly to lower class women or to those that live in elite, Westernised, urban families. Neither divorce nor getting the husband to stop beating her is possible for northern upper class women (Miller, 1999: 210). Similarly, in Papua New Guinea, wife beating is a more serious problem for educated, employed and urbanised women (Counts, 1999). These examples do give credence to discursive theory. As Talbot (2003: 154) states:

Discourses are historically constituted bodies of knowledge and practice that *shape* people, giving positions of power to some but not to others.

These bodies of knowledge and practice only exist in social interactions in specific situations (Talbot, 2003) and locations. Whilst, I contend that patriarchal discourse is the predominant discourse (and font of domestic violence) almost universally today, I do not dispute the significance of the intersection of cultural discourses, such as class

and ethnicity, in reconciling what is accepted as truth; what it is possible to say or not say; and by extension what it is possible to do or not do (Talbot, 2003).

The Exchange/Social Control theory proposes that violent and abusive behaviour will be used when the rewards are higher than the costs; that cultural approval of both expressive and instrumental violence raises its rewards (Gelles, 1993). This is mirrored in statements by Kimmel (2000) and Hare-Mustin (1991). Kimmel (2000: 253) asserts that “Violence has long been understood as the best way to ensure that others publicly recognise one’s manhood”; that “the spectre of the ‘sissy’... is responsible for a significant amount of masculine violence”. Furthermore, Hare-Mustin (1991) believes that failure to conform has dire consequences; that men are penalised more negatively than woman for violating prescribed role requirements.

These statements might have some bearing on the conflicting opinions of researchers in regard to men’s attitudes and domestic violence. Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (1997) report that the more recently gathered data continues to develop a relationship between men’s attitudes to marital violence and their use of physical aggression; that the approval of wife assault more than doubled the odds of domestic violence. Eisikovits, Edleson, Guttman and Sela-Amit (1991: 75) argue that “Abusive men held significantly less positive attitudes towards woman battering than did the matched, non-violent men”, and Simon, Anderson, Thompson, Crosby, Shelley and Sacks (2001) make the point that a substantial percentage of adults in the United States accept some form of violent behaviour in intimate relationships, particularly when used as a retaliatory measure. Locke and Richman (1999), Sakalh (2001) and Simon et al. (2001), all conclude that male attitudes to wife beating are more favourable than those held by women.

Conversely, Kane, Staiger, and Ricciardelli (2000) state that whilst men who used violence towards their partners were more aggressive and dependent than two comparison groups (football players and community service volunteers), all three groups generally opposed the use of men’s violence toward female partners. Likewise, Peterson del Mar (1996) says that from his experience men regret their violent actions, and even view them as unmanly and unacceptable.

Similarly, whilst Berkel, Vandiver and Bahner (2004) and Copenhaver et al. (2000) emphasise gender role attitudes as overall predictors of domestic violence, Holtzworth-



Munroe et al. (1997) say that reviewers of the literature concur that sex role expectations and attitudes towards women are not consistently related to marital aggression. Nor is it possible, they continue, to differentiate between violent and non-violent men in terms of relationship standards and assumptions. There does however, appear to be some agreement that violent men are more likely to blame their wives, or external factors, for their own use of violence (Hearn, 1998; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997; Paymar, 2000; Stamp & Sabourin, 1995).

My argument is that men are not innately predisposed to having bad attitudes towards women. Rather, that “discourses make positions available for individuals” (Pease, 2000: 34) and that masculine subjectivity is a discursive struggle; a process involving constant negotiation of investment and returns in a multiplicity of cultural discourses under the umbrella of a now almost universally predominant patriarchal discourse.

Gelles (1993: 38) argues that the subculture of violence theory is perhaps the most fully developed, and widely applied, socio-cultural explanation of violence. It claims that social values and norms influence, and provide direction for acts of violence and explains why some sectors or subcultures in societies appear more at risk, especially when they have cultural rules that both justify and necessitate violence.

Delamont (2001) states that by belonging to a class group we are offered a sense of identity, a sense of who we are and where we belong. To my way of thinking, a class group forms a subculture with its own cultural rules or discourses. Beynon (2002) comments that middle class men have more aspirations and hold more institutional power than men of lower standing; that working class men experience little formal power in the workplace and so will often adopt a macho identity to cover up the powerlessness they feel. He (2002) believes that young working class males will be involved in fighting, sport, drinking, machismo and displays of sexual prowess; that as they age, and are no longer able to drink or command as much physical dominance over younger men, they will continue to exert their domination at home.

Ingalls (1998) also feels that working class males inherit an injured sense of dignity and, as a result, are emotionally depressed and isolated. He states that psychological distress is difficult for most men, but even more so for working-class men. He thinks that they, more than other men, associate masculinity with the capacity to endure psychological

discomfort and physical pain. Similar to Beynon (2002), and Douglas (1993) as well, he believes they will compensate for their experience of social impotence and powerlessness by engaging in harmful behaviours such as crime, racism, gay bashing, substance abuse, street and domestic violence.

I think what is missing from the argument of Gelles (1993), as well as other sociological contributions like those above, is an acceptance of the notion that social discourses define what society accepts and makes function as true; that there is an interrelationship between cultural discourses, behaviour and social relationships. Whilst sociological frameworks accept that social structures and social institutions affect people and their behaviour, how this is so is seldom clearly established. I argue for the application of discourse analysis in this respect.

I was particularly influenced by the writings of Coates (1993; 2000); Graddol and Swann (1998); Murphy (2001) and Talbot (1998). They discussed the connections between language and gender using critical discourse analysis and social constructionist approaches. Ferber (2000) studied the construction of masculinity in mythopoetic and white supremacist discourses. Beynon (2002), Hearn (1998) and Pease (2000) are examples of those who investigated discursive theory in relation to men and violence. Hirschmann (1996), Kantola (2004) and Nichols and Feltey (2003) write about the impact of dominant discourses on women's experiences of domestic violence. Stamp and Sabourin (1995) evaluated the narratives of 15 abusive males, whilst Eisikovits and Buchbinder (1997: 482) analysed "battering men's intrapersonal and interpersonal worlds" by studying the metaphors they used. They found that these were not simply figures of speech, rather "powerful indicators of the way reality is perceived and carried out in men's everyday behaviours" (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1997: 495). Unfortunately, their conclusions were solely confined to the significance this has for clinical practice and predictors of change on an individual level. This is true, too, for Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh and Lewis (2000).

Two examples of papers which explicitly link social discourse and men's violent behaviour are those of Sanday (1996) and Hall (2000). Sanday (1996a: 157) describes the differences between rape-free and rape-prone societies as the result of cultural selection:

That slow accumulation of a set of fundamental postulates mediated through discourse, which constitutes sexual ethos, identities and relationships ... In American society, the attribution of male sexual aggression to human biology and evolutionary progress is an epistemological not a biographical truth.

Hall (2000), in her ethnographical study on the entrenchment of violence in the lives of a group of poor, white youths in the urban Northeast of America, connects the construction of a valued sense of self with both symbolic and material social practices. She argues that violence is thoroughly embedded within the lives of what she has called, the “Canal Town” boys. She contends that the institutions around which their lives are organised are implicated in the normalisation of their abusive behaviours because their violent attitudes and tendencies are not challenged. She observed that the gym floor at the community centre became a space for “the production of a potent form of maleness and whiteness” (Hall, 2000: 6); a place where boys “revealed their potential as present and future abusers” (Hall, 2000: 6). It was clear that the girls were seen to be “contaminating male space” (Hall, 2000: 6) and the violence directed towards them went on under the watchful eyes of adults at the community centre. The boys did not speak of domestic violence as a prominent or defining feature of their community, yet they consistently experienced men hitting women. They were not critical of the violence, saw it as normative and, in fact, sided with violent men and scorned females. They affirmed male supremacy and saw white females as objects of male control. Hall (2000: 6-7) concludes that:

In this sense, by not challenging violent ideology and behaviour among youth, the institutions that structure the lives of white Canal Town boys are complicit in the normalisation of abusive behaviour.

Social practices, she insists are being discursively produced in relation to the social structures that organise relations of power.

## ***Multivariate Approaches***

It seems appropriate to end the summary of perspectives on the causality of domestic violence with those that are multivariate and open to multi-disciplinary theories. For

the previous sections, and those that are still to come, bear witness to the fact that I support an approach that moves away from single factor explanations of domestic violence (Goldner, 1990; Harway & O'Neil, 1993; Heise, 1998; Malik & Lindahl, 1998). This section, therefore, allows me to clarify my theoretical standpoint more thoroughly.

Harway and O'Neil (1993) suggest that the theoretical literature around men's violence to women is fragmented and confusing; that theoretical analyses are limited by the specific approach taken by a particular discipline, and that these single-factor theories limit their hypotheses to single factor causes rather than multiple factors spread across the disciplines. As early as 1990, Goldner et al. (1990) had realised that in order to adequately handle the human and therapeutic dilemmas that their clients presented to them, there was a need to conceptualise domestic violence using multiple lenses; psychodynamic, social learning, socio-political and systemic. They explained that the internal representation of self and others, often constitutes the underlying organisation of a couple's fierce attachment and therefore a psychoanalytic perspective is called for. However, they also felt the need to use a social learning model to explain how men and women are socialised into their gendered positions in relationships; a socio-political approach to explain power differentials between men and women and finally a systemic lens to understand the interactional nature of relationships, the feedback loops, the double-binding processes, and the involvement of extended families and social institutions (Goldner et al., 1990).

The work of Heise (1998) is an example of more recent work that seems to comply more specifically with Malik and Lindahl's (1998: 420) urging that researchers shift from "single-level discussions of etiology ... toward more ecologically inclusive models". Basing her work on a 1980 paper by J. Belsky, Heise provides a visual framework; a figure consisting of 4 overlapping concentric circles which represent: personal history factors; the microsystem, or context in which the abuse takes place; the exosystem, which includes variables such as socio-economic and employment status and the isolation of women and the family; and, finally, the macrosystem, which represents the general views and attitudes that permeate the culture such as male entitlement and ownership of women, the notion of masculinity as linked to aggression and dominance, rigid gender roles and an acceptance of interpersonal violence and physical punishment of women and children under certain circumstances.

Heise maintains that the framework helps explain why a potentially abusive man might be violent at one moment and not at another; why one man is violent and another is not. She also suggests that whilst the model is neither definitive nor complete, it provides an “interesting heuristic tool for conceptualising future research” (Heise, 1998: 282); that from it questions emerge that require exploration. Some of these questions are: Which factors must occur together for violence to exist? What factors are missing? Is it necessary for factors from all four levels to be present for violence to occur? Which factors are most applicable when comparing violence in cross-cultural studies?

O’Neil and Harway (1999) provide another model but also admit that it is preliminary and that there is a great need for more models and theories to investigate a multiplicity of factors. They, too, identified four fairly similar factors or content areas to those of Heise (1998) which, they maintain affect men’s violence against women. These are: macrosocietal factors; biological factors; gender role socialisation factors; and relational factors. They define macrosocietal factors as the patriarchal and institutional structures that cause oppression and violence against women; biological factors as those hormonal and neuroanatomical dimensions of men that cause them to be violent towards women; gender role socialisation factors as the sexist attitudes, emotions and behaviours men have learnt during their lives that contribute to their violence against women; and relational factors as the ongoing interpersonal and verbal interactions causing violence between a man and his partner. To each of these four factors they have attributed a major question that needs to be answered and have then developed a number of hypotheses as possible solutions. They claim that their model differs from others in that: previous theories have neither determined a multiplicity of factors nor developed hypotheses which can be tested; they have not differentiated between predisposing factors and triggering factors; have not provided a theory nor related gender role socialisation to the etiology of domestic violence; and finally, that earlier models have not discussed in detail how relational dimensions contribute to men’s violence towards women.

Models resembling those of Heise (1998), and O’Neil and Harway (1999), appear to be similar to aforementioned feminist multivariate models advocating intersectionality, and different from my line of reasoning, in that equal emphasis is laid upon the significance of gender, race and class; they include “primary dimensions of social life, including but

not limited to race, class and sexual orientation” (Bograd, 1999: 276). However, I argue they are more sociologically based and do not emphasise institutionalised systems of power as the other feminist writers do.

Throughout this chapter, I have critiqued aspects of psychological, biological, feminist and sociological frameworks, but there can be little doubt that I adopt elements of their suppositions to a greater or lesser extent in the development of my final theory. Moreover, there was another branch of learning that was extremely influential in the direction this work took, and the conclusions that were finally drawn. This was anthropology and I will review some of the ethnographical works that impacted significantly upon my work at the conclusion of this section.

I endorse the viewpoint of those like Malik and Lindahl (1998: 409), who note that research on domestic violence has “tended to isolate causal factors and for the most part focus on the individual level of analysis”; that a “single underlying etiological mechanism is unlikely to account for as diverse a phenomenon as violence within couples”. However, I am also concerned that the adoption of complex frameworks become too intricate; that the significance of anthropological studies are minimised and the fact that domestic violence was absent, or minimal, in indigenous societies, and that this has changed with globalisation and the influx of Western consumerism, is overlooked. It must not be forgotten that the Semai were able to simply say, for example, that “we do not hit people” and for this to be mirrored absolutely in behavioural practice. Nor should it be forgotten that the Waorani were able to reduce homicides by 90% in a relatively short time without being incarcerated, defeated in war or made equals in the Ecuadorian socioeconomic system (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1998); that they just pursued this new reality when new leaders emerged with alternatives and ideas of how to achieve them (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1998); when they were allowed to envision new possibilities and to formulate new goals.

Therefore, I argue like Hall (2000: 6-7) that “meaning making is formed in the discursive passageways between social structures that organise relations of power and human agency”; that “normative values imbued in members of a society through socialisation in turn affect the social interactions” (Eiser, 1998: 161); that it is the prevailing discourse that defines what coercion is acceptable and is both the determinant and deterrent of violent behaviour (Eiser, 1998). This, I believe, would answer the

questions Heise (1998) postulates. Furthermore, discursive arguments appear to be implicated in Marin and Russo's (1999) critique of O'Neil and Harway's (1999) model. They observe that O'Neil and Harway's model would be enhanced if inhibiting hypotheses were also identified. They maintain that all human beings have a potential for violence and that it would therefore be useful to identify the factors that prevent violence from occurring between a man and his female companion. These might include the fear of punishment or a capacity to be empathic. They also believe that explanations need to be given for the reason why males are violent, and why the women closest to them are the targets for their aggression.

The theory that I have built, grounded in the emergent data, is that behaviour is a discursive phenomenon and that patriarchal discourse is the predominant discourse, and font of domestic violence, almost universally today. I see men's violence to their intimate female partner as an issue of power and control; a means of claiming, legitimising and enforcing his socially prescribed dominant position over her and the family. Violent behaviour is the consequence of a conscious and unconscious internalisation, individualisation and reproduction, possibly even an acquired neurobiological response, to inequitable discursive gender relations. Underneath the umbrella of patriarchal discourse, discourses of the primary dimensions of social life (Bograd, 1999) unique to an individual, intersect to shape and define rules for behaviour, and therefore domestic violence.

## ***Ethnographical Studies***

I have already mentioned that there have been accounts of societies where domestic violence was absent or minimal (Lyons, 1999; Noble & Bettman, 2003; Sanday & Goodenough, 1990). These societies include indigenous communities in Southeast Asia, Ecuador, Suriname (Dutch Guyana), Sandaun Province in Papua New Guinea, Western Sumatra and the confederation of Iroquois peoples in North America (see Dentan, 1968; 1978; Ember, Ember & Skoggard, 2002; George-Kanentiio, 2000; Gilmore, 1990; Mitchell, 1987; 1999; Robarchek & Robarchek, 1992; 1998; Sanday, 2002; Van Krieken, 1989; Van Velzen, 1984; Wagner, 2001). The Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri forest in Africa (Sanday, 1981), the Vanatinai, islanders off the coast of mainland New Guinea (Lepowsky, 1990), the Nagovisi of the North Solomons Province

in Bougainville (Nash, 1999) and the Garifuna, an Afro-Indian population living along the Caribbean coast of Central America from Belize to Nicaragua (Kerns, 1999) provide further evidence that that “the subjugation of women by men is not a human universal and is not inevitable” (Lepowsky, 1990: 214).

The comparison of two indigenous tribes, the Waorani, who are from Amazonian Ecuador, and the Semai, an aboriginal people who live in the hills and mountains of central Malaya, is particularly fascinating. The assertion by Robarchek and Robarchek (1992; 1998) that wife beating was absent in both these societies seems extraordinarily significant because these tribes appear to differ so markedly in respect of their attitudes to violence. It is, perhaps, easy to understand the absence of domestic violence amongst the Semai because they have been described by Westerners, who have lived amongst them, as staunchly non-aggressive and timid (Dentan, 1968; Gilmore, 1990). Violence appeared to terrify them and despite having no police or courts, physical violence of any kind was highly uncommon, and homicide virtually non-existent (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1992).

The absence of violence between intimate partners in the Waorani tribe seems more difficult to comprehend because the Waorani had a fearsome and “well-rounded” reputation for ferocity (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1998: 9). They had no peaceful contacts whatsoever with surrounding groups to the point that their neighbours, the Quichua, called them “Auca”, which means savage (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1992: 192). The Waorani, in fact, first came to world attention when, in 1956, they speared to death five American missionaries who attempted to make contact with them (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1992; 1998). Sixty percent of Waorani deaths were due to homicide; 20% as the result of warfare and 40% from internal vendettas. Blood feuds, vendettas, quarrels over marital arrangements and accusations of sorcery, were commonplace. In addition, although they possessed no firearms, and in their last years of isolation only numbered 700 people, they maintained their reputation and control over a vast terrain with the help of 9-foot spears. Yet, according to the Robarchek and Robarchek (1992, 1998), the Waorani did not beat their wives.

The Semai and Waorani will feature significantly in the discussion to be presented in Chapter 7. Of equal note are the Minangkabau and the Iroquois, two tribes who promoted a sense of gender complementarity rather than competitiveness. The



Minangkabau are a literate Indonesian society whose traditional homeland is in Western Sumatra (Sanday, 1996a; 2002). They claim that interpersonal violence and rape are impossible in their society and Sanday (private communication, 2002) confirms that in the heartland villages in which she lived and worked on and off for 20 years, domestic violence and rape would not be tolerated. George-Kanetiio (2000) and Wagner (2001) write about the culture of the North American Iroquois. The position of women amongst the Iroquois tribes differed vastly from that of their Euro-American counterparts. In the final chapter, reference will be made to the manner in which physical and emotional gender differences were regarded as natural by Minangkabau and Iroquois societies and used to the advantage of all their members.

Counts, Brown and Campbell (1992; 1999) present an overview and comparison of customs on wife beating in a variety of cultures. A number of societies have, and will be mentioned again in Chapter 7, where the prevalence and severity of domestic violence is radically different from the aforementioned. For instance, McKee (1999) notes that in the Andean community, Las Flores in Ecuador, rather than being taboo, wife beating is institutionalised as part of the social structure, and is tacitly accepted as an outlet for male frustration and hostility. McKee (1999: 168) reports that “mothers commonly warn daughters planning to marry that, sooner or later, their husbands will beat them. ‘That,’ they say, ‘is how men are’ (*asi son!*)”. Reference has, and will also be made to McClusky (2001), who wrote about domestic violence in a Mayan community; Peterson del Mar (1996), who documents the history of wife battering in Oregon; and Briggs (1970), who describes the anger management techniques of the Utku, a small tribe of Eskimos living in the Canadian Northwest Territories.

## Chapter 3: The Road Taken

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This chapter, *The Road Taken*, is divided into two sections. In the first, *Making Plans*, the methodology is set out and justified; and in the second, *The First Leg*, the difficulties in accessing participants for this study are described.

### ***Making Plans***

This research began as an inquiry into the prevalence of domestic violence in intimate heterosexual relationships. However, my experiences in clinical practice, position in social science networks and submersion in the academic literature pertaining to domestic violence, left me with the question I described in the preface; i.e. whether there are differences in how diverse men, who are subject to variations in discourse through membership of different social groups, conceptualise masculinity and violence. As I have already stated, I wanted to know what it is like to be a man in society today; what masculinity means to men and whether men believe there are qualities they have to demonstrate. I felt it important to know whether men feel advantaged or disadvantaged by being men; how they view women, femininity, relationships and domestic violence; whether they believe that violence, and domestic violence, are ever acceptable, justifiable or even inevitable. Above all, it seemed necessary to investigate whether there are differences in the way men experience the rules, messages and views of their social groups around violence in general, and domestic violence, in particular.

Therefore, as described in the preface, this research developed into an exploration of how gendered discourse and the discourses of different cultural groups intersect to shape men's understandings of masculinity and sense of entitlement to use violence in an intimate heterosexual relationship. The intention was never to measure one culture against another or to see differences as deficiencies (Hays, 1996). However, it did seem necessary to look upon the unique ways that cultural contexts shape domestic violence (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). The working title I formulated was *Class, gender and ethnicity: how these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship*.

It seemed that the value-laden nature of this inquiry called for qualitative research methods i.e. an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and the use of ungeneralisable single, rather than multiple, case studies (Oakley, 1999). It appeared that to make any sense or meaning of the question clearly defined above, it would be necessary to gain access to the rich and real frames of reference of those actually involved; that to determine the influence of social discourses upon men's construction of reality, it was obligatory to consider their perspectives first hand and in their own language. The focus needed to be on the personal stories of individual men.

In research circles, rather than there being an acceptance of the merits and uses of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, qualitative methods are often criticised as "Oprah Winfrey" type research (Silverman, 2000: 287), biased and absent of reason and truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research is often pitted against the positivist masculine emphasis of quantitative studies on objectivity, logic, tasks and outcome (Neuman, 1997; Oakley, 1999). In fact, Oakley (1999: 155) has stated that it is often more appropriate to call the dialogue around the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, a 'war'. She states that the choice of methodology is very often dictated by the paradigm, rather than the pursuit of trustworthiness, or the need to match the methods to the question being addressed by the research.

As the goal of this thesis was not simply to record human interest journalistic accounts and anecdotal insights (Silverman, 2000), the opportunity to respond constructively to a question posed by Silverman (2000: 289), is valued. He urges qualitative researchers to consider: "How far can our data, methods and findings satisfy the criteria of reliability and validity, or put more crudely, counter the cynic who comments 'Sez you'?" This is the intention of this chapter.

The decision to employ qualitative research methods was influenced particularly by the writings of James (2001); Karner (1998); Oakley (1999); Strauss and Corbin (1998); and White and Epston (1990). White and Epston (1990: 77) question the appropriateness of applying what they refer to as "logico-scientific mode of thought and the production of scientific theories" in the domain of the human sciences. They maintain that in scientific inquiry, and its efforts to produce universal truth, testable theories, formal logic and tight analyses, persons are reduced to high grade automatons. They argue that it is

valid, even imperative, when dealing with the complexities and subjectivities of human beings and the interpretation of events in human systems, that procedures and conventions do not take precedence over protagonist's particulars of lived experience and the connectedness of events across time (White & Epston, 1990).

Oakley (1999: 5) provides further justification for the use of qualitative research methods. She stipulates that "quantitative researchers seldom are able to capture the subject's perspective because they have to rely on more remote, inferential empirical materials". Akin with Flood's (1999) description of the methodological flaws and gaps within the Conflict Tactic Scales (CTS) (mentioned in Chapter 2), the work of James (2001) confirms the danger of only adopting a quantitative approach for the study of men's violence. Her research with male perpetrators of domestic violence identifies the inaccuracies that arise if only the black and white answers of empirical methods are considered, without the grey matter being taken into consideration as well. James (2001) describes how the answers men gave on initial questionnaires were inaccurate in the light of what was subsequently revealed in face-to-face interviews. She reports, for example, that in 18 out of 24 cases, men who had denied experiencing childhood abuse on their questionnaire sheets, later recognised that they had, in reality, been victims of it. This supports the argument of Strauss and Corbin (1998:43) that objectivity in qualitative research does not translate into the controlling of variables.

Rather, it means openness, a willingness to listen and to "give voice" to respondents, be they individuals or organisations. It means hearing what others do, and representing these as accurately as possible.

For this thesis particularly, Karner (1998: 198) is noteworthy. She argues that the culture of a group speaks through each individual's story. For her, personal narratives are more than just an account of life events. They are:

Responses to the system in which they originate and thus reveal its dynamics ... life stories allow social scientists a view of the individuals and the society within which the narrators act out their lives.

Whilst the decision to work with men might appear contrary to the usual feminist practise of prioritising women, this research is nevertheless unequivocally pro-feminist. In fact, one of the main reasons for choosing to work with men was actually made out of the belief, in accordance with Cavanagh and Cree (1996), that women's oppression

cannot be understood and changed by focusing on women alone. Feminist research, because it offers the opportunity to embrace the meaning of experience (Cavanagh & Cree, 1996), is often seen as synonymous with qualitative research and its validity questioned or minimised. Ironically, it was the reading of feminist research that provoked further appraisal of the validity and reliability of the chosen methodology for this thesis. Feminist research argues that positivist quantitative research methodology does not allow the voices of women to be heard; that there are hierarchies of power present in the research process (Cavanagh & Cree, 1996; Oakley, 1999) and female respondents are at times objectified and exploited (Cavanagh & Cree, 1996).

The question was how this translated into working with men. It was necessary to consider what the consequences were of being a female researcher with male participants, who had been labelled perpetrators of domestic violence. How might the gathering of information be sullied and the validity of data tainted in the process of the research interview? My training had taught me that gender and power permeate all aspects of social life; that it is therefore, not possible to detach, isolate and insulate oneself from the pervasive influences of class, ethnicity and gender even within the process of research (Neuman, 1997). How would power be manifested in this gendered setting? Could the men's testimonies be valid?

Cavanagh and Cree (1996) point out the dangers of being a passive listener when working with men. They claim that there is less chance of data being contaminated if male respondents are challenged; that otherwise men are more likely to state what they feel the researcher wants to hear. They assert that whilst it is appropriate to minimise power differentials with women, it is inappropriate to do so with men. As a counsellor, rather than an activist, it seemed more congruent to adopt an approach that aligned itself more closely with that of White and Epston (1990) mentioned above. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 11) refer to this as the fifth phase in the history of qualitative research where: "Theories are now read in narrative terms as 'tales of the field'". As Drewery and Winslade (1997: 39) argue that "Conversation is a very good metaphor for the social process of meaning", the goal was to create empathic connections with the participants so as to encourage them to tell their stories. However, at the same time, the intention was to uphold a pro-feminist value position, encouraging self-responsibility and both personal and societal change (Neuman, 1997: 80).

Whilst the thesis cannot claim to be pure grounded theory practice, it was also strongly influenced by grounded theory research methods and principles. In the first place, it is explicitly emergent. I did not begin with a preconceived theory in mind; rather I began with an area of study and allowed the theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Interviews and observation provided the source of information on which theory was developed. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) avow, grounded theory demands a systematic, rigorous and comparative analysis of data derived from the respondents themselves. Therefore, emphasis is not placed upon the collection and ordering of data alone. Rather, grounded theory research employs a system of coding and conceptual ordering which not only ensures analytic depth but ensures “conceptual development and density” (Strauss, 1987). It is necessary to organise the many ideas that emerge from an analysis of the data (Strauss, 1987) with the purpose of building theory *grounded* in it (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Therefore, once the interviews were completed, they were analysed word by word, and coded, or categorised according to their salient properties (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process was facilitated by the use of a software program called NVivo. As stated by Bazeley and Richards (2000: 5), “NVivo is designed to approach qualitative analysis as researchers do”, to provide a toolkit for analysing and auditing qualitative research data; for seeking and exploring associations and relationships in the material; and for finding and validating patterns (Bazeley & Richards, 2000).

It is too simple to claim that the men’s answers to the interview questions and the consequent discussions that arose during our conversations, solely directed the organisation and analysis of data; the coding, selection and development of themes, categories and sub-categories. No claim is being made to exclude “the observer from the observed by the imputation of objectivity” as would be required by logico-scientific modes of research (White & Epston, 1990: 82). Rather, it is acknowledged that any time one classifies, labels or selects data, it follows that there is some degree of interpretation. As argued by Strauss and Corbin (1998: 47), it is impossible that an analysis can be totally free of bias:

Insights do not happen haphazardly; rather they happen to prepared minds during interplay with the data. Whether we want to admit it or not, we cannot completely divorce ourselves from what we know. The theories

that we carry in our heads inform our research in multiple ways, even if we use them quite un-self-consciously.

Certainly, every effort was made to adhere to the stipulations of Strauss and Corbin (1998) that coding not be done haphazardly or at the whim of the analyst. Likewise, much emphasis was placed upon the actual words of the participants rather than “tidied-up” data extracts. “Deviant cases” (Silverman, 2000: 288) were considered, and then reported, with as much alacrity as any other. However, alignment with narrative modes of research also signals acceptance of the notion that any experience must be “storied” (White & Epston, 1990: 10). As White and Epston (1990: 82) explain:

This is a world of interpretive acts, a world in which every retelling of a story is a new telling, a world in which persons participate with others in the “re-authoring”, and thus in the shaping, of their lives and relationships ... “observer” and “subject” *are placed in* the “scientific” story being performed, in which the observer has been accorded the role of the privileged author in its construction.

As Drewery and Winsdale (1997: 40) have been reported as saying, “we can create the world only in the terms we have available to us”. Therefore whilst, clearly, the themes and coding chosen in the analysis, as well as the reporting of the emerging data in Chapters 5 and 6, represent my own “preferred knowledge” (Drewery & Winslade 1997: 40), it is also true, in accordance with Drewery and Winsdale (1997: 39) that:

The subjectivities that we live are not necessarily of our own making but are the products of social interactions ... When we speak to or about others, we are giving them parts in a story, whether we do this explicitly or implicitly ... a speaker makes available a subject position that the other speaker in the normal course of events, will take up.

Hence, in Chapter 4 where the participants are introduced, and in Chapters 5 and 6, in which an analysis of the material is presented, it was possible to be, not so much the “privileged author” that White and Epston (1990: 82) speak of, but a privileged editor and reporter of the participant’s views. The editor privileges and comments upon information, but meaning is co-produced, and links relationships and multiple perspectives of lived experience. Likewise, the conclusions drawn in the final chapter, have been co-produced. They are the result of a deliberate and reciprocal activity; an

uncovering process in which I was partnered by those with local expertise (Drewery & Winsdale, 1997); the result, too, of the intersection of contexts, and many stories, including the ethnographical accounts of anthropologists.

Constant comparison is at the heart of grounded theory research (Dick, 2000). Therefore, true to grounded theory, data collection, coding and categorising were not isolated and unrelated events for this thesis. Strauss and Corbin (1998: 44) suggest that thinking comparatively is a technique to increase awareness and to maintain sensitivity to what is being said in the data. So whilst the first interview might have begun with questions like what is going on here; what is the situation and how is this person managing it, subsequent interviews and the coding and categorising of the collected data were carried out with the emerging theory in mind (Dick, 2000). Strauss and Corbin (1998) also encourage turning towards literature or experience to find examples of similar phenomena. They explain:

We emphasize that the logic behind the use of comparisons is to stimulate thinking at a property and dimensional level to gain some perspective when examining a piece of data.

For this reason, the final chapter, in drawing its conclusions, makes reference and comparisons to ethnographical accounts of societies where domestic violence was absent, or minimal. However, Chapter 7, by virtue of its name, *Reflections*, clearly makes no claim to being the absolute truth. Recognition is also given to the second order perspective that an observer continues to be part of what is being observed and is “crucially implicated in *constructing* that which is being observed” (Jones, 1993: 21). Furthermore, as I stated in the preface, no single anthropologist can see it all; no matter how conscientious, ultimately ethnography is a *version*, or a construction, of the experience. In spite of this, I argue that the use of ethnographical accounts makes it possible to don a new lens and to gain a different perspective, or a new and broader outlook, on the inquiry to hand. I hope that by approaching an old problem in this new and imaginative way, new data may be produced which will augment or correct some of the accepted “truths” about domestic violence, and perhaps stimulate new insight and further action (Mitchell, 1987).

I have already been conceded that the methodology, whilst informed by grounded theory, certainly cannot claim to represent it in its pure form. For example, 24



volunteers were interviewed without the use of theoretical sampling, which involves the researcher “seeking samples of population, events, activities guided by his or her emerging (if still primitive) theory” (Strauss, 1987: 16). The reason for this was that it was difficult to find participants who were prepared to share their experiences. However, in keeping with grounded theory, as interviews were conducted, constant comparisons were made and new questions emerged as a result of what the men divulged. These questions were then included in the interviews that followed with other men. For example, bullying at school and violence in pubs were consistently brought up by men during the first three interviews and, therefore, became a topic of discussion in the interviews that followed.

Finally, in respect of grounded theory research, I decided to write the thesis as a journey; to explicitly document and report the emergence of a theory from an initial research question; and to integrate grounded data into a coherent argument.

The plan was to interview men who had used abusive behaviour in a heterosexual relationship, from as many different cultures as possible. This meant from as many different ethnic groups, religions, income groups, age groups, interest groups, levels of education and residential areas. It was planned that the men would be recruited through the Department of Corrective Services, a number of men’s health services, family therapy organisations and community services. Permission was sought, and given, from the counselling service where I worked, not only to hold these interview sessions and group meetings on their premises, but also to access participants through the organisation (See Appendix II). The intention was to hold both individual sessions and small focus groups. The participants were to be invited to attend either or both of these meetings. They were also to be offered a follow-up session on their own if they so desired. Prior to the session, they would be asked to complete a brief questionnaire to provide demographic information, so that amassing this data would not restrict the already limited time allowed for the session. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix III.

As it happened, only individual sessions materialised. The reason for this was that the nature and sensitivity of the topic made it difficult to find men, who were prepared to participate, let alone for group meetings to be organised at a time convenient for all concerned. Interviews lasted for just over an hour and, barring one, were held at the

offices of the counselling service that employed me. The other took place at the Chatswood Probation and Parole Office of the Department of Corrective Services. One man returned for a second visit because work commitments had caused him to leave before his first interview was completed. None of the men felt the need for a follow-up session.

In-depth interviews were to be semi-structured and based upon a number of open-ended questions. However, bearing in mind that the research was informed by grounded theory and narrative mode of thought (White & Epston, 1990), it was expected that the sessions would acquire a momentum of their own as men punctuated events, thoughts, feelings and values that were significant to them. An interview schedule was developed, which included a number of questions to be used as prompts for broader discussion. A copy of the interview schedule appears Appendix I.

Drewery and Winslade (1997) state that the endpoint is determined by the starting point and the questions that are asked. All of the questions were designed to provide an opportunity for the inference, both explicit and implicit, of cultural differences in the men's conversations. Questions 1 to 6 (See Appendix I) aimed to invite the men to position themselves in discourses around masculinity. Their responses are reported in Chapter 5, which is, therefore, called *Being Male*. Questions 7 to 15 (See Appendix I) did likewise with respect to violence. Three questions (13, 14 and 15) generated information which made possible an analysis of individual and social change; both on that which had already been achieved and that which is still necessary. The men's replies to these questions are documented in Chapter 6, *The Construction of Violence*.

The plan was to inform the participants that their sessions would be audio taped so that I could participate fully in them and still have an accurate account of proceedings. These recordings were to be transcribed, and as anonymity was necessary according to the UWS ethics approval (Appendix V), the men would only be invited to read their own transcripts, and offer further comment if they so desired. It would be made clear that the information would be used for the purpose of a doctoral thesis. In the end, five men asked for transcriptions but did not choose to make any further remarks. The men were also to be assured that the decision to participate was theirs alone and that there would be no penalties, disadvantages or adverse consequences for choosing not to be involved or for withdrawing at any stage. Whilst they would not be expected to reveal anything

they considered too personal, they would be advised that the law required disclosure of information relating to the commission of a crime or if anyone was at risk of harm. Each man was to be issued with information sheets and consent forms, which needed to be signed. Again, copies of these documents are to be found in Appendix IV. Once arrangements had been put in place, and participants had been found, these plans were rigorously followed.

### ***The First Leg***

The UWS Human Research Ethics Committee granted ethics approval in November 2002 (See Appendix V) and an active search began for participants. The research branch of the Department of Corrective Services was immediately approached. It was assumed, somewhat naively, that as in Duluth, Minnesota, a “relatively tight coordinated community response” (Paymar, 2000: 239) to domestic violence would be forthcoming. It was never imagined that anything less would transpire than what Summers (2003a: 91) advocates for, and likewise has found absent, i.e. “a concerted and, preferably, bipartisan strategy that aims to eliminate domestic violence altogether”.

On the contrary, what occurred is illustrative of what has already been, and will be, spoken about in this thesis i.e. the privileging of men; the rigidity of institutions; “male emphasis on individual competition, on dominating and controlling the environment” (Neuman, 1997: 80); the devaluation of qualitative methods of research and the way advocates for those who are victims or survivors are discredited (Breckenridge & Laing, 1999). It gives rise to the question of how much truth is silenced in the name of professionalism (Breckenridge, 1999).

Initially, members of the Department seemed extremely supportive and interested in the research. They suggested the submission of an ethics approval application and, subsequently, a meeting with their ethics committee. This meeting, and any further dealings with the Department, lent credence to Foucault’s (1980: 131) aforementioned allegation that there are some “who are charged with saying what counts as true”; and was an exhibition of power in keeping with the comment of Hearn (1998: 200), that “the response of agencies to men’s violence, including those in the criminal justice system, are themselves constructed in the context of men’s domination of women”. The

relationship with the Department also reflected the “mutual antagonism” (Oakley, 1999: 155) which exists between two different ways of achieving knowledge about the world, i.e. qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It became clear that they supported a positivistic approach using quantitative strategies stressing “explicitness in techniques of measurement, data and interpretative processes” (Oakley, 1999: 165). The value of hearing, and analysing, the narratives of men with the purpose of building theory grounded in the data, seemed to be minimised; deductive reasoning more highly regarded than inductive; repeatability and reliability more prized than an attempt at validity, or getting closer to a deeper truth. For example, even though ethics approval had been granted by the University of Western Sydney for the research project, and rather than focusing on the safety of human subjects for whom they were responsible, this committee made the size and representation of the sample group the centre of their attention, and they also indicated their preference for the inclusion of control groups.

Eventually, ethics approval was granted. A letter from the Commissioner confirmed approval to conduct research with up to 30 persons under the supervision of the NSW Probation and Parole Service in the Sydney metropolitan region (See Appendix VI). However, the difficulties that arose from a stipulation that “Probation and Parole Officers are in no way to be asked to assist you in directly recruiting participants for your study” (Letter from the Commissioner, February 2003: See Appendix VI); the time taken to clarify the situation; and the negative response to the distribution of questionnaires, ostensibly because they would introduce “systematic measurement error and may compromise the comparability and reliability of your overall research findings” (Letter from the Commissioner dated September, 2003: See Appendix VI), made it clear that it was no longer possible to persevere with any efforts to canvas men through Probation and Parole. Only one interview occurred as a result of this association.

Only minimal success was achieved in attempts to recruit participants from other counselling or community services. In fact, only three participants were canvassed through other organisations. In the end, the counselling organisation where I worked provided the best opportunity to access possible participants, although, obviously, current personal clients were not eligible to take part. Colleagues were informed and leaflets distributed amongst them. These brochures (See Appendix VII) were also placed strategically in the waiting room. Ultimately, apart from the four participants

already accounted for, fellow passengers included: three past clients who rang and volunteered their help after receiving a flyer in the mail; a further four men who had been participants of the men's program and also made contact after receiving a letter; eight others who heard me speak at program meetings, or at information and orientation nights; one man, who was actually a counsellor at another branch of the organisation and so heard about the research; two men who were given information through their counsellors, my colleagues; and finally, two more men, recruited by the facilitator of the men's program at another branch of the organisation. This made a total of 24 interviewees. These men will be introduced in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4: Fellow Passengers

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This chapter serves to introduce the participants. Originally, it was planned that this would be carried out in conjunction with an elaborate analysis of class and ethnicity. In view of the narrative approach taken, and more importantly, the nature of the findings, it seems more apt as a form of introduction, to proffer a biography for each of the 24 men who volunteered to take part. The contents of these biographies have been taken directly from the answers the men gave on their questionnaires (See Appendix III) and from transcriptions of their interviews. It needs to be acknowledged that these biographies are limited, both as a result of the restrictions of dissertation writing and because they represent my own selection of the available material. Whilst an attempt has been made to illustrate the abuse used by these men in their intimate relationships, the aim was also to portray the diversity found in this small sample group, and to acquaint the reader with the participants and the complexities of their situations. However, in the interest of confidentiality, the participant's names have been changed.

### Aaron

Aaron was born in Australia to Palestinian parents, who spoke both German and English. He was fifty one years of age and a follower of the Vedanta faith. He loved bicycle riding, volley ball, swimming and listening to what he described as “mood making music”. His father had been a fitter and turner, but Aaron had attended university and qualified as a consulting engineer. He lived in a trendy suburb in the inner west of Sydney and worked for a motor accident investigation department. Divorced with two children, Sam and Marta, he noted on his questionnaire that during his marriage, he had sometimes withdrawn from his wife to punish her and, at other times, had shouted and yelled, been disrespectful and self-righteous. He also stated that he had not maintained the aliveness of the relationship. In conversation, he spoke more about this:

I would always initiate physical contact, so I could have touching, hugging, kissing. There'd be times when I would have liked that to just spontaneously come the other way and I'd be prepared to wait. But I never wanted to wait too long and if nothing was happening I might sulk and withdraw and yeah, so I'm feeling like this, you can feel like that. I'll punish myself and I'll punish you as well. And I shouldn't be

punished because of the fact that I'm even doing this which is childish and in one sense wrong. But that's because I'm wrong anyway and I'm not good enough and so I'll punish me and how dare you point that out to me, so I'll punish you too by just simply withdrawing.

## **Adrian**

Adrian enjoyed his tennis, but also loved motor cars. At 34 years of age, with a religion that he described as "spiritual/connectedness", he shared a house in a wealthy suburb of Sydney. He was born in Australia, the son of an appliance repair man and an accounts clerk, who were also both Australian. He had completed secondary school and was employed in the information technology industry, where he claimed to earn over \$61,000 annually. He had never married but wrote that he had used sexual, physical and emotional abuse in his relationships with women. He was not in a relationship at the time. He explained:

Before, I just wanted to be in a relationship. I just wanted to be with someone, and I didn't even know why. See, the reason I wanted to be in a relationship before, was just because I was unable to be with meself ... It was kind of like just something there to fill me up, 'cause I wasn't present. The relationship was a way of defining me ... I was fucking mad two years ago. Seriously mad. I was in another world ... I got ways to go. I still don't trust women and I wouldn't be in a relationship with one. But I'm kind of getting an idea of how it is going to work out.

## **Barry**

Barry was Australian; Catholic and forty three years old. He was the son of Australian parents; his father, a financial advisor and his mother, a cleaner. An electrician by trade, he was self-employed; his earnings falling in a medium income bracket. He said he enjoyed running and reading. He and his current wife were childless, but Barry did have a son, from a previous relationship, living in Perth. Barry noted on his form that he had used anger, violence and physical abuse in his relationships. Later, he said:

I had many, many relationships and I didn't realize why I was having so many ... I think when we were arguing, I didn't know how to control myself; I didn't know how to argue properly ... that was, you know, totally my fault ... I thought everybody did that. I mean if you don't have role models, how else do you learn?

He described the latest incident:

My wife and I had an argument and then, basically, the argument turned into a screaming match and then I lashed out at her, kicked her and then I left the house upset.

## **Chan**

Chan was born in Hong Kong in 1967. His father had been a funeral director in China before his death, for which Chan angrily blamed the Chinese medical system. Chan was sent by his parents to a Melbourne Grammar School in 1983 to pursue his education. His home language remained Cantonese even though he had decided at sixteen years of age that the Chinese did not love him as much as the people in Australia; and despite the fact that he felt the Chinese, through being poorly educated, lacked respect for others and thought the world owed them.

Chan was an atheist and had no particular hobbies or interests. He revealed that he was a salesperson but at the time of the interview was doing tele-marketing and struggling to pass his driver's licence test. Separated, he had no children, but talked often about the family pet, a Labrador. On the questionnaire, he described his abuse as "I hit her. I yelled at her etc." In his interview, he described the incident which finally led to his wife leaving him:

I was under extreme stress for the driver licence permit, basically to do with parental trauma. If you withdraw attention and say no, I don't need to talk to you now, don't have to talk to you, that is the button she pressed that caused me to pull her hair. We had that fight and she moved out. I wasn't beating her black and blue ... the whole thing about our four months separation, I see it as a communication problem thing. She sees it as a violence thing. I disagree and that's what bugging me the most.

## **Clive**

Clive was from New Zealand. He had arrived in Australia in 1985 when he was 32 years old. His late father had been a tailor and his mother in shoe sales. Both of them were born and bred New Zealanders. A Presbyterian by persuasion, Clive lived alone and was a water-proofer. He was a sports fanatic, passionate about his rugby, tennis and squash.



He also enjoyed reading. Clive was not in a relationship and “was nervous as buggery” about going into another one; in fact, he thought it “pointless” because he believed that he would, more than likely, destroy another person’s life. On his questionnaire he wrote that he had used verbal abuse in relationships and later, in conversation, he swore that he had never, and would never, hit a woman. Rather, what he regretted about his relationships with women was:

The way I treated them; the way I spoke to them mainly. And my selfishness. Shocker. I’m not selfish like that now. No way. I give and take man.

## **David**

David was born in England in 1964 to Italian parents. His father was a film director; his mother, he said, was a nanny and involved with child care. He was of Christian faith and had been trained as a chef. However, as he was on a government pension, he was not actively seeking work. He was married to a Thai woman who had just given birth to their baby son. However, she was living in a women’s refuge where she had been taken by her mother-in-law. David had been charged with assault by the police. He was also in trouble with the Department of Community Services for behaving aggressively towards a case worker. He claimed on his form to have used verbal and physical abuse and in his interview described a recent incident with his wife, Suchada:

Take Suchada’s slap for example. There was an initial sensation. She felt a sting and five minutes later there was no residual pain. There was no bruising. There wasn’t, right? In other words, it was not unlike when you slap your child when you lose control. Because I am a father figure to Suchada - and this was actually one of these incidents where I was her father. This is a problem with me and Suchada. I am her teacher. I am her father. I am her counsellor. I am her therapist. And I am also her husband, her best friend and her lover ... Sometimes the roles get confused, and especially when there is tension, Suchada won’t jump from “I’m being the daughter now” to “I’m going to be the wife now under the circumstances”. This is what she did to me on this day. She was striking me okay? And so I lost it. But it took some time for me to lose it.

## **Feodor**

Feodor was from Finland and spoke Swedish as his first language. He had lived in Australia for twenty one years and was 34 years of age. His father had been an engineer and his mother a travel agent. Feodor had completed part of a psychology and sociology degree but was working as both a horticulturalist and a cleaning contractor. He gave his interests as gardening and doing weights, and described his religion as non-denominational. He was separated from his wife who looked after their children, a boy of ten and a little girl of two. Their oldest son had died some years before from a brain tumour. Feodor claimed that he was recently diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome and that the drug, cipromil, was proving beneficial. On his questionnaire, Feodor noted that he had sexually assaulted his wife as well as controlled her through isolation and the withholding of finances. In his interview, he spoke of raping his wife many times during their marriage:

After, maybe twenty or thirty times - I talked to my wife and we kind of came up with a number, you know, a rough number - she said, "That's it". She'd been in one case bleeding for three weeks and I wasn't that worried about it; that whole period, nothing really drew an emotion out of me. I can't figure out why. But I remember when she said, "That's enough. Look, you will have to go to counselling otherwise I will call the police". Now that didn't set off alarm bells ... in the sense of gaining an insight into the enormity of what I had actually done ... I just said, "yeah, alright, yeah we'll do it".

## **Jean-Claude**

Jean-Claude was born in France in 1958, the son of devout Catholics. His father worked in technical and commercial industries, and his mother was a housewife and telephonist. Jean-Claude's father left home to take up residence with his mistress when Jean-Claude was two years old. However, his parents never divorced and his father would visit regularly on weekends to "check" his children's homework. Jean-Claude married an American when he was 19 years old but the marriage was short-lived. He had been married to his second wife for six years and both treasured their three year old son. He loved bushwalking and art. A gilder by trade, he earned very little as he tried to establish his own business, and was stressed at the fact that the family relied on his wife's income. On his form, Jean-Claude revealed that he had broken objects, shouted, sulked and shown a great deal of indifference in his current marriage.

## **Jeffery**

Thirty five year old Jeffery, a Christian, was born in Australia to a Dutch father, who was a sales manager, and an Australian mother. Jeffery had grown up on the northern beaches of Sydney and loved jet skiing and motor sports. He worked as an area service manager for a large motor car company. He was separated from his wife, Lana, who had moved to a town outside Sydney with their four year old son, John. Jeffery admitted that he was really enjoying meeting people, going out and having fun. On his question sheet, he wrote that he had used emotional abuse in his relationship with Lana. In his interview, he added:

I don't think she was ever really scared ... I know I can come across a bit blunt and insensitive at times but I don't think she would think that I was scary or she was frightened of me ... I think she possibly could have [felt crushed by me] and the frustrating thing for me is that I couldn't get much out of her ... She sees me as a controlling person who tries to control all situations but I see it a little bit differently because Lana was very reluctant to organise things ... I am a very motivated person but I think Lana's perception of me being controlling is a little bit harsh.

## **Khaled**

Khaled was thirty one years old. He had been born in Australia to Lebanese parents and held both Australian and Lebanese passports. He was married to a nurse, Natasha, an Anglo-Saxon Australian, with whom he had two young children. He identified strongly with his Muslim religion and stipulated that he and his wife were very different. For instance, Natasha enjoyed drinking wine which Khaled thought was evil. Whilst his father had been a landscaper, Khaled had started off, in what he described as his rebel years, as a bouncer in Kings Cross, the red light district of Sydney. At the time of the interview, he was employed as a manager of a telecommunications company. He was passionately fond of working out in the gym and also enjoyed renovating his suburban home. He wrote that there had been pushing, swearing and verbal abuse. In his interview, he spoke about a time when he had been violent towards Natasha:

Yeah, it was a push. It wasn't a hit. It was just a push. I just lost it. I didn't feel too good. I felt terrible. But it just got to a point where I was in absolute agony (from a back injury) and I just couldn't take her crap anymore. She threw my clothes out in the rain. I was supposed to

go to work the next day. Just all got too much. So I came in and she started going, “huh, huh, huh”. So I just gave her a push. I just lost it and then started abusing her and her mother. [Wanted] to show her that she can’t do that. It is not on. She can’t get away with it just by maybe just walking away, and copping it sweet. I wasn’t going to cop it sweet. I was going to show her that if she does that, there are ramifications.

## **Lane**

Lane at 22 years old was the youngest participant. Australian born, of Australian parents, he had two sisters but lived away from home in a shared house. He had never married and was not in a relationship at the time of his interview. Lane said that he enjoyed eating, watching television, studying and socialising. He reminisced:

I think maybe I was happy from about the age when I was born till I was five, when I think I went to kindergarten. When I started kindergarten, my relationship with my mum kind of disappeared or something. And that was a bit disastrous ... Because I had learning difficulties I was obviously separate to everyone ... I failed so I was singled out ... I suppose there was a lot of hurt and pain inside of me and a lot of anger and I just rebelled. I never did any work and I just mucked up and got into trouble. Started smoking marijuana at the age of twelve or thirteen, and I left school. I was just turning fifteen.

On his parent’s advice, Lane began an apprenticeship to be a chef. His father had been a milkman, but currently operated a gym and café with his wife. Lane described working as a chef as “hard. It was pretty lonely and pretty tough” and he was “pretty unhappy”. Diagnosed with ADHD, he began therapy with a psychiatrist. He gave up his apprenticeship and was studying at TAFE. On his form Lane wrote, “I hit Jill. Then I used emotional abuse against her and swore at her and raised my voice. I got angry with her”. Yet, he stated in his interview that he had never been angry enough to lose control. He described his violence with Jill as “lashing out”, “probably to get another reactionary reaction”. “I suppose I just wasn’t that angry. Just got my stuff and left and said goodbye”. With his mother, however, he explained that “I might have just gotten so angry that I like just popped. I might have slashed an aerial off something”.

## **Marshall**

Marshall managed a storage depot. Estranged from his partner, Bess, he lived alone near the beach. He was 31 years old, an atheist, and had never married. A product of a broken home, he did not know his parent's occupations but he did say that they were Australians. Marshall loved the outdoors and enjoyed surfing and playing football. On the questionnaire, he described the violence he used in his relationship with Bess as verbal, physical and power games. He expanded upon this in his session:

We had been seeing each other for about 5 months and there was never any issue of any violence whatsoever. It was just one day Bess was stressed out about something about college or college work and things like that, and it didn't matter what I'd said or what I was going to do, it just wasn't good enough ... It didn't faze me in the slightest, until Bess got to the point where she was that upset and that angry that she pulled out a knife, and that's when everything turned for us ... I have this thing if someone threatens me it's like I have to stand up ... I felt that every time my mother was being mean to me or trying to intimidate me or trying to be aggressive with me, my way of protecting myself was to stand up, and be empowered and that's when our relationship changed. Every time Bess got angry, I remembered seeing my mother, and I would feel fear ... My old patterns would come up in self defence. I think that's half the battle with a lot of domestic violence ... Every time she got angry it was like I would stand up a lot more rigid and I would be a lot more on guard and so if needs be, I would push her out my way.

## **Martin**

Martin, who was almost fifty years old, was born in Australia. His father was a Sydneysider; his mother came from Melbourne. Martin was a potter and taught at college, an occupation very different to that of his very conservative father, who had been a typesetter. His de facto wife, Penny, taught at a Montessori school and they had two children, Barak and Helen. At the time of the interview, they were living in separate homes. A flamboyant and gregarious man, Martin said that his religion was non-denominational, and that his interests included "clay, cycling, rum, body jewellery, old '78's, trees and chatting". He particularly enjoyed reading a magazine which Penny hated called *Savage*, whose name he said was a misnomer. It covered such subjects as

tattoos, implants, and shrapnel and was “sort of kicking convention, you know, sort of upsetting convention”.

On his form, Martin claimed that there was “no physical personal abuse” but that he had used “language especially regrettably” and was guilty of “breaking inanimate objects”. He did not equate the latter with physical abuse, for in conversation he told of an occasion, when he and Penny had argued about the environment. Penny felt that owning a motor car was a necessity; Martin felt it was an evil and that only public transport was justifiable. In fury, he had taken to Penny’s car with a pole, and severely damaged it.

## **Matthew**

Thirty four year old Matthew was born in Australia to parents from Swan Hill, a modest town on the New South Wales, Victoria border. He lived with a sibling and his family on the Northern Beaches of Sydney. Like his father before him, Matthew was a truck driver, and self-employed. He said that he had completed a tertiary degree but his poor writing and spelling certainly belied these claims. For example, he wrote on his form that the abusive behaviour he had used in a relationship was “verbley, mental and pshicle”. In conversation he said:

A few years ago, I used to feel a lot better [after fighting with my wife] and then towards the last year or two, I started feeling bad. And I still couldn’t pinpoint it. And then it just exploded one day and that was it and I just knew that ... like you had a major problem and just had to sort it out inside of you.

Matthew had no religion but loved motor sports and watching the sitcom, “Everybody Loves Raymond”. He described himself as a country bloke and spoke of growing up in a family where they would go on trips and “basically do things that dad used to like doing”. He was separated from his wife, who had custody of their five children, but he lived with a lady who he described as different from him in that she was Christian and had grown up in a loving family.

## **Pablo**

Pablo was a Spaniard, who was born in 1948, and came to Australia when he was almost forty years old. His father had been a sculptor, but he had worked as a chef. At the time of the interview, Pablo was retired and receiving a pension. Of the Roman Catholic

faith, Pablo enjoyed fishing, tennis and bicycling. He was separated and lived alone, but had two young sons, who were sixteen and nine years old. He had lost another son two years previously, when the twelve year old had fallen from a building as he tried to retrieve a toy. Pablo had just reached the end of his probationary period with the Department of Corrective Services. In regards to domestic violence, he wrote on his form that he had used “verbal abuse once”, and in conversation, he likewise maintained his innocence. He demonstrated to me how he had put his hand out and how it had come into contact with his wife’s cheek. He explained that he had only intended to shut her up.

## **Peter**

Peter was born in Australia to Australian parents. He was forty years old and was not in a relationship. He lived acrimoniously with his mother and busied himself as chairman of a running club. He also said that he enjoyed football and swimming. His father had been a transport manager but Peter had little recollection of him for a number of reasons: he had been an uninvolved dad; had left his wife and son, and had died twenty years ago. Peter was a self-employed truck-driver, but at the same time received a government pension and claimed to be looking for another job. He was Catholic and had never married, but had fathered a son in a previous relationship. He was clearly forbidden contact with this little boy and, angrily, claimed that the Family Court had treated him unfairly. However, on his questionnaire he admitted to being an angry man in relationships and to verbally and emotionally abusing his partners. He qualified this in his interview:

I can understand that I could have been quite scary. And they would have lied, knowing the end result or the consequences that come with it ... but I didn’t understand how to show my emotions as far as saying what I wanted to say. It doesn’t seem to get through. You can say something once calmly, but how many times have you got to say it to a person before it starts to sink in; before your anger sort of picks up and you say it a bit louder. “Didn’t you hear me this time?” Now why does the female choose to block it out? It becomes very frustrating when they are not listening or acting upon what you’re trying to tell them. When they say things once, the male’s got to jump. And does it.

## **Raymond**

Raymond, who lived in the hills district of Sydney, and was a devout Christian, had been born to country folk from Grafton, New South Wales, 48 years previously. His dad had been an insurance broker, but had also worked in timber mills and done bread deliveries. His mother had worked as a cleaner, in addition to her home duties. Raymond had been in the navy for many years but had changed career direction and was working as a counsellor instead. He described his interests as “family, men and relationships”. From his story, it was evident that he had been a skilful boxer in his younger days, particularly during the time he spent in the navy. He had two daughters, in their twenties, from a previous marriage but lived with his second wife, their seven year old daughter and his stepdaughter, who was sixteen. His seven year old daughter had been diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome, and both he and his wife suspected that his wife suffered the same condition. Of the abuse he had used he wrote, “physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, power and control in the relationship”. He spoke of this in his interview:

I remember the first year. There was violence and there was a lot of power and control stuff happening back then and I was trying to fix her; like she was the poor inadequate single mum that I married and so if I fixed the house up and helped around the place, then she’d be back on her feet and we’d all live happily ever after. But it wasn’t happening. And I had pretty heavy work ... and I’d go home. I’d be tired, exhausted and I just couldn’t cope. When I couldn’t cope, I became more violent, and the violence would be pushing away and then there would be slapping and hitting. So it was very physical even in the early days ... I was violent when she, when Wanda, was pregnant.

## **Roger**

Roger was born in New Zealand to New Zealand parents. His father had been a train driver and his mother, a nurse. At fifty years old, he loved music, sport and trading in shares but he said he had no religion. He was a computer analyst and his wife, Jenny, who travelled fairly extensively, was a career woman. Roger and Jenny had a very young son, but also a number of other children from previous relationships, two of whom lived with them. Roger wrote of the abuse in their relationship, “hitting, punching, shouting, silence, walking out, anger”. In conversation, he described his need to attend a men’s program:



But the reason I came on this men's group, is because I found myself falling into the same traps that my father fell into; following the old patterns; inflicting the same sorts of things on my child that he used to do. The reason I came onto this group is to work out where all that stuff is coming from and one of my prime motivators, was to avoid changing my child's behaviour because of the things that I did; making him into a different sort of human being than he otherwise could have been by having to observe the sort of things that I did which were not good and counter productive and negative in our family.

## **Serge**

Serge lived in the western suburbs but thought of Croatia as his home even though he had been born in Australia to Croatian parents. His home language was Croatian and his mother, a widow, was still not fluent in English. He spoke of his father: "I was in Year 7 at school when dad passed away. Right up until then I saw the violent side of my father". Serge was a Catholic and had been a mechanic for eleven years before changing his job to earn better money. He worked as a plasterer, partitioning offices and repairing ceilings. His "sole belief was to get married once and to hold onto that forever". Though separated, he maintained this belief. However, his wife lived with someone else and was refusing his invitation to move back home because of her memories and her pain. Serge enjoyed spending time with his two children, a daughter, aged nine, and a son of six. He liked sport and in particular, liked to fish and go on camping trips.

He wrote that in the relationship he had used "shouting, physical violence; isolation; intimidation. Just not being able to understand my own problems and issues enough to be able to deal with them thus getting frustrated with myself and lashing out at the people nearest to me". Furthermore, he revealed in our conversation that:

I just used to close up and try not to show anything and express anything, and in return, I was living that frustrated within myself that I wasn't able to. I knew I needed to express, and to show, and to get these things off my chest, but I just couldn't. I was getting that frustrated within myself and was just lashing out to people who were the closest to me ... That's the pressure that men get put on them. You can't express how you are feeling, and you can't let out that you're

angry or frustrated and ... you just hold it inside, and you bottle it up, and bottle it up, until the next time comes and you lash out. Explode again and then it just gradually gets worse and worse.

## **Sidney**

Sidney, was born in Australia of Australian parents and at fifty one years of age, was separated and living alone. His father had been a tradesman, his mother a cleaner, and Sidney observed that his father had been very involved in all matters of housekeeping. Sidney had two children and was a Buddhist. His interests and hobbies were many and varied but music and surfing the internet, appeared to be very popular pastimes of his. He had previously held a demanding corporate position as an advertising executive. His wife, he said, had not understood the emotional pressure of his work and so whilst he believed he was working hard to maintain an income to support the family, from “my spouse’s perspective, I wasn’t at home, and therefore I wasn’t doing a whole lot of other duties”. He had been retrenched and was temporarily working as a service station console operator. Sidney wrote on his form that the violence he had used was “physical, verbal, emotional. I once pulled my wife’s hair”. Later he said:

We were both very hot-headed people ... It was more a kind of a point scoring situation. There was no emotional blackmail or any of that stuff. It was just the fact that we used to flare up and we would say things to each other that were very nasty ... I needed to vent and express my point of view and very often that was in a heated situation ... if she was not listening to me, or understanding, I would press a point.

## **Simon**

Simon was fifty years old, an Anglican born in Australia to Australian parents. He described himself as a man who enjoyed exercising his brain rather than his body, but said that he did enjoy fishing and snow skiing. His mother was a housewife and his father earned the family income from a variety of jobs such as pastry cook, bus driver and maintenance man. Simon was a business analyst in the information technology industry and lived in an affluent suburb of Sydney. However, he divulged that: “I haven’t always lived over here in the nice leafy suburbs. I went to a pretty rough school. There was lots of fighting and stuff going on all the time”. He was married to a Chinese solicitor and they had a son and daughter.

Simon wrote on his form that he had been physically, verbally and emotionally abusive towards his wife. In his interview, he stated:

In the past as I said, I thought I was supportive of June in her career. Then when we started having difficulties, as I think back to it, my whole demeanour to her changed. The snag bit just disappeared. I wasn't supportive of her. I actually thought that she rejected me for some reason and I could never forgive her. What did I do to cause her to reject me? I was hurt and angry, resentful and I reacted violently. So it just got worse and worse. I didn't know what to do. I guess, in a way, I took it as a personal attack from June. Why is she behaving like this to me? What have I done? I don't deserve this. And that's how I reacted.

He also acknowledged that the making of financial decisions was still a problem area in their relationship. He believed that he had better financial knowledge than she did and it really pissed him off that she wouldn't listen. "When it comes to financial planning for retirement, I really think that June should listen and do what I say, in that regard".

## **Stefano**

Stefano, who was 38 years old, was born in Australia to Italian parents. He said that his upbringing was "very Italian dominated" and traditional. He had been an electrician for nineteen years, but had recently taken a job as a product quality control representative. A Catholic, he was currently living with a sibling in Wollongong, outside Sydney, as he was estranged from his tiny wife, Jackie. Stefano noted on his form that he had pushed Jackie; verbally abused her and pulled her hair. Later, he explained:

I don't know, but I don't think I've ever chosen to move on to Jackie. I have never chosen to be violent with her. Once I was violent with her, but then I can say I chose to stop. All of a sudden I have gone, shit what am I doing, you know, pull back ... I pulled her hair. I grabbed her by the hair and pulled her hair. I know that's violence, but I've never been in say, in a disagreement with Jackie and just gone and pulled her hair. I mean we are talking arguments where we're both screaming at the top of our voices and we have been going for a fairly

long time. And then all of a sudden for some reason, I woofed her ... I don't know how to explain it. I don't know how you analyse it to find out why ... It is scary, because that is not me. It's not who I am. I feel very hurt inside and humiliated ... because I was violent and I don't condone violence and for me to do it is out of my character.

## **Timothy**

Timothy had come to live in Australia in 1985 when he was thirty years old. He was born in England and had grown up in the east end of London, in a suburb called Hackney, which he described as a pretty rough area. Here, he said, violence was a part of everyday life; "used it to get what we wanted". Fights and gangs in the playground, streets and pubs were normal. His father was an electrician and demanded that Timothy learn a trade after he was expelled from school for breaking a window. Timothy would have preferred going to Art College at the time but he stated: "Dad thought I had to go and get a trade behind me, which was great, you know. I really thank him for it now". Timothy loved playing music and enjoyed the bohemian friends he had met as a result. At the time of the interview, Timothy was married and lived with his wife and three children. Whilst he wrote on his form that the abusive behaviour he had used was "verbal, intimidation, slap, shook, shouting", he described it in more detail in his interview:

It would spring up every now and then. I'm talking about once in one relationship; in another relationship, twice; and a previous relationship, twice; and my first very young relationship, I probably bashed her about three times ... I think I was more an idiot then than I am now. More of a young fool ... I think I was ashamed about it. I knew it was wrong ... but not as ashamed as I am now. And although I might, the deeds are far, far fewer and less violent. This time I slapped my wife, three months ago now, that was the first time I think that I have been violent with her. I have always when we have had rows stormed off or I have hit the door or I get so frustrated with myself, I've thumped the wall or I've kicked the garbage bin, made a big fuss, made a big drama you know, like a real school boy, a little boy having a tantrum ... Look at me, look at me. I'm the one who needs help. But back then I used to be more violent, more frequently ... I feel like now that I've got children, I've got to stop this behaviour.

He and his wife have since separated because Timothy's violence persists, but they continue to cohabit and co-parent their children.

## **Toby**

Toby was born in Australia and was 36 years old. He lived alone in what had been the marital home. His wife, Lois, had left him, taking with her their two little children, a girl and boy. He had been a plumber but was on worker's compensation due to a work related injury which caused him great discomfort and pain. His parents were Australian; his father, a spray painter, and his mother both a housekeeper and book keeper. He belonged to the Church of England and enjoyed watching football and boxing. On his form, Toby wrote that his abuse was verbal. In the interview, he was more explicit:

My wife's only very little. She's only like 4ft 10" and probably 50 kilos, and for me to like actually physically hit her, I feel I couldn't do it. I'd be too scared that I could kill her ... I might of grabbed her before but not like a severe grab where she would lose her balance completely and fall to the ground. I know when I was going through my neck stuff, I remember slamming the front door which I used to do a hundred times anyway. I just would walk in and just slam it. But one particular day, we had a bit of a disagreement and I was out the front and she was ready to take the kids to school and she wasn't answering me properly. Like she wouldn't give me a straight answer which was just frustrating me a bit and when I walked back in, as I normally would, I just grabbed the door and slammed it. And I probably did it a little bit harder than what I normally would and the glass broke. But that was more through being frustrated; like I guess I was taking my frustrations out on something else, like not on her.

Thus concludes the somewhat concise biographies of the participants. However, these individuals and their personal circumstances will become more familiar with the data presentation to follow in the next two chapters.

## Chapter 5: Being Male

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This chapter is dedicated to a presentation of the data that was forthcoming in response to the first six questions on the interview schedule. These questions had been designed to invite the men to position themselves in discourses around masculinity. Hence, this chapter has been called, *Being Male*. It provides “a” summary of the men’s responses and therefore, I suggest, an insight into what they considered acceptable and appropriate behaviour for men; what it took, in their view, to be “good at being a man” (Gilmore, 1990: 36). Moreover, as was stated in Chapter 3, the questions also provided an opportunity for the inference, both explicit and implicit, of cultural differences in the men’s attitudes towards masculinity.

In accordance with grounded theory, an attempt has been made to organise this data according to its salient points in such a way as to allow for the building, or the development of theory in the final chapter of the thesis. Therefore, in each section, I allow the men’s voices initially to speak for themselves before making some very brief comments, which will be expanded upon in Chapter 7.

In Chapter 3, I acknowledged that it is too simple to claim that the men’s answers to the questions on the interview schedule, and the consequent discussions that arose during our conversations, solely directed the organisation and analysis of data; the coding, selection and development of themes, sections and subsections. No claim is being made to exclude “the observer from the observed by the imputation of objectivity” (White & Epston, 1990: 82). Rather, it is conceded that any time one classifies, labels or selects data, it follows that there is some degree of interpretation and it is necessary to identify my own part in the endeavour to find “truth”. Hence, in the above paragraph, recognition is given to the fact that what follows is “a” summary of the participant’s responses.

However, as “we can create the world only in the terms we have available to us” (Drewery & Winsdale, 1997: 40), and as every effort has been made in the analysis to convey meaning as closely as possible to the narratives of the participants, it seems fair to suggest that this chapter, as well as the next, have been co-produced and that I, as the

observer, have been accorded the role of privileged editor and reporter (White & Epston, 1990: 82).

The first two sections have been called *Advantages of being Male* and *Disadvantages of being Male*. They record the answers men gave when asked what the advantages or disadvantages were of being male in society today (Question 2: See Appendix I), but it is clearly my comprehension of what is being said that has determined in which section their replies are reported. Both of these sections have been divided into subsections, which also incorporate the responses of men to questions 1 and 2. For example, the subsection, *Social Expectations*, includes statements in reply to the question, “Are there qualities that men are expected to demonstrate; if so what are they and what effect does this have on you?” Similarly, the subsection, *Identity Crisis*, proffers responses to the question, “How are things the same or different today as compared to the past?” (Question 3: See Appendix I) Obviously, it is not suggested that either sections or subsections are exclusive. Inclusions to one are very often applicable to another.

### ***Advantages of Being Male***

The summary of statements indicating what the men thought were the advantages of being male, begins with the subsection, *Innate Differences to Women*, so named because men suggested that they were advantaged in some areas by being born with different, and largely biological, traits to women.

#### **Innate Differences to Women**

Adrian said that there were real biological hardwired gender things that made men and women different; that it was just part of the package that women were going to lose the plot once a month, whereas it was different for men. Jeffery expressed his view that women were disadvantaged by having their “monthlies” and Matthew admitted relief at being unable to fall pregnant. Chan said that men might not be skilled in terms of multi-tasking, but were coded instead by DNA to protect others and to preserve the DNA sequence of future generations.

Khaled spoke of men being born with natural instinct, aggression and the strength to win. He said that one only had to look at the wild to realise that women did not have it in them to be hunters like men and he was adamant that women could not make good leaders, bosses or managers because “I don’t think they’ve really got it, when it really counts”. Jean-Claude used wild life to illustrate a similar view. He said that it was clear from observing chimpanzees that the male was supposed to be the go-getter; that even though the female was very active in hunting, her role was specifically to educate children and to show them how to use implements. Adrian also extolled men for having a level of action and decisiveness, strength of purpose and “the balls to really go for something”.

Feodor pointed out that there were differences in the brain functioning of men and women. Men, he said, were advantaged in that they could be better scientists; could focus on chemistry, pattern making and visual, spatial thinking; women were more able to multi-task. “You guys can’t park cars”, he added. “We can park cars”. Jean-Claude also pointed out the advantage of male strength when driving a motor car with which, he said, females have more trouble. He said that his wife was unable to release the hand brake despite being an athlete and a swimmer. Marshall, a very slim man who spoke extraordinarily quietly, said that he enjoyed being a boy because he was able to throw his body around. He enjoyed the fact that his body was as strong as a brick and not delicate like a woman’s. As a boy, he said, he was obviously a lot stronger, a lot earlier, than his sister was. Adrian spoke of being advantaged by having the brute strength to fix things around the house and to be able to do such things as open jars. Aaron also felt that men were born with the ability to pick up a hammer and fix things; that men were generally more physical than women, enjoying activities like running around, crashing into each other, ball games and bicycle riding. Matthew explained that men could build and fix things up, “where a lot of women, doesn’t matter how many times you have shown them, just can’t seem to grasp the concept of it”. Feodor thought “you just have to accept” that because of the way men are “made”, “we will always be a faster runner over 100m”.

Martin also identified, and contrasted, the physical strength of men to the nurturing qualities of women. He likened men to a wall of defence whilst he described women as “the supplies that nourish the troops on the wall of defence”. Aaron thought that it was an advantage that men had the ability “to switch off emotional things”. Like Mayor Giuliani after the September Eleven disaster, he said, men are able to walk in and



simply take control, shutting off all emotional stuff so that things are managed and organised without a lot of panic, whereas women would be emotional, although supportive and nurturing. He stated that:

I like aspects about me that are the male aspects. Because of the work I do which is accident investigation, I actually like that ability to be able to walk into a scene where there is trauma and drama and things like that and to be able to be dispassionate ... If someone wants to know what went on here so that it can be prevented in the future, it needs a dispassionate, analytical way of going through something and I can do it. And I like that quality. I kind of think that is a male quality not a female quality.

***Commentary:***

Adrian extolled men for having the “balls to really go for something”. His use of the phrase suggests that women, or those who do not have testicles, are incapable of having similar courage and strength to those that do; in other words, men. Murphy (2001), however, says that metaphors such as having the balls” reflect the values of society. He suggests that language reinforces social roles and that discourse gives permission to perpetuate certain behaviours. The phrase “having the balls”, he says, equates a man’s gonads with courage but in reality excludes a man’s mind or intelligence, so that what is assumed to represent a positive male quality in fact indicates stupidity and insensitivity. Murphy (2001) speculates what would be different if “having the brains” replaced “having the balls” in the general discourse. This calls to mind Nussbaum (2000:5) who argues that the “best approach to the idea of a basic social minimum is provided by an approach that focuses on human capabilities, that is, what people are actually able to do and to be”. Unfortunately, “unequal social and political circumstances give women unequal human capabilities” (Nussbaum, 2000: 1).

Marshall’s appreciation of his body and the fact that it is not as delicate as a woman’s invokes Brown (1999) who talks about the status and power of the hard male body.

As an external signifier of masculinity, the body has come to represent all the conventions traditionally linked to assumptions of male superiority ... Nothing else so clearly marks an individual as a bearer of masculine power ... In fact, muscles are so adamantly read as a sign of masculinity that women who develop noticeable

muscularity ... are often accused of gender transgression, of being butch or too 'manly', in much the same way as underdeveloped men are open to the criticism of being too feminine ... This myth of idealised masculinity which is still incredibly pervasive remains dependant upon the symbolic split between masculinity and femininity, between the hard male and the soft Other.

The following subsection is called *Male Superiority and Power* because it documents statements suggesting that males are advantaged through being superior and holding more power than women do. A number of the statements already recorded above could well be included in it.

## **Male Superiority and Power**

Perhaps, there is no clearer example of perceived male superiority than that depicted by an extract from the conversation with Feodor:

Researcher: How do men see themselves in our society?

Feodor: We have the luxury of not having to.

Researcher: You don't believe that society expects men to demonstrate certain qualities?

Feodor: Yes, but they are more nuisance qualities really ... Well, put it this way. You guys put on make up. Why do you put on make up? To please us.

He was not alone in these views. Jean-Claude stressed that, in any event, the areas in which women were expected to perform were not as critical to survival as those of men. Stefano felt that men were perceived to be more knowledgeable than women on any subject and Roger commented that men play a game of one upmanship with women; that "it comes from a place that they've been taught, that the man is somehow the breadwinner or superior or whatever and they've believed it. They've swallowed the whole line". Raymond was an example of this. As an avid churchgoer, he was adamant that God had decreed that a man had to be the head of the household, responsible and accountable for the family. Therefore, it was not that a man simply played "head-honcho"; rather that, whilst he had to take into consideration the needs, opinions and

welfare of his family, it was his God given responsibility to make the final decisions. Matthew talked of movies that “give us the effect that men are just superior and not as sensitive as women”. Marshall stated:

That’s the difference between males and females. Males will say what they need to say; do what they need to do. Get it out and then move on. And females hold a lot more in, and it stews on, and it goes on for years.

Simon said that although it was a broad statement, it remained true that, in general, the model in Australia was for male superiority. David summed it all up by saying that women and children are “people that are lesser than me”.

Men also spoke about the advantages of having and using power. Raymond indicated that “there’s a gender imbalance of power”; that men have an advantage in the way it is. This was a view supported by a number of men. For instance, Peter said that men are brought up to be dominant in a relationship and Clive agreed that a man needed to be the dominant one; the one in control. “My father”, he said, “controlled my mother like something incredible”. Pablo, too, felt that men needed to have at least fifty-five percent of the say in making decisions in the home; that when a man lost power, he felt as though he was not needed and that not being needed was a slow death for a man. A man, he stated, needs to control the situation; to be like “the king of that empire”. Raymond declared that “in my own home, I have that power because I have got physical presence”. Serge observed that it was an expectation of men to: “Just have total control of what goes on at home. And not giving in and not letting yourself be walked all over”. He stated further that “there’s a lot male dominance and male power in there and from what I can see the male is expected to show the strength and, I guess, just be the one in power”. He was of the opinion that:

If you show more power, more dominance, you’re much more likely to get somewhere in life and if you can push your way through the crowd, you can get somewhere then, and get in front. Get in front a lot easier than someone who is just not using their power and just relaxing and just being themselves. I guess there is a big advantage in that.

“Cause as you well know”, agreed Khaled, “to get to the top you need to tread all over people”. He believed that to make people sit up and listen it was necessary to be

forceful, and show it. As mentioned previously, he believed that women did not have the innate ability to be forceful when it really mattered which, for him, was the reason they did not make good leaders or bosses. As Stefano said:

It is easier for a man to get something done, rather than a female. I mean, a classic example is a car. A female takes a car into a mechanic. More than likely she is not going to know anything about a car mechanically wise and the mechanic is going to rip her off.

***Commentary:***

Pease (2000: 34) states that:

Discourses make positions available for individuals and these positions are taken up in relation to other people. When taken up, the world is seen from the standpoint of that position.

This section began with a comment of Feodor's about women and make-up which not only defined his position, his subjective masculinity, but established his perceived sense of superiority by virtue of his male gender. This sets the scene for further examples of men describing the advantages of being male not only by contrasting themselves as "other" to inferior females but by pitting themselves against them as well. It is indicative of a stance equivalent to "us" versus "them". As Coates (2003: 69) argues, "The significant way in which hegemonic masculinity is created and maintained is through the denial of femininity"; men's narratives "do important ideological work, maintaining a discourse position where men are all important and women are invisible" (Coates, 2000: 122).

It seems from the comments made by some of the men that they are "culturally propelled to incorporate dominance, whether in terms of crude physical strength or displays of 'masculine' rationality and competence, into their presentation of self" (Beynon, 2002: 11). Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994) make the point that success and power are the hallmarks of masculinity. Therefore, it is little surprising that Pablo, for example, could say that when a man loses power, he feels as though he is not needed and is bad; that not to be needed is a slow death for a man.

Kimmel (2000) argues that gender is as much the property of institutions as it is of individuals. He says that institutions themselves reproduce gender relations between

women and men, perpetuating gendered hierarchies of power and control. This is clearly illustrated in the statement by Raymond, the avid churchgoer, who firmly advocated that God decrees man to be the head of the household. I, like Pease (2000), believe that patriarchy means institutionalised male power.

Some men acknowledged that they were advantaged in terms of employment opportunities and earning potential; that certain industries such as the automotive industry, companies, boards of directors, the army, police force and politics remained male oriented. Therefore, the following subsection has been called *Professional and Financial Advantage*.

### **Professional and Financial Advantage**

Whilst Peter was unhappy that women had been allowed to enter every male “bastion” with the exception of Maroubra Surf Club and Icebergs, Roger said that he knew that men had certain advantages in terms of work and all those sorts of things; that the glass ceiling still existed in a number of industries. Simon confirmed that whilst numbers of women equalled those of men in the junior ranks of his IT department, they just about disappeared in management ranks; that “if you get 10%, it will be amazing”; and that “that sort of dominance would apply in most professions in the professional world”. Stefano, likewise, held the view that “to this day the business world is still mainly male oriented” and Jean-Claude maintained that “there are more and more women in those professions, but they are still the minority”.

Barry stated that:

[Men] have the capability in our society of earning more money because you’ve only got to look at all the boards of directors. I mean, how many of the companies are all males? So I think unfortunately the society we are living in isn’t even a true equality society. I think that’s an advantage for a male.

Aaron asserted that it was a historical thing that men earned the better salaries; that the caring professions, i.e. women’s professions like teaching, “are still kind of looked down upon”. He felt that it was outrageous that the heads of companies get a million

dollars, even when companies collapse, whereas teachers “developing a few generations get paid a relative pittance”. However, whilst he claimed that there should be the same pay for the same level of work, he also believed that:

If the male technically has the greater earning capacity and [they] need the funds to keep the home front afloat, pay the mortgage and bring the food in, then it makes more sense that the person, who has got the greatest earning capacity, goes and gets it and spends a lot of hours doing it.

***Commentary:***

It is important that patriarchy not be seen as ahistorical (Pease, 2000) or to suggest that change has not occurred. Kimmel (2000) says that for the past century there has been a movement towards lessening gender inequality and removing obstacles for women entering public arenas that were the sole domain of men.

However, “the structures of patriarchy exist beyond the individual actions of particular men” (Pease, 2000: 13), and the comments the interviewees made about their professional and financial advantages, suggest that patriarchy as institutionalised male power, a system of power and oppression, remains embedded in the social practices of society (Pease, 2000); that gender relations continue to be “present in all types of institutions” (Connell, 1994: 30). Walby (1994: 23) said that “The control of women’s access to paid work is maintained primarily by patriarchal relations in the workplace and in the state, as well as those in the household”. Whilst there were some men whose statements also acknowledged that “despite enormous and persistent gender inequality in the workplace, women are there to stay” (Kimmel, 2000: 198), generally, the men’s comments reflect a belief or desire for the division of labour where for the most part, women’s work continues to be understood as domestic and unpaid whilst, on the other hand, men’s is public and paid (Connell, 1994).

Pease (2000: 134) argues that there are numerous discourses available to men that “are quite compatible with the patriarchally constructed interests of men”. Aaron is an example here, but there will be further evidence of this in the men’s statements to come. Whilst agreeing that there should be the same pay for the same level of work, Aaron nevertheless said that it is a historical thing that men earn the better salaries and, therefore, he felt, it made sense in a pragmatic way that the person who has the greatest

earning capacity goes and gets work and spends a lot of hours doing it whilst the other person stays at home with the children. McMahon (1999: 154 & 166) would most likely suggest that this opinion reflects the failure of the “revolving door” theory; that what is evident is a “blocked door theory” or resistance to change; that this is another case of doing gender and that men like Aaron would not see this as resistance because they hold the power to resist.

Some men indicated that an advantage of being male was that they enjoyed a less restricted lifestyle than women did. Hence the following subsection has been called *Personal Autonomy*.

## **Personal Autonomy**

Simon said that men have an advantage in that they can make their own lives; that apart from certain constraints such as careers, “otherwise we tend to derive and direct our own futures”. Jeffery’s comment was:

For a start, all we’ve got to do in the morning is have a shave and brush our hair and that’s it for us. We put on a shirt and tie for work. You guys have got to wear something different most days or you’re worried about what you wearing.

Clive thought that one of the advantages of being a man was that “men have got more freedom than a woman. It’s as simple as that. As they say it is a man’s world. It’s true”. He added that men were very selfish; that it was, in his opinion, the reason why so many relationships, like his, were spoilt. “What I wanted, I wanted”, he said. “I wanted to play squash. End of story. Shit what you think, right”. Khaled also said that he would be the one to make any major decisions. Natasha could put her input in and he would listen but ultimately he would make the final decision even though she sometimes got “shitty”. He believed simply that men needed to be more dominant than women and Jean-Claude and Roger agreed that men enjoyed more authority than women did in their dealings with people. As Raymond said, “I can control my wife and children because I don’t talk to people the way I talk to them in the workplace or in the world at large”.

Khaled believed that an advantage of being male was that men could get up and go; that “[Lebanese] men come home, have a meal, then they go out and see their friends. The woman is still stuck at home with the kids”. He added that although some men (but not him) might be scared, there was far more chance of a woman being attacked in a dark alley than he was. Clive also stated that women get freaked out by what might happen to them in the street. He said they got mugged or raped, which, in his view, did not happen to men very often.

For Martin, the advantage of being male was “putting it bluntly, a good fuck, a good lay, a good drink up with some female that you pick up”. Feodor also commented that rather than marry as young as he did, he probably should have been “sewing my seeds”. That women had less sexual license was apparent when Peter expressed much criticism of a woman who he found in a “casual relationship” with a guy at three o’clock in the morning. Marshall also pointed out that whilst it was pretty much unacceptable for a woman to swear in a public area, this was not the case for men.

Both Jeffery and Peter hinted at the advantages men had after separation. For Peter, men were able to pick up the pieces, walk away and find another relationship to move on to, “a helluva lot faster than what a female can”. Jeffery added that he was able to enjoy his separation because he was not restricted by caring for children. He said that if he had had his son with him seven days a week:

I’d be very restricted to what I could do and what I couldn’t ... I probably haven’t had so much fun in all my life as I am at the moment. I am doing what I want ... Going lots of places and going out. I’m meeting so many different people it is ridiculous.

***Commentary:***

Marshall suggested that swearing in a public place is well accepted for men but not for women. Coates (2003) points out that male speakers express solidarity with each other through the use of such linguistic strategies as swearing, and that it simultaneously accomplishes hegemonic masculinity.

Sexual licence is also implicated in some of the men’s statements as socially accepted behaviour for men and not for women. Comments like these are representative of the sexual double standards that exist in Western patriarchal culture where sex for women is



considered immoral but is actually encouraged for men for whom, too, sexual immaturity is stigmatised (Kimmel, 2000). A man gains status from sexual experience whereas a woman loses it. He is considered a “stud” whilst she becomes a “slut” (Kimmel, 2000). Martin maintained that an advantage of being male was “putting it bluntly, a good fuck, a good lay, a good drink up with some female that you pick up”. This illustrates a belief that sex, even combined with a measure of aggression, is central to men’s lives, lacking in intimacy and mostly genitally and orgasm focused (Kimmel, 2000). It is ironic that whilst this is seen as an advantage, Murphy (2001: 3) maintains that “when men speak of their lives as men, they hide behind a discourse that protects them from close, personal, caring relationships with others”.

Khaled’s comments about street violence are interesting as men are overwhelmingly the victims of violence as they are its perpetrators (Connell, 2002; Kimmel, 2000) and the home is, in fact, the safest place for men and the least safe place for women (Hearn, 1998). Khaled’s statement also confirms his need to conform to the patriarchal stipulation that men are fearless and can hold their own when challenged (Gilmore, 1990).

Sidney pointed out that being competitive could be very good, but at the same time it could be very nasty. The “nasty” side will be reviewed in the section, *Disadvantages of Being Male*, but in the subsection below, statements to the contrary will be summarised. The men also expressed being advantaged by the enjoyment, and the ability to give, mateship and protection. In some ways, this subsection sits in contrast to another later section in this chapter called *Relationships*. Initially, the name Mateship and Guardianship was formulated but this was deemed inaccurate for the following reason. Pablo said that men loved to give and that the bottom line was that every man wished, and tried to put in, the best for his wife and children. David also stated that he believed in being the provider; that “I have provided for all my wives. They’ve never had to work and if they did, all the money was theirs to do what they wanted”. However, generally speaking, it seemed that in contrast to the physical protection of the weak and vulnerable, the financial provision for families was spoken about as a disadvantage and as extremely stressful. Therefore, statements pertaining to providing were accordingly summarised in *Social Expectations* and the title for this subsection was confined to *Mateship and Protection*.

## **Mateship and Protection**

Raymond observed that when he looked at men, even though he saw a great deal of inadequacy, he also saw hearts that were willing. In the main, said Sidney, if you broke through the abusive icy exterior, then men were warm and willing to share and help. Other men held similar views. For example, Lane believed that men could be destructive but also very loving and caring.

Chan described the deep understanding and support that existed between him and his work-mate, Daniel. He explained how they spoke to each other and comforted each other over the loss of their wives using a “male code”. “But when we talk about it, we don’t say I know how that feels, darling. We don’t do anything like that”. But, if Daniel asked Chan to go out with him and some friends, Chan knew that this meant, “how are things going at home”; “I know how you feel; I know how much it hurt”. Sidney talked about how his friends would approach him and say “why didn’t you tell me about this? You know we can do something to sort this out”.

Raymond recalled that as a rugby player he was always a good team member and had the boys around him. He remembered an incident when a guy had tried to kick him as he lay on the ground. He said his tough mates had come in and belted this person up; that he, therefore, felt very much protected in this way. David pointed out that in a pub, when a man was hit, everyone was watching and he would be protected. Toby described another incident of this nature. He and “his mate” were walking along the Manly Corso. A guy, who had been watching a boxing match on television in a pub nearby and had got “pretty hyped up”, attacked his friend who, Toby commented, had also been drinking “full on”. The fight became so violent that Toby described it as pretty scary. He remembered trying to help but was aware that five or six of the attacker’s mates were standing by. Weighing up the odds, based upon previous experience, he decided against stepping in, and was forced to stand helplessly by with this friend’s girlfriend, even though, he said, it was not a nice thing to see.

Aaron, Jean-Claude, Jeffery and Peter firmly believed that there was never competition between men. “It just does not seem to happen a lot”, said Aaron, “at least, not with my male friends”. Jean-Claude shared that his relationships with his close friends and brothers were totally non-competitive; that they were all very close and prepared to talk

about their emotions, problems with their wives, things they were worried about and to a point, any other intimate issue. Jeffery explained that he and his friends would be competitive about who had the fastest jet-ski. “But that’s just fun”, he added, “I mean it’s not serious stuff ... it’s probably about it as far as competitive goes”. Peter agreed that “No, there is no competition”, but he added that in present society, a man learnt soon enough who was, or was not, his mate.

Matthew thought that, in fact, men, and not women, were born with the ability to make their partner feel comfortable and secure. Stefano, for example, said that men did not really want much and that they would do anything for a woman. Serge thought that he needed to give his family support and security, and Barry spoke particularly of providing emotional support. Some men spoke more specifically about their own efforts or desire to protect the vulnerable and uphold justice. For instance, Martin said he would strangle anyone who treated another human being in a physically abusive manner; this included anyone responsible for the physical abuse of a woman or an action involving a child. Yet, he also made it clear that, to his mind, the physical abuse of a woman was a very grey area indeed.

If I had a colleague, I wouldn’t care who the hell it was, who came in and absolutely gloated like fireworks ... if it were anything that involved a child or absolutely straight out physical abuse of a woman who didn’t consent to it, and that is a very grey area I don’t deny it ... but let’s take the blatant one, if he came to me and gloated about being physically violent, yes, I would generate 150% energy in me and I would strangle him.

Feodor told the story of how he had physically attacked a man who was beating his son in a supermarket car park. He had run up to this man, pulled him to the ground and held him by the throat. It was over, he said, as soon as he had taken hold of him. “How does it feel?” he asked this person. Feodor confessed: “I see that weird juxtaposition that I defended someone’s child, but I could at the same time in a sense do something a lot worse to my wife”. Khaled, too, had gone to the rescue of a blind lady who had been robbed. He said that he chased the “desperate” robber down the street to grab him because he was doing the wrong thing. Looking back on it, he said, the offender’s condition was such that he would neither recommend this action nor would he do it himself again; the offender could, after all, have been armed with a knife or a gun.

Marshall recalled that only two weeks previously, he had walked out of a pub with some friends of his. They had come across a whole lot of young kids who, he knew, wanted to have fights “left, right and centre”. “It was serious”, he said, “but they were too drunk to really know what they were doing”. He stepped in, he explained, to break it up and to “brighten the situation up a bit”. He did not want to see anyone get hurt as he had before in other similar situations. Whilst he felt that he was not for a moment in danger, and what had happened was just playing, he recognised that there was a very fine line between playing and the real thing, and that “it was starting to get bad”.

Adrian also spoke of wanting to be protective. He explained that if he was on a train and people were threatening the environment, or there was some arguing, then he saw it as his role to step in; to be “that kind of protective”. He also said that being “fairly protective of his partner” made him feel good about himself. David maintained that his role was to be the protector. In fact, said Chan, men were built by DNA to protect others. Khaled, too, agreed with his father’s stance against the bringing home of his male friends as a youth, because he felt that his sisters needed to be protected. Jeffery stated that he had noticed that women still like being treated as ladies; that the man needed to be a gentleman; “and that is in me”, he added, “Like I really like to look after people”.

***Commentary:***

In these examples, the narrator presents himself as performing heroically (Coates, 2000). Gilmore (1990: 229) found that:

Manhood ideologies always include a criterion of selfless generosity, even to the point of sacrifice ... Again and again we find that “real” men are those who give more than they take; they serve others.

However, it seems necessary here to remain cognisant of a point made by Kimmel (2000). He said that the spectre of the sissy, the fears of emasculation, humiliation and effeminacy, lie behind much of masculine violence. I think, too, of Kaufman (1993: 208) who states that relations between men are relations of power;

And to the extent that men fear not making the grade, it is other men who can best unmask our pretence; even if we can fake it with women

we can't fake it around men. Other men are the real judges of masculinity.

Martins' statement that he would strangle the offender in any action that involved a child or the physical abuse of a woman, shows that violence is seen as legitimate as long as it is retaliatory (Kimmel, 2000). However, his declaration that the physical abuse of a woman, who did not consent to it, is a very grey area, is a concerning indication that men see what "they do to women as their 'right', a sense of entitlement to women's bodies" (Kimmel, 2000: 105); and that "[sexual] entitlement also covers acting on it – even when a woman doesn't want to" (Kimmel, 2000: 232).

To my way of thinking, the men spoke at greater length about the disadvantages of being male than they did of the advantages. However, it is important to keep in mind that the aim here has not been, and will not be, to determine how good a man is in the moral sense of the word. Therefore, neither the advantages nor disadvantages carry more weight than the other for both represent an enactment of "masculinity-as-text" (Beynon: 2002: 10); a commentary on what is acceptable as appropriate behaviour for men in Western culture; a collective representation of the "male script" (Gilmore, 1990).

### ***Disadvantages of Being Male***

At times men expressed opposing viewpoints. Therefore, there are two subsections in the *Disadvantages of Being Male* which have counterparts in the previous section, *Advantages of Being Male*. In the first place, whereas some men spoke of the advantage of some innate trait differences, others put forward differing views. Therefore, this first subsection has also been entitled *Innate Differences to Women* and stands in contrast to that in the previous section.

## **Innate Differences to Women**

Feodor believed that men's brains develop differently to women's. As a result, he explained, men were unable to find the soy sauce in the fridge as women could; men were unable to speak on the telephone and watch television at the same time, like women did; men were not as emotionally stable as women were.

Chan believed that males were very limited in multi-tasking; that it was useless to set a moving target for them. They needed linear tasks. He said the cave man had to build a fire and then hunt a deer or go fishing. He could not be disturbed by being expected to tend to a crying baby at the same time. Therefore, he, personally, believed he was unable to get his driver's licence and attend job interviews at the same time. This simply resulted in his stress level being tripled and certain failure in achieving either endeavour. Nor, he said, was he genetically built to handle, the internal stress caused by his wife and family. Rather, he was equipped to become defensive in times of external threat to his body.

Go back to the caveman, bear analogy. Let's say you are the bear. I have no trouble dealing with you. But the whole reason for me to do that is to save the wife and children ... So obviously, I am not afraid of dealing with external stress. It's internal stress that comes from the wife and the family that normally I'm not equipped to handle ... I think genetically, I am not built to handle it.

Andrew also believed that women were born with an ability to learn about, and handle, emotions earlier and better than men. Men, he commented, "don't go like this up and down every month", and therefore women have the advantage of being able to learn how to cope with "those highs and lows perhaps a little better than blokes do". When men do experience a low, he said, it "nearly knocks the piss out of them". Simon agreed that both as a result of the way humans were born, and their social interaction, men were not equipped to handle emotions as women were.

There were other innate disadvantages mentioned. Roger claimed that men die a lot younger than women; Timothy and Stefano, that women rather than men could use their beauty to advantage. "We can't use our sex appeal as well as females can to get what we want," stated Stefano. Martin commented:

So if men and women are identical in every social format by legislation, it means that because men can't bear children, then there is something that women can do that men can't. And in effect have an edge, for want of a better description.

***Commentary:***

Coates (2000: 37) maintains that the key function of narrative is the construction of gender; that masculinity and femininity are relational constructs and that in "telling a story, a male speaker is, among other things, performing *not* being a woman (just as a female speaker is performing *not* being a man)". She goes on to say that hegemonic masculinity is created and maintained through the denial of femininity; that "Hegemonic masculine discourses are both misogynistic and homophobic" (Coates, 2000: 69). Silverstein and Rashbaum (1995: 235) agree that Western culture expects "boys to identify themselves as masculine by virtue of not being feminine". Therefore, it is little surprising that the denial of femininity and misogyny are constant themes running through the men's narratives; that women are constructed as the despised other (Coates, 2000).

Graddol and Swann (1998) argue that language reflects rather than creates social inequality. Some of the statements above give evidence of a culture that promotes competition not co-operation (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1995); competition that has been dubbed "compulsive" competition by Biddulph (1994: 4). It is arguable that what sounds like resentment, jealousy or envy in the statements above, is, in fact, an indication of the pressure placed upon men by an idealised hegemonic masculinity, and the fear of not realising a target which, truth be told, is unattainable (Karner, 1998) and not equally accessible to all men. Roger said that men were disadvantaged in that they die younger than women and Beynon (2002) uses statistics to confirm that this is indeed so. The unanswered question is who inflicts this situation upon men.

Moreover, these comments by the men also highlight how much male oppressiveness is unconscious because men work from a base of unacknowledged privilege (McIntosh, 1998). They are a reflection of the "years of indoctrination into a relatively powerful and relatively blind place within the social order" (Dolan-Delvecchio, 1998: 171). For example, Chan says that *he could not be disturbed by being expected* to tend to a crying baby at the same time as building a fire; that men need linear tasks. He does not explain

why the same does not hold for his multi-tasking wife. Stefano and Martin's observations are no less illustrative of this blindness.

The second subsection is called *Competitiveness*, and it stands in direct contrast to the contents of *Mateship and Protection* in the previous section.

## **Competitiveness**

Just as some men spoke of mateship and an absence of competition between men, others indicated, to use the words of Pablo, that rivals were all around; that these rivals were not women and children but men. It was Pablo's view that men had to show power against these rivals; that being stronger and on top, was not about a punch in the jaw but money. Money, he maintained, was power; money meant better houses, better cars and more exotic holidays. According to him, huge corporations had made it this way; individuals and achievements he identified as being at the lower end of the scale which is topped by huge corporations who set the targets.

Raymond agreed that power was an important factor in winning the respect of other men. This power, he said, could be achieved through being successful with women or through having knowledge and expertise in a particular area. Clive was another who felt that more pressure was placed upon men to prove themselves by other men, their mates, rather than by women. He said that he and his mates used to drink and smoke as much as they could, to show that they were better and tougher than each other.

Matthew said that men are too far up themselves; that it's "sort of a macho image where you got to be better than the next bloke, which is just a vicious idiotic circle really". He told of how he and his brother-in-laws, "both nice blokes", had gone out for a buck's night with about "half a dozen of their mates and two people that I have drunk with so many times". He said these were all guys who had known each other since primary school, and yet "they were just trying to outdo each other the whole night". He could not help but think, "What have I got myself into here? I have been out with them on separate occasions and they are totally different people". Clive, a New Zealander, maintained that drinking was certainly the norm amongst his friends in New Zealand; that all of them used to try and drink and smoke as much as they could, to show that



they were tougher than the next man. It is interesting that Peter, an Australian truck-driver, explained the giving of the “evil eye” in pubs by the Kiwis as their inability to hold their drink. This statement seems to bear much evidence of masculine competition being experienced not only on an individual level but in the broader global context as well.

Roger was very vocal on the subject. He said:

Men are competitive. Absolutely. They compete constantly. Men are heavily into one upmanship. That’s something I really notice on a day to day basis. Men love to be on the winning side.

He was of the belief that it was all about feeling superior; that if there were no men on the losing side, the winners would get nothing out of it. He believed that society was teaching boys to always compare themselves, or to compete, with another guy; that masculinity is obtained through superiority and getting on top of somebody else. Aaron, on the other hand, thought that men appreciated sport as a task and a challenge. He described playing rugby and thinking “here’s this large heavy thing coming towards you and I will tackle this and be successful”. He agreed, though, that there was also an element of measuring oneself against others and of needing to produce the goods.

Lane said that everyone wants to be the best; be the most successful; look the best; have the best partner and be the happiest. For him, it was all about power and control; who’s the strongest; who can have the last hit”. “There’s a lot of destruction in a way”, he added. Khaled said that “It is such a competitive world at the moment. In the city it is just a competitive race”. For Marshal, it was, in fact, so “cutthroat”, that “you don’t reveal anything because it might come back to hurt you”. Toby said that he had always been a trusting person, until he realised that people took advantage of this. As a result, he said, he had become cautious to the point, where as an electrician, his business dealings with builders basically bordered upon paranoia. Martin also observed that men take pleasure in being able to gloat about climbing further up “their ivory tower”.

Stefano was of the opinion that a man’s age determined the extent of the competition he would experience. Whilst pointing out that women were also competitive, he said that “when you are younger, there is a lot of competitive nature. When you get older, not so

much. You become more mature and you understand that there's no need to be competitive"; as an older person, he added, one realised that ability had a part to play.

***Commentary:***

Both Pease (2002) and Kimmel (2000) acknowledge the need in society for men to maintain a competitive edge which then effectively undermines not only their friendships with men but with women as well. Murphy (2001: 3) argues that for "most men all relationships are tactical encounters that have to be won, lest they risk the loss of manhood". Likewise, Gilmore (1990) correlates real manhood with high performance in the social struggle for scarce resources. In this endeavour he says, men experience the threat that they stand to lose and are expendable. He added that men also need to demonstrate enthusiasm for manhood with stoic resolve and grace. These sentiments and the resulting pressure on men were apparent in the men's narratives. Pablo's comment about corporations reflects the role of institutions in defining and maintaining hierarchical power and with this, the need for individual change to be accompanied by structural change (Pease, 2002).

In the section, Mateship and Protection, I reported Jeffery saying that he and his friends would only be competitive about who had the fastest jet-ski; that this was just fun and not serious stuff. This is very interesting when considered in the light of a statement by Coates (2000) that men's narratives are those of contest whereas women's are narratives of community. She believes that solitary men pit themselves against both men and machines.

Jeffery articulated his view that there were definitely pressures to conform to the outside world, and Sidney said simply, that "in the wider spectrum of life, there are still very strong stereotypes". Interestingly, Aaron believed that that there were differences between what society, and what women, expected of men. That the men felt disadvantaged by these pressures will be apparent in the following subsection called *Social Expectations*.

## Social Expectations

Martin, who as a school boy had been dragged around in the playground because of, and by, his rather unusual “Hendrix” hair, pointed out the dangers of thinking originally in the social context. As a man who wore clogs and tights, ostensibly for a bit of fun, liked jewellery, tattooing and guffawing, and thought that he could enjoy a homosexual relationship, he was, nevertheless, adamant that “If you are too much at the edge, you are seen as being an unacceptable, social eccentric ... I think it bothers all the men”. He was of the mind that “you are conditioned to think and it’s like being conditioned by octane as opposed to standard. You fly with it, with the rest of the vehicles, rather than chugging along in the background”.

Feodor was dumbfounded that Australian little boys could not be dressed in pink, although he was of the opinion that frills were unsuitable.

It’s like people in Australia still want to, bloody well they drive me nuts! When we had kids and I’d put on something pink and [they would say] “It’s a lovely girl”. “No, it’s a boy”. “But he is wearing pink?” And I go like, “Yeah, so? I love pink”. It was always first like “What the hell is your hang-up with colour”? Blue for boys, pink for girls. It starts then. You know, boys aren’t allowed to. I can understand the frilly bits.

Khaled spoke of how, as a youth, he was forced to spend his Saturdays learning Arabic whilst his Australian counterparts were on the sporting fields; how he was bashed on the bus because he was the only “wog” in the northern suburbs. He was aware that he had always been seen as different by his Australian peers; that even in present times, he neither met the criteria expected of Australian men, nor fulfilled those of his Lebanese relatives.

This duality continued to cause difficulties for Khaled. He spoke of being judged and labelled by members of the Australian community because of his swarthy Middle Eastern appearance. He believed that he experienced racial discrimination as a result. He said with some derision: “Just the way people look. You know, you’re Lebanese, are you? Ah, yeah”. He gave as an example, an incident that had occurred recently in the gym. He said he was laughing and joking with friends when a woman, who he

described as a “nutter” and “twisted”, abused him, accusing him of looking, and laughing, at her. She claimed that he was going to rape her and blow up her house. He believed it was the “stigma” against Lebanese men that caused her to pick on him and not one of the other men that he had been talking to.

Yet, Khaled disclosed that he did not get on with Lebanese men because they differed from Australians in terms of their “mentality”. Lebanese men, he argued, succumbed and were moulded by parental demands. He, conversely, had chosen to rebel against his parents from childhood. Therefore, as an adolescent and in his early twenties, he drank to “fit in” with his peers, even though drinking was disallowed by his religion. Whilst he no longer drank, he believed that acceptance by his chosen Australian peer group continued to need reinforcement through sporting achievements and a demonstrated toughness and strength. He spoke of being revered in the gym because he was able to lift weights of 400 pounds whilst doing a bench press, and, at the same time, was sufficiently supple to do the splits. He worked hard at these exercises and was devastated, and felt totally emasculated, when he suffered a back injury and could no longer attempt them. On top of this, Khaled had been unemployed as a result of his back injury and was forced to borrow money from his wife, Natasha. “Not having money just made me feel really weak and miserable, and everything else that goes with it”. Without money, he felt. “you don’t have the buying power”. He said that there were pressures placed upon men to be leaders, not followers. It got to the stage, he said, where you just got sick of it.

Like Khaled, Chan felt that he did not meet the norm of an average Australian male, and that he also fell short of Chinese expectations. He disclosed that he did not fit the model of an ideal Australian man because he wore glasses, was not high on the corporate ladder, could quite possibly ask stupid questions about how to use a screwdriver in a hardware store, and neither drank nor played football or golf. In truth, Martin did point out that whilst women were stereotyped as cheesecakes, men were expected to be beefcakes. Jean-Claude indicated that in French society, men were not expected to be he-men, as they were in Australia. He said a big difference was that French men do not win regard based upon physical activities and their sporting abilities. Yet, he contradicted this somewhat when he revealed that, to him, manliness translated into risk taking such as driving a car dangerously. Furthermore, he thought that romanticism involved a sword, cloaks, daggers and hanging from the chandeliers.

Adrian, in similar vein, maintained that women only wanted macho men, particularly big hairy builders and Peter's experience was that when he weighed 23 stone, women only wanted to be his friend. On losing 8 stone, he said, "they were coming out left, right and centre on my arm".

In regard to alcohol consumption, Timothy said that coming from England where drink was part of everyday life, he was delighted that on arrival in Australia, he had found another "Caucasian English speaking tribe" of "beer drinking people", "on the same side of the road". Roger, a Kiwi, pointed out the extremity of drinking and violence amongst the Maoris, but said that essentially average, middle class, white men in both Australia and New Zealand appeared to be brought up in exactly the same manner.

Chan stressed that the expectations placed upon Chinese men, whilst different, were no less onerous. Chinese men, he said, were the dominant figures in the family and it was the chore of the male, and particularly the oldest son, to provide; to bring in the bacon; to look after aging parents; pay their bills, see them through retirement and then care for the next generation as well. Chan stated that to be a man in the Australian system meant meeting the demands of a mortgage and he confirmed that the stress he experienced was as a result of house hunting, his job and car. He said his wife's biological clock was ticking. She had wanted a nursery, and though it was not her intention to stress him, he interpreted this as a series of demands which he was required to fulfil. However, he said that perhaps because he was brought up here, he found Australian society a lot easier. "You can", he said, "actually do what you want. If you fail [financially], you fall back on social security, a safety net". At the time of the interview, there was huge friction between Chan and his aging mother. Battling financially, especially since his separation from his wife, Chan wanted his mother to accept a pension. She, on the other hand, was too proud to do so and believed strongly that he, as her son, was obligated to support her; that he was reneging on his duties.

Indeed, the greater majority of the participants still believed it was their role to provide; that they were to be the breadwinners. Aaron, who described himself as a hunter gatherer, was peeved that in modern times, not only were men expected to work and bring home the pay, but they were also expected to spend more time with the family. He thought it was inconsistent to criticise a man for working long hours, for not being at home with the family, when, without being at the "coalface" sixty hours a day, it was

impossible to keep a mortgage in Sydney and provide for the family. Matthew spoke of having to go “outside” to make money. He told of work related stress and its burden of responsibility. Sidney was another who believed that being the provider remained the greatest social expectation for men and he admitted to being very pressured and stressed by this; in fact, he thought, it had ultimately destroyed his marriage. Even at the time of the interview and living alone, he still felt concerned that any hope for success and the possibility of opportunities were declining as time went by and he got older.

Pablo said that every man tried to prevent his wife from working, because if he could not adequately provide for his family on his own, he was an underachiever. It would “make frustration in the man”. Society demanded that children were dressed better and educated preferably at private schools; a car, a house, and holidays were also necessities. As a result, he said, the anxiety to get money kept men disturbed; but an extra job also put men under pressure. “A man”, he said, “is always under stress”. Toby, too, spoke of the pressure placed upon him in a work sense because, as a man, he was the main breadwinner, and because his wife had expectations of owning a house in the area where they had both grown up. “I even spoke of moving out of Sydney”, he said, “because of the financial pressures of just living in Sydney”. Moreover, Roger maintained that there was still pressure out there for the male to be “the higher income wage earner, bringing in more money than the female”. He continued: “I know that a lot of men don’t like women to beat them for instance, or to be earning more than them”.

Jean-Claude thought that when a man met a woman, she was quickly able to ascertain whether or not he would be able to provide for her; that this took priority over whether or not he had a sense of humour, was a good lover, was tender or respectful; a man, he said, was judged on the stability he could provide. Stefano agreed that men were measured and considered a better catch if they earned a lot and were wealthy. He declared that:

If I looked at a male and he had a million dollars a year or something like that, I wouldn’t say he is better than me. Because he’s not. He’s just someone that’s got more money than me. But from the female point of view, he’s a better catch because he earns more money.

Jeffery expressed his view:

I think there's a lot of pressure on a male in today's society to be successful but, having said that, I learnt that success wasn't part of our relationship. I mean to her it wasn't that important, which I am now upset about. But I think there is this image out there that a man has to do well at his job, and have a good career, and is expected to dress well otherwise the opposite sex aren't going to be attracted.

Lane rather cryptically commented: "I suppose if you are going to be successful, society will put high expectations on you. If you are not so successful then society won't put such high expectations on you".

For Serge, the greatest disadvantage of being a male was the expectation that people had of men always being in control. He had constantly heard and believed, he said, that a man was expected to show strength and be the one in power; that television and the media had a lot to do with it. There was an expectation, said Roger, that men would be strong, silent and independent, or as Peter said, Australian men were inspired to tough it out in the spirit of the ANZACS. Khaled said that people looked up to a strong man; that "You're not supposed to let your guard down being a man. In society, if you let your guard down, you're not a real man. You are a softie". Matthew stated:

Like a man's supposed to be strong and able to handle the problem and sort out the problem without too much help or too much difficulty. If you honestly don't think you can do a job, and if you're too scared to actually say something about it and you try and do the job, of course you stress out the whole time you're doing it.

Chan said that in Australia, there were a lot of people who were willing to listen and "don't find it too intruding, to listen to your stories"; that, conversely, in China, the people had become conditioned by four or five thousand years of rule by dictatorship governments which disallowed them from thinking. He said that the Chinese have learnt from "long experience", that it was wisest to remain silent rather than to report knowledge of wrongdoing; that Chinese people did not go to counselling because, in the past, disclosing information to people in authority was tantamount to death; and "to not just kill you but to kill everybody who has the same surname". Yet, somewhat in contradiction of his statement above, he was also adamant that in Australia if men

discussed their “psychological traumas” at work, they would be seen as weak. “If you talk about it at work, people will shoot you down and you’ll lose your job. People will have no respect for you”.

Men, said Marshall, could not be emotional in any public place and Simon expressed his view that it was a very societal thing that men, unlike women, were not encouraged to share their feelings.

All males are dominant, powerful, strong. They don’t break down and cry on TV. Leaders don’t break down and cry and if they do, that’s labelled as showmanship. I think all this stereotyping is what devolves the social expectation for the male, or the male child and that same expectation isn’t placed on female children. They’re allowed to be emotional and whatever.

He was certainly not alone in saying that men had to be emotionally tough. As Martin said, “it is not right to show the emotional depths, the emotional extremes, layers of the onion”. So much so, added Adrian, that a man could go to therapy and be a bit out of control, “but even then you can’t be really out of control”.

Roger stated that men were not expected to cry. Though Clive admitted that he sometimes cried by himself because he so badly wanted someone to hug and hold him, and though Peter thought it acceptable to cry in front of females, it was clear that crying in front of other men, was taboo. Khaled said that to make it anywhere, a man needed to be toughened up from birth. He would teach his son these values because to be accepted and make it in society, they were still necessary. Simon, too, admitted smacking his son but not his daughter. There was after all, an expectation, he said, that men be emotionally tough; girls were not looked on as weak as men were. For Peter, the training had begun at school. “You’re taught at a very young age, at age 5, not to cry. Whenever you start crying, you’re a sissy and you had the teasing of all the other kids”. He added that the messages stayed; that “it’s the teasing and the bullying at school that’s the thing that prepares you for outside”. Furthermore, in his opinion, the situation was getting “worse and worse and worse”; a male was expected to bear “the brunt of the pressure”. He needed to show what he was “made of”, and how much he could “handle” both physically and mentally.



Both Jean-Claude and Feodor, the Swedish Finn, expressed strong beliefs that the cultures of Europe and Australia have different norms regarding what was permitted, and considered acceptable for men, in terms of emotional behaviour. For Feodor, not talking about feelings and emotional matters was behaviour “peculiar” to Australian men; Jean-Claude spoke more broadly of Anglo-Saxons, or people with British backgrounds. He said that in France and Italy it was quite acceptable to complain, to have outbursts of opinionated statements, and to express one’s feelings. Yet, he contradicted himself somewhat when he said that men in his family were not allowed to demonstrate emotions; in fact, that in the family, emotions were actively repressed. Feodor said of his country of origin, that “Everybody is more sensitive there”. He told a joke to illustrate this about 6 people stranded on an island; two of whom were Italian, two German and two were Swedes. Within six months, he said, the Italians had grown a variety of fruit and vegetables; the Germans had built a house, but the Swedes were still waiting to be introduced. He felt that the Swedes, rather than solving a problem, wanted to talk about it; wanted literally to take it apart and see all the issues.

It seemed that the participants thought there was a different set of expectations for gay men around emotional behaviour. Whilst to Khaled, “straight men need an outlet”, he believed that gay men were able to show their emotions and talk about their problems. Straight men, according to Chan, did not have the capacity to listen. On the other hand, gay men, because of testosterone differences, were more sensitive to women; they were artistic and all that stuff. Simon said that a male that displayed emotion would get ribbed; “come on you big girl”; “you weak bastard”. He would be labelled a homosexual; in fact, any “snag”, he said, would be labelled in the same way. Timothy said that he had a number of gay friends, some of whom were not “closed down to emotional talk”, but if he spoke to straight guys about his marital problems, they would tell him to “get fucking real you, poofter. What’s the matter with ya?” Lane concluded that ultimately what it came down to was that men, who did not feel completely comfortable with their sexuality, would not be able to talk about their feelings.

### ***Commentary:***

Gilmore (1990: 223) speaks of “Man-the Impregnator-Protector-Provider”, whilst Pease (2002: 103) claims that “bringing home a wage is still central to masculine identity and what it means to be a man”. Indeed the greater majority of the participants said that their role was to provide; that they were to be the breadwinners. Silverstein

and Rashbaum (1994:216) even went so far as to say that many men, not just from the middle class, are in fact “devout believers” in the breadwinner ethos. The comments in this section support another claim by Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994); that Western society prizes instrumental rather than relational qualities; and that “doing” is more highly regarded than feeling; success more than caring; the valued qualities are those that stereotypically are expected of men rather than women.

Timothy said that he had a number of gay friends, some of whom were not “closed down to emotional talk”, but if he spoke to straight guys about his marital problems, they would tell him to “get fucking real you, poofter. What’s the matter with ya?” This illustrates Murphy’s (2001: 101) observation that:

Misogyny asserts itself once more in the form of homophobia, a behaviour that reinforces the assumption that a real man is free of the taint of the feminine. In our modern society a real man prefers women exclusively ... *to have* a woman in order not *to be* a woman.

Timothy’s statement is also a clear illustration of Beynon’s (2002: 68) view that the slightest weakness is picked on and exploited in “a brutal environment”. Even at school, at ages 5 and 6 according to Peter, a little boy is insulted by being called a sissy and having his masculinity slighted and questioned. The word sissy is a derivative of the words “sis” or “sister”; so that being a sissy means a man is womanish and, therefore, subordinate (Murphy, 2001). Peter’s comments allude to the fear of being misperceived as being gay oneself (Kimmel, 2000). I quote again at length from Murphy (2001: 106):

If gay men represent undesirable male sexuality and straight men embody the only acceptable male sexuality, all men become victims of the language “passively” adopted to describe “authentic” masculinity. This kind of language does not allow us to entertain the thought that there are other alternate forms of masculinity to the heterosexual ... A language that neither denies our femininity nor derides men who have other than just traditional masculine traits or ‘normal’ sexual proclivities would be liberating to all of us.

The men described being disadvantaged by isolation and emotional immaturity which appeared to be the consequence of the stoicism they were encouraged to demonstrate. Therefore, the following subsection has been entitled emotional dis-ease.

## **Emotional Dis-ease**

Stefano revealed that his father would never shed a tear:

Now you know he is hurting on the inside but he is not going to let you know that. He's not going to come out and say that I'm hurting or I feel low ... he won't because he's a man. He's strong. He's got to be head of the house.

Sidney also spoke of having grown up with a generation of people who wanted to gain social acceptance within their own circles by being tough; by constantly standing up for themselves. Therefore, it is not surprising that Roger thought that men in our society were in a rut and had “lost the ability to reach out and invite other men into their lives”; that the only time men communicated was when they went to the pub and got drunk. Apart from killing themselves with alcohol, he said, men shut other people out and lead sad, and lonely, lives. He had noticed that he, too, had a method of deliberately shutting out other men. He thought that “ultimately what lies at the core of it is the fear of getting knocked back; a fear of rejection; a fear that people will think you are stupid; or not acting the way men are supposed to act”.

This was the case for Adrian. He shared that when he grew up “if you wanted to talk back-to-back in private or upstairs or something like that, that wasn't on”. When he read books that made him cry, his mother would take them away from him, even though as Adrian said, “I think I was just identifying with really normal fucking healthy stupid things”. Consequently, he became stuck inside himself and was not communicating with anyone. He recalled that “it was kind of like, I was just there ... like I had bad separation problems. You know, separation from the experience ... it was like I was asleep or dead, or not present”. He said initially he had used a lot of drugs and alcohol “just to be a person in the world”. It was the only way he could function. At the time of his interview, he felt that he was still isolated but that this was, possibly, to his advantage.

Perhaps, it will turn out that I am more peaceful with myself. At the moment, it is like sometimes I am peaceful with myself in that isolation, and then sometimes I am lonely. And indeed the loneliness in the past, certainly growing up, took me to some pretty toxic places.

Peter believed males were not willing to open up their inner feelings because they were scared of being hurt. However, he was unable to be sure of this because he was “still in like the recovery sort of thing, trying to figure out where I am at”. Barry confirmed that “we don’t think about talking about feelings or anything like that”. This, Matthew argued, was not because men were incapable of doing it; just that they thought it was unacceptable in the real world. Martin told of how as a very young man, he had helped in a bar at a sailing club. He described himself then as being slight, with an easy walk, a great ball of hair and a penguin suit and bow tie. He said that the male clientele would do anything to stir him up in the early stages of the evening when he “first knocked on”. However, later on, he said, when “they were too out of it” to bother with him, they dropped their own controls, taboos and fears, and related differently with each other:

They were all over each other. In this very close intimate manner in which they had been taking the mickey out of me ... It took the grog to do it ... The social conditioning was such that you wouldn’t stand any closer than that, but with the grog in, well, you didn’t care.

Jeffery stated that his best friend never told him anything about what went on at his home. He believed that men were frightened to speak up; that they were definitely scared of being tarnished as a softie. Instead, Timothy, Barry and Matthew suggested that men’s conversations remained on a superficial level. According to Matthew, it often amounted to nothing more than “footy, motor racing, drag cars ... you seen the new bird that works in the coffee shop down the road, or something like that”; for Barry it was about “schooners, sex and sport”.

Clive said he certainly would not talk to a man, not even his best friend; “I would get more nervous of him laughing at me than trying to help. I would get more embarrassed”. Toby said that even with a close mate, there was a need to be fairly reserved; that when they went out for a beer, they did not get too deep and involved in all this stuff. Khaled admitted that “if you’re a guy, you don’t know where to turn, who

to talk to because you feel stupid". He said that if he had spoken to his mates, they would have had a good giggle. Raymond felt that there was not much help for men in general. He said that when he was in trouble, he was pretty isolated and believed that no-one would understand if he disclosed what had happened. He thought of the shame that it would bring on him if people found out who he really was, and so he thought he would have to cope on his own. He felt trapped and it only got worse, he said, when he involved family, relatives or the police. He mused at how being in control disadvantaged men because they could never experience the "good things that marriage or a relationship has ... They'll never experience their children in a way". Lane also said that he was all by himself, which was pretty lonely and tough. He said his family tended to close off or shut him up. Simon disclosed that he did not really talk or have a friendship circle outside of work. He was incredulous that his wife had managed to share her experiences with about six people. He said he shared with no-one and "kept it all bottled up, which used to drive me crazy". Sidney said that he could be deeply frustrated and have all sorts of things ripping him apart, but he would not go and discuss it with anyone for fear of burdening them.

I think there are a lot of men who aren't coping and aren't doing okay ... because whilst not being expressed, it doesn't go away and I think given certain triggers, it can cause reactions that are not necessarily positive reactions.

This was true for Serge. He said that he ended up being that scared of expressing his feelings that he could not even reach out and put his arms around his wife. He added that the pressure that was placed upon men to suppress their feelings meant that they could not let out their anger and frustrations. He said that he would hold his feelings inside; bottle them up until the next time came when he would lash out and explode; it got worse and worse, he said. He disclosed that his wife had prophesised "that if I am not careful, I am going to end up being a lonely man. And this is where I am now ... I have no one".

Matthew also stated, "I was brought up not to express myself"; and:

Always told to bottle things up. "Don't"; "It's all right"; "Not the time"; "Don't worry about it"; "It'll be fine". That sort of thing. And you don't get to express anything and all that just builds up and just sort of explodes in the end. And because you have always worked that way,

you get into relationships and you don't express yourself. You don't express how you feel all the time, and in the end, you've bloody well bunged it all up, and get your feelings and emotions up, and of course it you can only do it for so long.

Barry recounted that a friend of his had jumped out of a car when a mutual acquaintance had made a derogatory statement about his wife. "He had to get out of the car otherwise he was going to punch this guy". He added that men generally deal with such situations aggressively; that his friend knew no other way to communicate. Aaron revealed that there were issues that never got discussed with his wife because he did not know what to say or do; he believed he was probably completely emotionally unavailable. One such issue was an unplanned pregnancy and subsequent miscarriage. He said that he had real difficulty putting names to feelings and emotions apart from anger. This was a lesson he had learnt from his father; that all he had seen was his father either angry or not angry; like a switch being turned on or off. Consequently, whenever there was a crisis in a relationship, he would detach from the emotional side of things and switch off.

***Commentary:***

Steve Biddulph (1994: 4) states that "men are a mess"; that whilst women have had to overcome oppression, men's problems are about isolation; women's enemies are in the world around them whilst men's are within, caused by the wall's they've built around their own hearts. I argue that both men and women conform to social discourse and that therefore, both "male and female speakers in families collude in the construction and maintenance of normative family relationships and normative gender roles" (Coates, 2000: 168). Furthermore, Biddulph (1994) argues that men have three prisons from which they must escape. These are loneliness, compulsive competition and lifelong emotional timidity and, hence, he feels that "men are not winners" and "there are very few happy men" (Biddulph, 1994: 5). Indeed, the number of comments by the men that mirrored Biddulph's sentiments was striking.

Beynon (2002) goes so far as to say that the only emotions expected and allowed of men are patriotism and lusting after women. However, Kaufman (2001: 42-43) maintains that

Many of our dominant forms of masculinity hinge on the internalisation of a range of emotions and their redirection into anger. It is not simply that men's language of emotions is often muted or that our emotional antennae and capacity for empathy are somewhat stunted. It is also that a range of natural emotions have been ruled off-limits and invalid ... But again for many men the one emotion that has some validation is anger. The result is that a range of emotions are channelled into anger.

Aaron's narrative supports this. He actually said that he had difficulty putting names to feelings and emotions apart from being angry. The word, alexithymia, has been coined to describe the inability to feel and express feelings (Kimmel, 2000; Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994).

Coates (2003) stipulates that keeping talk away from the personal is another form of aligning with hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, Pablo is a good example of self-disclosure being largely absent from narrative; of a story being characterised by emotional restraint (Coates, 2003). Interestingly, the other men did disclose far more, and at times allowed themselves to show emotion. It is possible that the venue might have had something to do with it. All the men, except for Pablo, were seen in a counselling environment. His interview took place at an office of the Department of Probation and Parole. As Adrian said, "you've got to be in control. You know, you can come to therapy and be a bit out of control. But even then you can't be really, really out of control". Coates (2003: 171) points out that "The linguistic behaviour of male speakers in mixed company depends in a very delicate way on the men's relationships with the women present". Men can, and did, display hegemonic masculinity, during their interviews with me but at the same time they explored topics, like emotionality, that they, perhaps, would not have done outside the counselling room.

A number of participants spoke of further personal or collective male inadequacies. Hence, the following subsection is named *Inadequacy*.

## Inadequacy

Raymond mentioned on more than one occasion that men, in general, really felt insecure; that if one got to the root of it, as he was doing, men felt inadequate as well as insecure. He revealed that his wife was able to see right through his façade; that her confrontation cut him to the quick and he was left feeling even more fearful. He admitted: “I am feeling really inadequate. I feel more removed. The more I know, and the more I understand, the more inadequate I feel now ... It’s a real struggle for me”.

David was another who talked of men’s insecurities. He believed this was manifested in men needing to be in a position of power with somebody lower than themselves, like women and children. He stated that whilst men were generally weak, they lived with bravado thinking. A woman, he said, brought out the weakness in a man, who, having no power and no knowledge of how to use it, would then be unable to control himself. He would try instead to compensate by being overly powerful. It was his view that feminism had caused men to “come down” and to feel inferior as a result.

Feodor believed there was another area of inadequacy:

I’m under the assumption that a woman would understand pretty much any subject I brought up. You could talk about relationship problems, or anything. You could mention that the kid’s were screaming last night and I’d assume they’d be able to picture why they would be screaming. You know, being put to bed; being told to do this, that and the other. I just assume a male would think, “Why in hell did you just not shut them up then. Why do you assume I care about what your kids were doing?”

Similarly, Matthew agreed that blokes just do not see the problem in front of them, nor have an idea what caused it. Chan seemed to think men were just self-centred and Barry that they just did not care. Pablo suggested that men could be very stupid. Speaking metaphorically, he said that they might kick a stone one day, forget how much it hurt them; walk past it the next day and accidentally kick it again. He warned of the dire consequences of men feeling frustrated because they were unable to achieve their goals. He said that perhaps that was “the match to start the bomb”.



Many men acknowledged their limitations in relationships with a woman. Simon did not think that he was a good husband. He was making, an effort to improve that fact, but when they had started having difficulties “the snag bit just disappeared. I wasn’t supportive of her”. In reality, he thought that when he had met her she was “a prize ... a class above me”. She did not drink or smoke. He did both. She had two degrees and was a professional; he had an uninteresting job as a clerk. Lane said that he did not know how relationships worked; that he had lots to learn and catch up on. Adrian, as mentioned in Chapter 4, needed a relationship to define himself.

Clive stated that he had “the biggest guilt complex God ever put breath into” as a result of verbally telling his partner what he thought. Raymond expressed similar sentiments. “I look at things how they are, and then I feel guilty for what I’ve done ... ah just if we could open our world and let others come in and help”. Matthew had promised himself when he grew up that he was not going to be like his father: “I’m never going to be like that. I hate you ... and one day you sit there and think, I am exactly the same”. He revealed that he felt bad about himself; thought that he was doing a poor job of providing. He was also disappointed with himself because he wanted to take the next step forward in realising his dreams but could not because he did not have the means to do so. Marshall said simply, “I always felt dispensable”.

### ***Commentary:***

David stated that men over compensate the weakness felt inside of them by being overly powerful and Raymond said that whilst there is the notion of men being the powerful and the advantaged, at the root of it men are really feeling inadequate and insecure. What they are saying reflects Kaufman (1993: 37) who said that “being a male is a strange world of power and pain”; that whilst men have social power, they are paying a huge price for it (Kaufman, 1993). The source of this pain is the patriarchal society which defines them (Kaufman, 1993). As Kaufman (1993) asserts, not only does being masculine mean living up to society’s image of manhood but because of the elusiveness of masculinity, no man can ever feel completely and permanently confident that he has made the grade. Is it any wonder, he asks, that so many men harbour doubts about their manhood. For “most men in this culture (if not all), his sense of himself as a man is tied in with his ability to compete, and the geography of his world is bound by the twin poles of failure and success” (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994: 179).

Murphy (2001: 11) affirms David's viewpoint:

The language of male heterosexuality allows men to hide their vulnerability and in the process cripples them as human beings. Ultimately, men translate their fear of being seen as weak or nurturing into violence against women and gay men; language expresses this violence, sometimes covertly but always effectively.

Matthew said that all men have a lot of denial and that it was one of the biggest disadvantages. "It's just in you so", he added. Therefore, the following subsection is called *Denial*, and it illustrates how men felt disadvantaged by being victimised and unfairly treated.

## **Denial**

Matthew declared that "“One of the biggest disadvantages is denial. A lot of men have a lot of denial. And we all do. All, all men do. Just it's in you so". There were different ways in which men's statements reflected their denial.

Adrian illustrates the use of denial as a social crutch when he said that he used alcohol and drugs as a means of interacting with people because he was so exceptionally shy. For him, he said, drinking was a denial of reality. He also said it was the only way he could function and just be a person in the world.

Roger felt strongly that men very often assume, and lock themselves into, a victim position in society. He said that men thought they were victims of their wives and would blame other people, usually those closest to them, for what was going on in their lives. He believed that men had a total inability to look at themselves and to see that they were responsible for what was happening. Possibly the most graphic example was that of David, who said:

I have known men who have never committed an act of violence in their whole life and have sat there gunning the engine to their car, with their wife in front of the car egging them on ... Come on, do it. And he's been there gunning the engine ... and then he's had a realisation and said my God, what am I doing? I've never done anything violent before

in my life and I am just about to run over my wife. But even worse than that, what is she doing in front of the car in the middle of the night screaming her head off trying to get me to run her over? So he in that issue realised that he was the victim. This girl actually had suicidal tendencies and could not go through with them in the past so she had come with a new angle now to get her mission achieved which was to drive her husband to do it.

Aaron said that men were constantly being criticised for being abusive, irresponsible and greedy; that these qualities were thought of as just being part of men. He was annoyed that when men did male things, throw away lines attributed these actions to too much testosterone. Yet, he, himself, articulated that “Males will do blokey things because they are just blokey things”. He suspected that women did not like men at all; that reading about “these horrible qualities of humanity” indicated that women would prefer it if there were no blokes around at all. Adrian thought that women had done “a lot to fuck us up”. Chan also asked why guys were blamed for hitting women when it was women who pressed their buttons. He added that if “in front of the bull you are waving a red flag, you are going to get it”.

Pablo thought that women were offered more protection from the police than men were; that women then used this protection to verbally, and even physically, abuse their husbands. Peter, Khaled, Sidney and Jeffery expressed the view that disadvantages were afforded to men by the legal system. The legal system, said Sidney, invariably favoured women in the case of a relationship breakdown. He was really peeved about the way it all worked to the detriment of men. Khaled said that a man would definitely lose out if he appeared before the courts; he would have to pay maintenance but would lose the children, the house and everything he had worked for. In fact, he said, a man would lose everything. Peter echoed all these comments. He said the Family Law Court had a formula and “bang, that is it. You suffer”. He declared angrily that he had slaved to put food on the table whilst she sat on her arse, and then she wanted, and got, half of his superannuation and everything fifty-fifty. She even used the child to get back at him.

I spent five years in the Family Law Court trying to get access to my son, and getting stuffed around. The bloke said, “You don’t know anything about the child and you’ve got to write and send gifts”. It’s

like, “Listen here, you fool, I asked in front of you who gave him the tables and chairs and I’ve got witnesses, my next door neighbour’s a school teacher. I got a blue table and chairs, stripped it back, painted it a boy’s blue and here’s the boy in front of me now saying mummy gave it to him. So now you’re trying to tell me to go back and do what I have already done in the past? Forget it. It just is not going to work ... How do I know that she’s going to send them on to him and tell him about it?”

Peter stated that a man had to make quite sure that he was picking the right female because if he did not, it would cost him. Get a female pregnant, he insisted, and “you’ll suffer for the rest of your life”. Jeffery expressed two opposing viewpoints. He said that it was a definite disadvantage to go from having your son come rushing to the door every night when he heard the car roll up; having him climb all over and tell you about his day; to nothing. He maintained that he missed out on seeing his son develop because he only got to see him every two weeks in what was a fairly rushed sort of affair. However, he also stated that he was grateful for the one-on-one relationship he was experiencing with his son since his separation. More than before, they were able to enjoy quality time which would cement their relationship forever.

Raymond blamed the church for some of his difficulties. He believed they looked on him and his family as weirdos and excluded him from working for the church in a position for which he was well qualified. He also thought that much of his current situation was the consequence of his wife’s very difficult upbringing. Her father had suffered post traumatic stress syndrome after being a war prisoner and a survivor of the Sandakan death march.

***Commentary:***

I cannot help being reminded here once again of the notion that men take patriarchy so much for granted that when they evaluate their position in society, they fail to see how they are advantaged by the social structure. They are more aware of the burdens and responsibilities than their unearned privileges, because the former are experienced as painful in their daily lives (Pease, 2002). The men expressed feeling victimised by women, institutions and even circumstance. For example, Aaron said that “it is not universal but there’s a lot of women out there I suspect that just simply don’t like men

at all". He said that judging by their comments about the horrible qualities of humanity, they would prefer men not to be around at all. Adrian thought that there were some women who were uncomfortable with men's roles and had done "a lot to fuck us up". Pease (2000: 31) states that "A common defence among men has been that if all of what women say about men is not true for them, then none of it is true".

Whilst Hearn (1998) speaks of the two differential selves that men present when speaking of their violence, the violent one in the past and the non-violent in the present, it seems necessary to acknowledge too, the pain of a double self; the way discourses structure "our notion of identity and restrict the way we can imagine ourselves as gendered beings" (Murphy, 2002: 6).

One of the questions asked of the men was "How are things the same or different today as compared to the past?" Sometimes, men were asked instead for their views on the supposed crisis around masculinity and the loss of male roles. Many of their replies suggested confusion and uncertainty. Hence, this subsection has been entitled, *Identity Crisis*. Once again, the extracts documented below are not exclusive to this subsection. Some could just as well have been recorded, for example, in the section, *Denial*.

## **Identity Crisis**

When Barry was asked what his view was on a so-called crisis of masculinity, he answered, "I think there are a lot of fools out there". He did not elaborate further. However, in answer to the same question, Feodor expressed his belief that this was all a myth. The remarks of these two men were very different from those of the other participants.

Adrian thought that what it was to be a bloke had been pushed and pulled around too much, so that most people did not have a "fucking idea" about what made a real man. His confusion about his identity was also, he believed, as a result of lack of information and lack of connection with people. David said that progress was a man's worst enemy because men had become recessive. "A woman", he said, "does not need to rely on a man for support financially or emotionally or for protection any more". Going into the office was not, in his opinion, what made a male. "Why", he asked, "do you think men

have to go and either hug trees or go and do weekend warrior courses and get in touch with the warrior inside?” He said that men had no place in society; that they did not know who they were or why they were there; that they had been demoted to a level that was less than they had been led to believe they deserved. He described his confusion:

And now I am obsolete ... It's like I am last year's model, and I think to myself, I don't want the new year's model. It's a little bit like old fast cars, Monaros. I like the old Monaro better than the brand new one that they just brought out. It's a lot cheaper to keep on the road and it's actually more of a car.

Jean-Claude believed that men did not so much mind the loss of monopoly of certain activities; rather, that their identity crisis arose out of concern that their social position of authority was being challenged, altered and reduced. Serge admitted that he was threatened by the idea that his wife might have more power than him. Aaron said there were no longer defined gender roles and Martin agreed that it was impossible to have the clear delineation of tasks that worked in his parent's times. He argued that “whilst legislation for equal employment opportunities and non-discrimination had brought up to speed the disadvantages that women have had for far too long at the social level”, it had resulted in much confusion about the delineation of tasks which had been left as a grey and nebulous area:

I think this causes a crisis for sociology and not necessarily for masculinity. I think it causes conflict by confusion for both genders in society, not just men ... For those relationships where there was a clear agreement and understanding, there's your border and freedom of movement, here's my border and freedom of movement, it was agreed and it was balanced and it worked. So the legislation ironically, as I said, well intended and having the positive effect of preventing men from chaining women, physically and metaphorically to certain tasks by thumbing them into a spot ... but in those relationships where consenting adults have agreed to the function that they would serve within the family unit, it in some ways interrupts it.

Marshall said that people of his age seemed to have a great deal of understated confusion and he did not enjoy this at all. Those in their early twenties, he felt, might know where they were coming from and going to, but other friends in their late thirties

and forties, were really confused. “I think”, he said, “that things are changing for the better in some ways, but in other ways I think it goes too far”. For Jeffery, this was the case when it came to dating as a result of being newly separated. “I’m used to opening my wallet and paying”, he explained. “I just felt good doing it. But she’s like, no, put that away. I’m paying this time. It’s weird”. Khaled and Toby experienced discomfort around parenting roles. Toby described how funny he felt when he had to stay at home and look after his children.

I managed okay but it did feel a bit funny that I wasn’t out working but, in saying that, I enjoyed the time with the children. Not that I did it for a very long time ... I guess it was sort of mixed feelings.

Khaled revealed that Lebanese women were expected to stay at home and look after the children whilst the men went to work; that they were brought up to listen to their husbands. He admitted that if he had succumbed to parental pressure, and had married a Lebanese wife who was brought from overseas, he would have treated her as an accessory and would have told her to shut her mouth and sit in the corner. However, he had married an Australian born, educated woman and therefore, he said that “if I tried that with Natasha, she’ll chuck a wobbly”. When he discovered that Natasha wanted to continue working, it meant that, out of necessity, he had to share parenting responsibilities even though he thought a child belonged at home with its mother and could not develop the same sort of bond with a father. “I’m not that sort of mothering type” he said and his concern was that “I’ve become more of a dad than a man. You see, you’ve got to show your soft side”. He also knew that he was an enigma to his male Lebanese relatives. “My dad comes over and I am washing the kids. My wife’s not there and he’ll just shake his head and walk away”.

Stefano felt that he had experienced two conflicting world views:

I think today it is very hard. I mean, it all comes down to how you have been brought up. I’ve been brought up the old fashioned way ... by my parents. But I have been brought up the modern way through education and all that, so there’s a crossover. And I find it very hard because we still got the male, we still got the female and there’s what we perceive as a male’s role and what we perceive as a female’s role. And for me, yes, you do cross over and you help each other out alright, but in today’s society I really believe it is hard for a male because you’re

getting constantly arguments from a female, saying that the male's got to do everything for himself and not rely on a female. But then the female wants the male to do things for her because she's not capable of doing it. Or she hasn't got the ability to do it. The male has got the ability, and is capable, of doing everything the female can do. Like I said, I don't think there is any fairness there.

He continued that whilst he believed there were some blokes that had blended into the modern sense of the new age guy, as he had in a way, at the same time he wanted to hold onto his traditional values.

***Commentary:***

Beynon (2002: 77) acknowledges that many men are trapped between the old machismo ways of being and trying to be the modern man; that "the widespread acceptance of more androgynous identities, has left men, acculturated into traditional masculinity, confused". He states that in the recent past the authority and dominance of men were simply accepted and that contemporary men have lost rights they had enjoyed by simple virtue of their sex. However, he (Beynon, 2002: 95) suggests that "there is a misleading tendency to assume that the alleged crisis is new and unique to our times"; that rather, each generation experiences the crisis of masculinity in a different way. Furthermore, he cautions his readers from using what he calls a contemporary cliché as a container into which all the negative things about men are poured. It is incorrect, he argues, to assume that every self-respecting male ought to be in crisis or that all men are engulfed in it. Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994) say that there should not be an attempt to turn the clock backward to some idyllic time when men went to work and women stayed home. Rather, that there should be a commitment to a society where gender does not separate people from one another, or from parts of themselves.

As Pease (2000: 17) citing Ruether (1992) asserts, "Men must 'come to understand the injustice that has been done to women [and] the way it distorts all social relations'". Change is not possible unless men acknowledge the injustice of their historical privileges (Pease, 2000). What is still certain is that men remain the dominant and threatening sex and that outside academia and the media, masculinity and the so-called crisis of masculinity, is not a major issue in the real world (Pease, 2000).



I agree with Coates (2003: 4), that:

At any moment in time there is a range of masculinities extant in a culture, masculinities which differ in terms of class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and so on. And these masculinities intersect in complex ways.

However, like for Coates (2003: 196), one of the most striking features for me in this research, is the orientation of men's talk to the hegemonic norms of masculinity. Therefore, like her, I argue for the existence of the "constraining hand of hegemonic masculinity". Furthermore, as Murphy (2001: 6) citing Mills (1997) argues:

Language can no longer be conceived of as "simply expressive, as transparent, as a vehicle of communication, as a form of representation ... [but rather] as a system with its own rules and constraints, and with its own determining effect on the way that individuals think and express themselves". That is, a discourse can be seen as a "set of sanctioned statements which have some institutionalised force".

Questions 4, 5 and 6 on the interview schedule included queries about the men's views on women and their expectations about women's roles. Their responses are documented in the section, *Attitudes to Women*. This has been divided into two subsections: in the first, men talk about women's qualities and hence it is called, *Being Women*; the second, documents their comments on women's roles and as such is called simply, *Women's Roles*.

## ***Attitudes to Women***

### ***Being Women***

It is true that the men sometimes commented positively about women. For instance, Clive said: "Now, it's becoming more equal. And it should be. I mean I am no better than you because I am a man". Raymond thought that:

There's a few extremes in the women's movement. But generally women aren't out to abuse men. They are just out to have equality.

They just want to get things on an equal footing. If that happened they would be quite happy. They're not out to rule the world ... I don't see women wanting to do that.

However, complimentary statements occurred less often and, in reality, mostly confirmed conventional social expectations. Therefore, women were extolled for demonstrating affection, nurturance and warmth and for maintaining interpersonal and familial relationships. As Martin said:

You have the male being the practical, the female being the emotional.  
You have the male being physically stronger; you have the female being the comforter and nurturer.

Feodor, for instance, assumed that a woman would understand pretty much any subject he brought up. "You know", he said, "you could talk about relationship problems or anything". Therefore, he said, he had the best conversations with women because they were so much easier to talk to. Chan, likewise, suggested that women were far more empathic than men:

Guys automatically shut down the minute you bring up those things at work. Pick up the phone, you know, fidget with paperwork and nearly drop off. With the female you talk about these things - they drop everything they are doing and they look at you. And they say, "Oh God", you know. But with guys, the defence mechanism is to say, "Ah gee. Sorry, I'm just busy. I'll come back to you later".

This contradicted somewhat the way he described his relationship with his work-mate, Daniel. It also stood in contrast to another statement he made in the interview when he said that the only person a man was given social permission to talk to was his spouse, "and this society hasn't trained spouses to think".

David described women as soft, nice and relaxed and he also contrasted them to men, who he thought, were strong, fiery and hyper. He said that women have to live with painful emotions. Whilst they might learn to overcome these, it "in essence doesn't make her stronger". What it does, he said, is to make her "super tuned" into people. Khaled expressed the view that women did not have the aggression required to be a

hunter, but that faced with looking after their family, and put into a situation where they needed to defend their young, he felt “they might have it in them” then.

At times, men’s attempts to show a favourable attitude to women, failed miserably. For instance, Lane stated that “women should not be treated like a cunt”; David followed a statement that he adored women with:

So please don’t misunderstand me. I’m not saying [domestic violence] is the women’s fault. What I am trying to give you here is another angle than the angle that all you people get from these women. These women, as you actually know, have issues ... violence is a part of the relationship as a direct consequence of the issues usually of the woman.

To him, it was excusable for a woman to hit a man because “it is like a child hitting daddy, you know what I mean?” Another example is a comment made by Adrian about women: “I’d hope that they’d be pretty nurturing. Fucking oath. I don’t want a non-nurturant woman. Not animal”.

Raymond said that he did not think men respected women. Indeed, many comments made by the participants about women were misogynistic. Adrian’s remark, that it was just part of the package that women lose it once a month, has already been mentioned. However, he also said that women were “twisted”; that they yell and scream abuse. Peter felt that a lot of men really let women off the hook and let them just go crazy with their feelings. He and Adrian both thought that women were untrustworthy. “I still don’t trust women”, Adrian said, “and I wouldn’t be in a relationship with one”. Jean-Claude and Simon were both amazed that their wives were able to speak openly with so many people. Jean-Claude stipulated that he was shocked at the ease with which women shared intimate details with people they did not know. Aaron said that women were guilty of making snide comments and that many of the men he knew were a “mess” because of the emotional abuse, the withholding and withdrawing, and really “nasty sort of sly stuff” meted out to them by their partners.

Chan was of the mind that women took things like receiving flowers for “bloody granted” and never returned the gesture. Women, he said, just assumed that was what men were supposed to do. When acknowledgement was called for, a woman’s response would be to ask if men expected medals. Clive maintained that as soon as men wanted

to relax, women stuffed it up for them; that women did not like to see men happy. Peter felt that women caused men to lose their freedom. He, Stefano and Khaled spoke of women's demands and nagging. Adrian added that women liked to control the environment and Marshall stated that women could pick and choose what they could and could not do; when to have children and how to arrange the house. Women, he felt, bore grudges; held things in and stewed on them for years. David said women were manipulative and Jean-Claude thought that if society was run by women, and if they, rather than men had the upper hand, "we would be living in a much more repressed world". Women seemed to him, to be far more conservative and less accepting of all sorts of "fancy behaviours".

It seemed clear that women were seen as being inferior. Certainly for Matthew they were the "weaker sex", who did not set goals for themselves as men did. Raymond, a devout Christian, said that Jesus encouraged men to bring women up to their level and to "use" them for their gifts and talents. He described women as being the "navigators" while men were the "drivers". Women were described as though shopping and spending money were central to their lives, to the point where Khaled said women went overboard and needed limits set for them. He maintained that women went behind their husbands' backs and bought things even when they were not needed. He felt the situation was worsened when they earned their own money. It made him angry, he said, because it was such a waste; the money could have been put towards the children or the house. He admitted that men waste money on gambling and drinking, but said he did none of that. He went on to say that one could not be soft with women because they did not listen to soft words. A man had to be forceful, throw in a few swear words, and tell her that she had done the wrong thing. Peter agreed that it was necessary to repeat things that were said in a calm fashion many times to women before anything would sink in. Furthermore, he said, men got the silent treatment from them. In addition, he described women as if they were consumed by their image and having their hair done. "I can't", he declared, "understand why a female wants to go and have her hair coloured once a month. I don't know what their mentality of it all is".

Stefano also stated that women were materialistic; that men were able to live very basically and not worry about all the mod cons which women needed to be happy. He, Jean-Claude and Adrian thought that women marry for money. Adrian commented:

Women still appear to be marrying up for money and resources. Still seem to work on status models of men. It is pretty common for men who are in low income or in low employment prospects to be unmarried ... I think that at some reptilian level they're still looking for that status and power.

Jeffery was also most concerned that his friend's ex-wife would "well and truly take him to the cleaners", even though his friend had often been unfaithful to her whilst they were married.

A few men positioned their attitudes to women against broad stereotypes of other cultures. For example, Feodor laughingly suggested that a man who thought of his wife as an accessory had to be an Indian, and Pablo said that in Taliban countries, women had no rights at all. Simon was of the opinion that:

In other societies, women really are second class citizens. In Islamic societies, where you know, "You walk behind me and wear your veil". And even in the educated Islamic countries, women are still second-class. They can be faithful to Islam but they are not allowed to step into a mosque or anything. In lots of countries, African countries and I guess the countries we would consider as lesser developed - women are really second-class citizens. In Western society, I don't think we can consider women as second class. Here, women are equals, but I still think there's that expectation in Western society that men are still the leaders and even though women are equal, they'll do what they are told.

Stefano thought that there were some other cultures, like in the Middle East, where "the woman's rubbish". This, he said, was totally wrong and in Australia, nobody should have power in the relationship; people should be "putting their ideas in" and coming out with something that makes both happy. Jean-Claude stated that in countries like Japan and Vietnam, as well as Arab countries, men were recognised as authorities and as decision makers. He said that in his experience, and with his current wife, that had never been the case. However, he had noticed that when he was with his wife in the company of men from these other cultures, they would address him rather than converse with her. He added that in some really repressive Middle Eastern societies, like Saudi Arabia, there were things that women were unable to do, like driving a motor car, but

even so he believed that in all “human societies”, “females really pull the strings in many ways”. Khaled, who said he accepted the dogma of the Muslim faith, was however, of the belief that Islam defines men and women as equal and that the law makers were moving away from true Islam. He stated that it ought to be a woman’s decision whether or not she covered her head; that it was not for men to judge or say what God thinks; that men could not speak for God and were, in fact, speaking for themselves.

***Commentary:***

If men are brought up to be unlike, opposite or “other” to women, then it follows that they will be unable to identify empathically with them (Pease, 2000); that they will continue to regard them with secondary status in society (Moore, 1994; Pease, 2000). Likewise, if men hold no respect for their own emotions and see them as a sign of weakness, it is unlikely that they will respect women’s emotions either (Pease, 2002).

Both Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994) and Smith (1996) suggest that misogyny is the end product of the “forced march of the sexes into two opposed camps” (Smith, 1996: 209). Western patriarchal culture is one where to be masculine is to dominate and to be a woman is to be less than fully human (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994). This was borne out in the comments the participants made about women, which were often extraordinarily disparaging and indicative of their oblivion to their own unearned privileges. No where is this more graphically illustrated than when Lane stated that “women should not be treated like a cunt”. He attempted to portray himself as respectful to women but what he said was not only derogatory to all women, myself included, but it also accomplished hegemonic masculinity and reflected his psychological, social and cultural worlds. I think of Pease (2002: 66) who stated that he “conquers her when he succeeds in reducing her from a being to a thing”.

That the interviewees spoke positively of women is also true. However, this occurred less often and, in reality, what they were approving was the Talcott Parsons distinction between male roles and female roles (Connell, 2002), i.e. the instrumental versus the expressive. Therefore women were extolled for demonstrating affection, nurturance and warmth and for maintaining interpersonal and familial relationships.

However, I think it would be remiss not to point out, as does Coates (2003: 200), that “Men’s relationships with women are complex and betray contradictions”. On the one hand, men’s fear of the feminine results in misogyny, but on the other hand, men need the intimacy and togetherness of a heterosexual relationship. It is necessary to regard men’s narratives as a powerful display of heterosexuality and the performance of hegemonic masculinity.

## **Women’s Roles**

Matthew admitted that men regarded their wives as accessories rather than as soul mates; that men felt they owned women once they were married and expected to be obeyed. The general view expressed was that women were biologically determined to bear children and then to care for them. Most men stated that it was also the wife’s role to stay at home and take care of the children particularly whilst they were young. They also wanted their partners to willingly care for them; and to be obedient. For instance, Stefano said that all he needed from a woman was to be fed, cleaned and loved. Pablo, too, said that almost 100% of men would like their wives to take care of the kitchen, washing, ironing and things like that. Food had to be “nice and good” and on time. If not, he said, a husband’s reaction would be: “I told you to have my dinner at 10 o’clock. It is a quarter past ten. It is not [on the table]? Why not?”

Aaron commented that women “railed” against staying at home as though “they were being denied something” and Chan questioned how women could claim that they had the greatest job bringing up children when half the time the children were in school. “I don’t know what the mums do during the day”, he said. “Certainly not cleaning!” Yet he also was of the opinion that:

A female is quite happy in the cave doing everything at once, you know, multi-tasking. She is built for it. That’s the traditional past ... women might go out to work but you don’t see the women saying, “I am planning to have a baby. I think, darling, you should stay home once the baby is born so that I can go back to work”. Ask every single guy you come across and see how many of them, even normal ones at bus stops, have this. So if you say [it] is a new age thing and women

want to go work, have a career and so on, have they ever said, “I don’t want a nanny, I just want you, darling, my husband, to stay home?”

Three men described growing up with mothers responsible for all household duties. For example, Stefano said that his father did not even do the gardening; that his mother, to this day, put his dad’s clothes away for him. Khaled revealed that his mother had done everything for her boys; that his father would not have done any of it. When he was naughty, he said, “she’d beat me and eventually she would say, ‘You wait until your dad comes home’. I said, ‘I’ll be asleep before he comes home anyway’”.

Aaron also revealed:

My father would go to work and when he came home that was it. His job was finished. He would just sit down. My mother would cook dinner. She would wash up and all that sort of stuff. And still does today. Nothing is different. I mean, he hardly ever does anything in the kitchen. Mum makes him a cup of tea.

Toby suggested this still happened in a more recent generation.

It was not that I didn’t like doing [housework] but that’s one thing my wife said that she has never been happy with throughout our whole marriage was that I never contributed enough to the housework. But, I’d be working such long hours ... I’d be that exhausted coming into the week that ... there were stages where I just couldn’t get off the lounge ... I remember having to like go and mow the lawns and that was such a mental effort to try and get yourself motivated to do it.

Some men, like Marshall and Clive, said they did not mind being involved in household duties. Feodor stated that feminine and male roles were “a load of crap”; that visitors to Finland might observe men washing up and consider this effeminate when in fact, for the Finns, this was accepted practice. David said that in his home, there was no differentiation. Like Aaron, he said he was quite happy to cook and clean for his wife.

However, it appeared that when it came to housework, the men set certain limits. Roger said that “men get away with blue murder in terms of housework and all those sorts of things” and Sidney thought that men shared the workload in theory but not in practice.



Peter, for example, said things ought to be fifty-fifty in respect to housework, and that partners should sit down and talk about where their strengths and weaknesses lay. He asked:

How easy is it just to throw washing in, do a couple of loads, hang it on the line, bring it in, fold it up and then you might have to spend maybe one hour a day sitting in ... front of a TV and do your ironing, getting the best of both worlds?

Yet, in spite of this, he was just as adamant that he would only be involved with outside chores. Jeffery admitted that his domestic participation was more of a help than an involvement.

I quite enjoy cleaning. I've never had a problem with it. I mean with Lana and I, it was a funny situation because I worked long hours and Lana was a housewife. So, I know this sounds wrong, but I almost expected Lana, that was her role, so that when I came home we had our time and weekends were free. But it was never a problem to grab the vacuum cleaner and clean the bathroom. We would share that. It was more help. Definitely wasn't just my job. No, never looked at it like that ... It's more a help. Sharing the responsibilities, I suppose.

Khaled was prepared to do all the vacuuming. He would mop the floors, as well as feed, wash the children and change their nappies. However, he would not do the washing or the ironing, nor would he cook. Stefano said he wanted to hold onto traditional beliefs but realised there was a bit of give and take.

I'm happy to do everything in a relationship. I'll do the washing, I'll do the cleaning, I'll do the ironing. I'll do everything. And it doesn't bother me. But if I get in return from a female what I want, then I am happy. It's when I don't get what I want from a female ... I just want a female to respect me and if I have got an opinion, to respect that opinion ... I would expect that she does cook me meals.

Sidney said that it was fine, perfectly great, that women were working out of home more and Marshall did not believe that he would have a problem or feel disempowered if his partner was the major income earner.

I wouldn't feel disempowered. I feel as long as the other person was happy with that. Whichever worked best for us really. Whatever works best and whichever you can get the most satisfaction out of life.

Jeffery said that the traditional role where the male just worked and the female stayed at home was not straight down the line for him.

We both made a decision that Lana would stop work until John was old enough to go to school but if an opportunity came up where she could do some part time work then she would do it. I mean there were times where I put a little bit of pressure on Lana to even find some part time work.

He also admitted that the burden of the mortgage on the new home they had built, and the need to complete the landscaping, had a lot to do with him suggesting to his wife that she should work. Both Peter and Khaled said that two incomes were necessary to survive in modern times, in order to buy such things as a house. Peter's words were:

I would have thought it more expected now for the wife to get back to work as soon as possible ... I don't know that unless you're earning five or six thousand dollars a week that you can afford to buy a million dollar house just living in a normal suburb like Maroubra. You can't. I mean the pressures are putting more stress on the family. The wife is going back to work because you just cannot afford to buy a house unless you are living in another state or what have you. It is just getting out of hand. I'm different. I'd prefer my wife's out there working. I mean that gives her independence; another life as well outside of the main house. She's got her own money and what have you. I suppose that gives more financial freedom for both of you. You are not stuck to that particular one income.

Roger thought it would be counterproductive for his wife not to work; that their finances would be damaged for a start and they would be in a lesser position socially. Stefano, laughingly, commented:

If my wife earned more money than me, I'd say good luck to her. I mean, great, fantastic. It wouldn't bother me that she earned more than me. Actually it might make my life easier.

Women were also seen to have a sexual role. Jean-Claude expected a wife to be cultured, to have a good sense of humour and to be a good lover. Pablo thought that the best reward a wife could give her husband was kindness; that she ought to respond to her husband's sexual demands even if it was sometimes against her wish. Lane said that he might on occasion just look at women as a "fuck"; and Stefano thought that men were more likely to get "into" a beautiful female than one that is not so attractive. Clive said that that he adored women, for the way they looked; that women were made to be looked at. Feodor spoke of "spunks", "birds", and "chicks"; and of women being "do-able". He admitted growing up in an environment where pornography and Playboy magazines were openly flaunted. He then worked in a sex video store and thought that if he got "turned" on it was a natural reaction to want sex and to expect his wife to respond. Raymond said that he grew up with a brother who thought of women as sex symbols. Consequently, he said, he followed suit; that he stored this image of a woman in his mind, did not respect women at all, and used pornography and things like that. But then, he continued:

It's like God said, "You don't respect women. Well, here are four daughters. And what's going to happen to them if you don't respect them?"

Finally, two men described *class* differences in men's expectations of women's roles. Barry's reply to a very specific question on this issue was:

I think the perfect example is our Prime Minister. He left home at the age of 35 or something, went straight into a marriage, and I honestly believe he believes that every female should be out there cooking up, you know, getting pregnant and looking after children. He doesn't want to put any money into childcare centres or anything like that. And so there's a perfect example. And that's how he was brought up, so he expects everybody else should be brought up like that.

However, Timothy said that compared to the affluent eastern suburbs of Sydney, the northern beaches were very "redneck". On the northern beaches, he stated, "the man's the man and the woman's the woman". The man would order the wife to get him a beer and would patronisingly call her "love".

***Commentary:***

Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994) say that society is still intent on raising sons and daughters as though they were marked for two different worlds; that sex-role socialisation in this society is as brutal as in any tribal society that used initiation passages. It seemed from the men's narratives that when women say I do, what men often think is meant is I will (Kimmel, 2000).

Roger was of the belief that "men get away with blue murder in terms of housework and all those sorts of things". Certainly, McMahon (1999) believes that a wife jeopardises her relationship if she does less housework, whilst the husband can do less than his fair share without putting the relationship at risk. He asserts that men's help is often conditional on it not interfering with either paid work or leisure time; that his benevolence and gifts of wages, taking her out or helping her in the house, place her in debt to him, for after all benevolence is the privilege of the dominant and can be withdrawn. This is evident in Stefano's comment that he wants a female to respect him and his opinions; to cook him his meals, irrespective of how many times it is a week, if she is the one to get home from work first. Stefano said he wanted to hold onto traditional beliefs but realised there was a bit of give and take. He said he was prepared to do the washing, cleaning, ironing, in fact everything, provided that he got back in return from the female the things he wanted.

McMahon (1999: 20) comments that those forms of domestic labour which men take responsibility for, like gardening and home maintenance are not as "dense" as women's work and can be scheduled at will. Many of the men set certain limits, or suggested competencies that were largely gender based (Pease, 2002). Peter, for example, said things ought to be fifty-fifty in respect to housework. He suggested that housework was a simple task, but he was adamant that he would only be involved with outside chores. Khaled was prepared to vacuum and mop the floors, as well as feed and wash the children. He would even change their nappies but he would not do the washing or the ironing, nor could he cook. McMahon (1999: 20) points out that:

Another indication of the choice exercised by male helpers is that the tasks particularly avoided by men are those which women dislike but perform anyway: ironing, cleaning and washing.

Sidney was possibly correct when he stated that men share the workload in theory but not in practice. McMahon (1999) also states that:

The term used most often by both men and women to describe male participation in domestic work is “help”, a term which clearly denotes freedom from ultimate responsibility.

Indeed, Jeffery said that his domestic involvement had been more of a help; a sharing of responsibilities.

It seems that many of the men who spoke positively about their wives entering the workforce, focused upon the monetary gain rather than the need for the eradication of the gendered workplace. This is in keeping with the viewpoint of Pease (2002) who said that change in attitude and behaviour is more likely if men perceive the benefits for themselves as well as for women.

Pease (2002) cites Litewka (1977), who identified objectification, fixation and conquest, as three elements of male sexuality. All three aspects were present in the comments made by the participants. For example, Lane said that he might just look at women as a fuck whilst Matthew admitted that men regarded their wives as accessories rather than as soul mates; that once they were married they owned them and wives needed to heed what they said. Pablo had to have his food on the table at an exact time.

Whilst it is important to acknowledge that heterosexual sex is a pleasurable experience for many women and that women are not only victims to men’s sexual desires (Connell, 2002; Pease, 2000), it is also true according to Connell (2002: 92) that:

The power of heterosexual men in a patriarchal system makes it possible to treat women as objects in a way that not only depersonalises desire but practically dismembers their bodies.

Pablo said that the best reward a wife can give her husband is kindness; that she has to respond to her husband’s sexual demands even if it is sometimes against her wish. Whilst clearly a statement of male entitlement, it is also an indication of dependence and the need for nurturing which as a result of socialisation, men are unable to express openly (Pease, 2000). Chan was another who illustrated the dualism of both distancing and being critical of women but feeling needy of them at the same time. He said:

I really would like someone that would say sorry darling, I understand, I listen to you, I can't help you but I like to listen. Here's a hot drink or what not and just a bit of pampering and understanding. That is a way of lowering the stress. You smart women are supposed to know that.

It seems fair to say in summary, that men both value and depend on receiving care from women. Yet, they also want their partners as servants, and willing ones to boot. They want both their obedience and their empathy (McMahon, 1999). In many ways, resisting change and maintaining the status quo is within men's interests (McMahon, 1999). On the other hand, it is what causes them pain (Kaufman, 1993). That the pursuit of gendered roles replicates social structure and male hegemony at the expense of the personal fulfilment of its members (Gilmore, 1990) is no where more poignantly illustrated than in the words of Clive and then, Serge:

I get so lonely you have no idea, kid. You have got no idea of how lonely I can get. I get very lonely ... I don't want to destroy someone's life just because I want to have a relationship with them. It's pointless. It is absolutely crazy.

At the moment, I do feel very lonely. I don't have any intentions of pursuing another relationship or ... doing anything of such nature. My sole belief was to get married once and to hold onto that forever. I still haven't changed that belief.

Men were asked about their expectations of relationships as part of question 6. Their responses have been summarised in a section called *Relationships*. It has subsections pertaining to relationships with fathers, mothers, children, men and intimate partners.

## ***Relationships***

### **Relationships with Fathers**

The men made very few positive comments about their fathers. The exceptions were Sidney and Timothy. Sidney said his father was a very good role model. He would do

97% of the stuff that was done in the house with great enjoyment because he liked making his wife's life a little easier. Timothy thanked his father for encouraging him to get a trade rather than going into acting.

A number of participants spoke of their fathers being absent both physically and emotionally. Marshall for example, never knew his father, who had left his mother to be a single parent relying on her own parents. Peter said his father was "just not there"; he hardly remembered him. Khaled also revealed that he never saw his dad; that his dad was always at work. "He never spent time with me. He never played. Nothing like that", he said. Even in his teens, he continued, there was nothing. Martin said that he had most certainly spent a lot more time with his children than his dad had with him. "And", he added, "I haven't done much with them". Chan was "pissed off" with his parents because he had been "dumped" in Australia to get an education. His father had recently died and Chan felt that he would rather have been less educated, mediocre and not a high achiever if he could have been with his father when he was alive.

Quite a few of the men expressed an inability to talk to their fathers. Raymond said that his father was very much in the background, like a "grandfather figure". "I don't remember sitting down and having heart to heart talks about sex or money. There was none of those skills given to me as a father to a son". Raymond explained that his parents had experienced a father/daughter relationship because his father was 18 years older than his mother. To his children, too, added Raymond, his father was a tough disciplinarian. He recalled being at his aunt's home and being offered a second bowl of strawberries and ice-cream. His father gave him the "wrinkled brow", he said, which was sufficient encouragement for him to be on his best behaviour.

Adrian said that when he reached puberty his father simply patted him on the back, gave him a packet of condoms and told him not to tell his mother. He said that when his sister reached puberty, "they "fucken had a celebration for her, but when my brother and I started changing like that, it was just like we were ignored ... They were just a bit shy about talking about that". His mother had told him that his father had, on occasion, shared a little cry with her, but, said Adrian, if his father saw anyone else crying, he would laugh and joke that they were having a howl. In reality, he could not handle it at all and would freak out. Khaled still remained sceptical about talking to his parents, believing that they would hold his disclosures against him; they would say that they had

warned him. Lane revealed that he had felt shut out; that his father was not a very emotionally connected sort of person. For Sidney, too, “There was never a great deal of communication with my father”. His dad, he felt, was not necessarily cold but had a cold aspect about him. He was really a warm man, but just not the sort of person who could be approached to talk about “all this kind of stuff”. “It’s different now”, he said, “but not when I was a child. Not until perhaps ten years ago”.

Clive was another who only managed to communicate with his father as they both got older and his father understood him more. “The older I got”, he told, “the more I could sit down and chat to him. But when I was younger, I was explosive”. How explosive will be expanded upon a few paragraphs below. Even at the end, just before he died, Clive’s father was still unable to relate to Clive on an emotional level. “Don’t do that”, he said, when Clive, sitting on his bed, described his loneliness and began to cry. He told Clive not to be ridiculous; to return home to them in New Zealand and to find another girlfriend. He had no understanding, or could not cope, with Clive’s fear and doubts that any of that was possible. For Jeffery, there was still a “bit of a barrier”. “Dad and I”, he said, “well, we get on well, but ... I don’t know whether he doesn’t ask or he shows no interest, or what it is. But I rarely talk to him about [problems]”.

In addition, the men made mention of physical violence occurring between them and their fathers. Matthew said he was brought up in a generation where all he knew was the back of the hand, or some verbal abuse when he had done something wrong; that basically he grew up with a stepfather that was “an angry person, bang”. Barry said he had a father who was very aggressive to everybody. “He used to hurt me, you know, in his drunken tirades. Pick me up; throw me against the wall”. Timothy also spoke of being terrified when his father got angry:

My dad had a terrible temper and it was normal behaviour in our house to see him ... scream, shout, smash things, throw things around, you know; break windows, break doors, get angry and like go into a rage and everybody would just be terrified. And I guess I just thought that was how you behaved.

Clive, too, said his father would take things out on him by being violent, but that he would never do the same to his brother. Clive thought that the reason for this was that he and his dad were like “two peas in a pod” and eventually Clive “thumped” him back.



On one occasion, as his father grabbed him, ripping his shirt in the process, Clive “bopped” him warning him never to do that again. He said they were also verbally violent towards each other:

I would just say, “Look, fuck off and leave me alone”. He’d say, “You do as I tell you”. And I’d say, “No, you don’t do that. I am a free man, a free person. You can ask me, don’t tell me”. And he’d say, “You get out of my house”. And I’d say, “Your house? Suit yourself”. And I’d go. And two days later he would apologise and laugh about it and I would say to myself, what’s he laughing about? There’s nothing to laugh about.

Clive said that this humiliated him and made him hate his father all the more, because his father was narrow minded and would never respect anything he was told; whether it was right or wrong. “He would call you an idiot”, Clive said. “You never do that to people. That is putting them down”.

Fathers were at times described by the participants as being highly critical of them. For instance, Jean-Claude said that his father was so ashamed of him getting married for the first time at a young age that he ultimately chose to marry in the United States rather than at home in France. Khaled, as mentioned previously, revealed that his dad still shook his head and walked away when he found him bathing his children. Another example was given by Feodor. He said that his father was a facts and figures man; that when he and his sister were going through puberty when “everything is questionable”; when “some things are emotional and there is no way any explanation will do”, his father would put them down if they were unable to explain their actions and he thought them behaving unreasonably. “I actually wished he would have smacked me”, he said. Instead, as a result of the constant criticism, and not being allowed to follow their own ideas, he believed they ended up not being able to think for themselves. One incident with his father, when he was thirteen or fourteen years old, remained in his memory. On arriving in Australia, he found himself having great difficulty with mathematics at school and his father tried to explain it to him. However, as an engineer, Feodor said, his father had a very convoluted way of explaining maths. The end result was that Feodor ran from the house, crying bitterly. Feodor felt that his father still behaved in a very childish manner and, even recently Feodor had argued with him over some of his father’s “red herrings, sexual connotations, sexual words and sexual conversations”.

***Commentary:***

Much has been written about the father “wound” and father absence (Beynon, 2002; Pease, 2000; 2002). In fact, Biddulph (1994: 13) suggests to his male readers that the first step to manhood is “Fixing it with your father”. He insists that a man’s father is his line of contact to his masculinity; that unless a man resolves the relationship between himself and his father, whether through a conversation with him or in his own head if his father is no longer alive, he will be unable to live life successfully.

Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994: 101) argue that “our culture has developed a near-obsessive interest in reclaiming and rehabilitating the reputation of this missing person”. They suggest that rather than blaming the individual for his behaviour, scapegoating the absentee father or even pointing fingers at the mother, it is the social system that ought to be addressed. Khaled said his father was always working and so was never home. It was his mother who would “beat the crap” out of him and tell him to “wait until your dad comes home”. Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994) might identify this as a clear example of the process of separation; a mother pulling back from her son for fear of exercising control over a male child who belongs to his father. They would argue, too, that it indicates a culturally imbued feeling in a woman of being inadequate to the job of raising a son.

Furthermore, they (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994: 85) insist that the notion that a young boy needs a male role model in order to become a man is “simply the latest trendy psychological panacea for a host of societal ills” but is now taken as the gospel truth. Moreover, they suggest that the search for male role models can be misguided and destructive. It reinforces the idea that male identity is defined by being like somebody who is male and unlike somebody else who is female. It promotes the continued acceptance in Western culture of the need for boys to become like their fathers and to both separate and differentiate themselves from their mothers (Pease, 2000; Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994). A hero ethos is upheld and men continue to be shaped into identities that are physically strong and brave, and emotionally weak and remote. In so doing, Pease (2000) suggests that men lose touch with parts of themselves that could have been powerful in triggering change. Moreover, a hegemonic model of masculinity is perpetuated. There are consequences of this process. Misogyny is

inevitable (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994; Smith, 1996) and men's relationships with both men and women are affected (Pease, 2002; Kimmel, 2000).

## **Relationships with Mothers**

There were participants who vocalised sadness at losing love and affection from their mothers. Lane was one such example. Talking about his relationship with his mother, he said that he was happy from the time he was born until he went to kindergarten:

When I started kindergarten like my relationship with my mum kind of disappeared or something and that was a bit disastrous ... I suppose she used to treat me like I was a king. Like I could do whatever I want.

Whilst he was rebuilding a relationship with his mother, he still found her controlling and manipulative. So much so, that there was a time when he had "just gotten so angry that I like just popped". Khaled described Lebanese men as mummy's boys because, he said, their mothers did everything for them. In a statement that seemed both nostalgic and reminiscent of the past, Khaled agreed that his mum also used to spoil him by doing everything for him. Chan expressed his feelings about being sent from Hong Kong to get his education in Australia. That was a time, he said, when he was on his own; when there was no more from Mum. He went on: "Mum just dumped me here, but Mum look at it that since I have got an education, I have been given a great opportunity". Whilst his pain and confusion at the separation is clear, Chan demonstrated little sense of empathy for his mother. He remained "stressed out" by her. He was adamant that his wife needed to understand that if she brought up the topic of his parents, she would have to deal with the consequences; listen to him for hours from morning to evening or he would hit her.

David blamed his mother for his father leaving home. He said:

My dad was thrown out of the house by my dramatic mother. When I was 12 years old, they separated. She would no longer tolerate his inability to provide for her financially.

Rather than eulogise the fact that she brought up five children on her own, he condemned her for subjecting him and his siblings to what he called, the subliminal

conditioning of a woman who had been abused as a child and deep down resented men but wanted to be a good woman and love her husband. He added that in a sense whilst she was schizophrenic or two-sided, she was also a person in a position of power. He declared that she had “the means to abuse a child and destroy their respect for the opposite sex and for trusting someone”. This statement is all the more poignant because he stated:

I adored my mother. I didn't go to school at 5. I went to school at 8 because I wanted to stay at home with my mother and her friends every day and they all adored me. I used to have an afternoon sleep with my mother for two hours everyday.

He was particularly angry that his mother refused to make his assault charges against his wife “kosher” even though she was a friend of a Family Law Court judge.

Peter was another who did not communicate any admiration for his mother's feat in bringing him up single handed. Instead he complained about missing out on a lot of toys, saying he had been lucky to get a pushbike. He said that he probably did not get any love or affection from his mother when he was growing up and, like a number of the men with their mothers, continued to have an uneasy relationship with her. He saw her as having a selective memory and as being able to push his buttons.

Serge acknowledged that he was still not very comfortable talking to his mother. He had no memories of experiencing spontaneous cuddles and affection ever in his life, or ever witnessing his parents demonstrate love and caring. Matthew used to only ring his mother on Christmas, Mother's Day and probably two other times throughout the year. He said that she had begun to send his children birthday cards, but whilst it made them happy, he remained sceptical about whether it truly benefited them.

Marshall continued to keep his mother at arm's length. He said that she had never wanted him and could not deal with him. “I always used to get into trouble”, he said, “whether it was my problem or wasn't my problem. I never felt worthwhile. I always felt like I was dispensable”. He said that he could not handle the way she would scream at him and corner him. She would attack and threaten him until:

One day I knew that I was actually big and I was actually stronger than her, so I could actually stand up to her and she would stop. By paying intimidation back to her I could actually protect myself.

***Commentary:***

It is little wonder that boys become lonely men. If mothers withdraw for fear of compromising their son's masculinity, and fathers are both emotionally and physically absent, the result seems inevitable (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994). Kaufman (1993) says that the first wound of men is not just the father wound but the mother wound as well; the loss of the mother and the rejection of the parts of themselves that are feminine. There were participants who appeared to mourn the loss of love and affection from their mothers. Lane's story is one such example. At one point, he clearly stated that if he could have a wish it would be that he was female. Perhaps, there is some truth in thinking that Western society, after all, permits females to remain emotionally connected to their mothers. Certainly, for Lane the mother was the person he both yearned for yet feared being trapped by (Pease, 2000).

Serge said he had never experienced spontaneous cuddles and affection. Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994: 137-138) might hypothesise that this speaks of a mother's love rather than neglect and a desire to prepare her son to meet social dictates. Her withdrawal was through "fear of being a sexually seductive mother" and to protect her son from being seen as a sissy or a mommy's boy.

Chan too, expressed his feelings about being sent from Hong Kong to get his education in Australia. He said "Mum just dumped me here, but Mum look at it that since I have got an education, I have been given a great opportunity". Chan's mother adhered to social dictates. For the good of her son she relinquished him and attempted to make certain that he was not the subject of social censure; that he was not thought of as being over-protected or over-mothered. Nor could it be said that she had meshed her identity with his (Pease, 2002). However, it appears that Chan learnt his lessons well and accepted the ways of the patriarchal world. Whilst his pain and confusion at the separation is clear, it is an egotistical pain. He demonstrated little sense of empathy for his mother and her own loss. Instead she was devalued, seen as inferior and blamed for her actions (Pease, 2000).

David's description of his mother was not only blaming but was also illustrative of his need to disassociate himself with her and identify with his father. It might also be an example of the immense fear men have of women's power (Kaufman, 1993). He was particularly angry that his mother refused to make his assault charges against his wife "kosher" even though she was a friend of a Family Law Court judge. It might be said that David's anger was borne out of ambivalence. He feared being dependant upon his mother yet realised he really needed her. He also understood that it was him that should be superior and yet it was his mother who had the social contacts.

## **Heterosexual Relationships**

When asked about their expectations of a heterosexual relationship many of the men were unclear. This was not only true of the past but of the present as well. For example, Feodor said that when he got married he just expected things to go on as normal; a way of life which he admitted had been an "indulged" existence. Aaron was another who said that he was unclear about his expectations when he married. All he knew was that he liked his wife and enjoyed her company and "it was like well, what do I do now?" Yet, he said, he never sought advice. On his own, he finally concluded that he and his partner ought to let their relationship proceed so that, at least, they could have one. Never, he said, did he have any clear understanding of why he was in the relationship or for what purpose.

It's as if the universe pushed me and my ex-wife together and we had these two children. Having had these two children, the universe decided we didn't need to be together anymore and now we aren't.

Even in the present time, he remained confused. As far as he was concerned, there was so much choice, and such a wide range of expectations for either person in a relationship, that nobody really knew what they wanted to be doing. Marshall was of like mind. He said it was scary and difficult. He said that in his relationship, as was so much the case in the world, "one day it's one thing and one day it's another thing".

Chan said that a man that went into a relationship with expectations would be disappointed. However, Matthew seemed of the opinion that men did have these expectations because he said:

Men go out; we prey on the person; we pick up the person; talk to the person; we sweep the person off their feet and then they are an accessory ... we just sort of think that well, you're an accessory. We own you. You do what we say.

Peter and David seemed to agree with Chan that relationships deteriorate. Peter said that:

In a relationship, a male just loses quite a few of his rights ... you get nagged for going down to the pub too often; spending too much time with your mates ... You lose freedom.

David believed that in every relationship there was a slide from the rosy honeymoon period to years later when the "girl's getting unpretty, overweight and the man has lost his job and feels insecure, invalidated". Khaled spoke of the bills, children and a demanding wife that men experienced for the rest of life.

The participants spoke about their needs in a relationship. Stefano's view has already been mentioned. He said that he only wanted three things; to be fed, kept clean and loved. This, he said, was all he needed to be happy. Peter said that he wanted mateship; that too many people became lovers before they were friends; Sidney also was looking for a partnership as was Roger who said he did not want to be looked after, although he suspected most men did. He wanted companionship and love on a continuing basis. Trust, respect, flexibility and acceptance were all mentioned as important in relationships.

There were also men who talked about the need for communication. Chan said sadly that the lack thereof had nothing "to do with I don't love you". He said that withdrawing attention from a child was one of the worst things that a parent could do. He felt that it was no different for a spouse. He wanted to be understood and listened to. He said that if his wife ignored him, he would go berserk. If she did not demonstrate sensitivity to his feelings, he said, she would have to suffer the consequences. In a similar fashion, Martin complained that he was of lower priority to his wife, Penny, than her family was.

One of the issues that I have found that has come up is, for example, how Penny was saying that she sees her sister and mother and family of

equal value to me. Now, I have questioned her on that because that means that I am of a lower priority. Because for partners in a relationship, be it marriage or whatever, the other member of that partnership is of the highest priority in the eyes of that person, no matter what the other family members are.

Matthew also had great difficulty accepting that his wife could speak to her mother on the phone for hours even though they worked together all day.

Like one of my biggest things with my wife was, “You’re always on the phone to your mother, yet you work with her every day ... You come home from work. You talk to her on the bloody phone for hours”.

He was also concerned about the group of friends she had at work and would tell her that she was not supposed to go there to have fun. In reality, he admitted, that he wanted her to be dependant upon him; that he felt she should not be at work in the first place and that he had failed as a man in not being able to provide sufficiently for his family. Similarly, when Jeffery said that he felt unable to enter a relationship if the woman wanted children, or when Peter expressed his upset that his girlfriend went on holiday against his wishes and spoilt their “quality time”, it seemed that they, too, were needy of their partner’s full attention and fearful of rejection or abandonment.

Martin eloquently defined his understanding of intimacy:

The antithesis of intimacy is being in a bed by yourself on a winter’s night when you can curl up with that someone and they can curl up with you ... and there’s just nothing like it, nothing to beat it. The sense that the other person has a desire to be cradled and you are willing to cradle them. Nothing sexual, just that intimate physical and emotional unity and if you turn over in bed, it’s reversed and winter is outside the bedclothes and outside the window; the emotional warmth and the physical uniformity of the spread. Nothing comes near it.

However, the number of negative comments about their relationships indicated that real intimacy had often eluded the men; that they were not able to make themselves sufficiently available or give any indication of the extent of their love. Adrian said he



had loved his intimate partners but did not think he had really known them. Feodor revealed that:

I have kind of considered us to be ... you know, we are one. We're Agnetha and Feodor. You know, you can't separate us. We are a couple, kind of thing. That's just how things are ... I have always thought no matter what happens that we'll always be together; always work things out.

This was not to be. As already stated, Aaron and his wife did not resolve their issues about an unexpected pregnancy and a miscarriage because, he said, he did not know what to say or how to relate to her. Simon did not talk to his wife about the finances because he wanted to avoid conflict. Chan said his wife was actually sick of talking and Sidney, found that "I was frozen out of her life". Peter maintained that having a relationship was too much hard work and he did not want to get involved. He had some girlfriends, he said, but could not be bothered to push the point any further. The men described the yelling and screaming that took place and, in Martin's case, regularly in front of the children. Arguments abounded and even, as in the case of Matthew, became routine. For Sidney, these arguments were "a point scoring situation". Martin admitted that he had not been good with his temperament; Toby that he was very snappy and very short, in fact, unbearable to live with, and Jeffery recognised that he had been blunt and insensitive.

The men did on occasion speak well of their relationships. Bearing in mind their admitted lack of closeness and intimacy to their partners, these comments take on an added sense of poignancy. It seems possible that their spouses might have been unaware of these sentiments. Toby spoke of play wrestling and mucking around; of his fidelity and loyalty; Marshall spoke of going shopping together; Simon spoke of encouraging his wife in her career and being proud of her success; Raymond revealed that he had learnt to trust his wife's discernment and had become aware of her insightfulness; of the way in which they complemented each other. Feodor acknowledged his wife's ability to judge what she should tell the children of the cause of their separation. He believed that she would be fair and give both points of view. Jean-Claude appreciated his wife's generosity and lack of censure as he established himself in a business that he loved, and was respected for, but which was not lucrative. Martin said that he and Penny agreed on the issue of homophobia; both felt strongly that

it was unacceptable and together worked to instil this view in their children. Khaled admired his wife's education and Timothy, complimented his wife on her strength and independence. Roger praised his wife, Jenny:

We had a child. She was the chief motivator of that. It has been a wonderful thing in our lives. She always said she was going to find something to do to keep her career going and look after him practically full time and she did an amazing job of that, establishing this huge business she has got while our son was young and still devoting most of the week to him at the same time.

It seemed that the participants perceived relationships with their intimate partners as different to relationships with other women. Some men like Khaled had not had too much experience of friendships with women at all. Toby had never been sexually intimate with anyone other than his wife. Lane, too, said he had not experienced really good friendships with either men or women. He always became distracted and the relationships never seemed to last very long. Simon had no friends out of his work environment. At work, he said, he spoke to women pretty much the same way as he did to men excepting that he did not swear in their company.

Yet, there were others who spoke of enjoying platonic friendships with women. These men seemed less threatened by platonic relationships than they were by intimate ones. Matthew was an example. He said that it might sound silly but "you can't talk to your partner like that". He had a sister-in-law and a lady friend who he said he could talk to about anything because they were his friends, not his partner. Clive said that his two ex-partners were still his best friends; that he could talk to them about anything. "They have both said", he stated, "just come and talk. And I do. If I want to talk, I will ring them up. But I can't do it with my mates". Timothy, too, said that before he was married, he had had a lot of girl friends with whom he shared platonic relationships. He felt it was easy to share his feelings with them; much more so than any of his friends, and even his gay friends. Marshall even enjoyed having his best friend's daughter to stay.

However, two of the men described their difficulties working with their women bosses. Adrian explained: "I am having a fuck with my boss. She's really getting stuck in and I'd love to smack her on the chops". Aaron was as irate: "I've had a go at our office

manager who's a woman. She's used up. I've had a go at her ... I slammed the door shut and I said you go and get stuffed".

***Commentary:***

If heterosexual men are socialised in a manner that defines them as "other" to women and gay men and if they are unable to express emotions, then it seems likely that their relationships with women, their friendships with men and their parenting of children will be affected. In fact, when asked about their expectations of a heterosexual relationship many of the men were unclear. This was not only true of the past but of the present as well.

When the men were able to articulate their needs in a relationship, it often seemed to translate into their rights rather than their needs (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994). Stefano for example answered in a manner that left no doubt that he had been schooled to expect gendered intimacy. He said that he only wanted three things out of a relationship. He wanted to be fed, kept clean and loved. Chan said that as a parent, withdrawing attention is one of the worst things you can do to a child. It was no different, he thought, for a spouse. He wanted to be understood and listened to. Rather, it seemed that he demanded this of his wife because if she ignored him, he said he would go berserk; that if she did not demonstrate sensitivity to his feelings, she would have to suffer the consequences.

In a similar fashion, Penny, Martin's de facto wife, would probably have experienced his complaint that he was of lower priority than her family, as a demand for her undivided attention. So would Matthew's wife when he complained that she was on the phone to her mother for hours even though they worked together all day. Similarly, when Jeffery said that he felt unable to enter a relationship where the woman wanted children, or when Peter expressed his upset that his girlfriend went on holiday against his wishes and spoilt their "quality time", it would seem that they too were demanding exclusivity. These men as Chan and Stefano above, surely mirror a sense of patriarchal entitlement in a heterosexual relationship.

However, they also demonstrate the flip side of the coin; that whilst they make demands, they also demonstrate a need, a longing for connection which they are unable to articulate (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994). They fear abandonment and rejection;

they equate neediness with weakness and unmanliness, and so are left emotionally destitute and alone. Matthew was also concerned about the group of friends his wife had at work. He told her that she was not supposed to go there to have fun. In reality he felt, and admitted this to me, that she ought to have been dependant upon him; that he had failed as a man in not being able to provide sufficiently for his family. However, he was too emotionally illiterate and the relationship “too inundated by the demands and conflicts of the patriarchal society as a whole” (Kaufman, 1993: 226) for him to disclose this to her.

The number of negative comments about their relationships indicated that real closeness had not been possible for the men; that they were not able to make themselves sufficiently available or give any indication of the extent of their love (Pease, 2002). Their narratives suggest that they have been robbed of potentially rich emotional experiences (Pease, 2002) and that, instead, heterosexual relationships are a source of both privilege and pain (Kaufman, 1994).

It is also clear that the participants perceived relationships with their intimate partners as different to relationships with other women. Again the notion of control seems to be a factor. In order to be vulnerable with someone, an element of control is forfeited (Pease, 2002). This is contrary to the patriarchal position a man is forced to assume, and is constricted by, in the private domain. Even in the work place, a public domain that men now sometimes find themselves sharing with women, it seems that Adrian and Aaron struggled to relinquish the old order and instead demonstrated a need to exert their power and control. According to Coates (2003: 190), talking and befriending non-intimate females, far from being the “new man” could be very much performing the “old man” routine: “through displaying their connection to a woman they were performing heterosexuality and therefore (hegemonic) masculinity”.

Kaufman (1994) maintains that men are the products of societies led by men in which violence is institutionalised at all levels of cultural, political, economic and social life. He said the starting point is neither aggression nor violence but the boy’s acceptance of a dominant creed of violence. If doing violence is an accepted if not acceptable way of being a man; if it is an available resource for showing that one is a man (Hearn, 1998), then it seems highly probable that it will occur in a relationship with someone “other”

than man. According to Hearn (1998: 36), the fact that men use violence in heterosexual relationships:

Can be seen as in large part a development of dominant-submissive power relations that exist in “normal” family life. Men may resort to violence when men’s power and privilege are challenged or under threat and other strategies have failed.

## **Relationships with Men**

Same sex relationships were at times described as unsatisfactory. For both Adrian and Lane particularly being in the company of men was at times uncomfortable, “angst” and tension ridden. Chan, too, said that men were unable to listen and Toby disclosed that he was cautious to the point of not trusting. Aaron said that men only seldom “chew the fat over relationships”; that conversations tended to be about things more external to them. Mention has already been made of the men’s comments about the superficiality of conversation between men. Moreover, Clive said his friends were too narrow minded and Raymond, that it was only his male friends, who were involved in counselling and psychology, that would understand what was happening for him. He revealed that he did not know many men who he could look up to other than Edward Louis Cole, who had written a book called *Maximised Manhood*. “There’s not many men like that around”, he said. “I look at men and think, gee, you know”.

Simon said he had only once in his life confided in a male and he had done so only because he knew that this person had experienced so much that “it made everything else that I was going through seem quite insignificant”. Serge said:

I do have one or two friends which I can go and talk to but it is just feeling that you’re burdening them with your problems all the time ...  
So it’s quite lonely.

Similarly, Sidney revealed:

I could be deeply frustrated and full of all kinds of things ... totally ripping me apart but my nature is [such that it’s] something that I wouldn’t go and discuss openly with somebody ... I don’t want to burden other people.

Matthew summed it up. He said that a man shows muscle in words; that men are too far up themselves and need to be better than the next.

In addition, relationships with brothers were described by some men as being largely devoid of close dialogue or disclosure. Stefano said he could talk to his one brother, but that this was one-sided. No matter how much Stefano tried to get a response, his brother remained vague and distant. Matthew was another who described his brother as vague. He said his brother had a lot of problems of his own and was stressed out. The only good thing about talking to him, said Matthew was the opportunity to consider his own mistakes, because his brother took everything he told him so lightly. Clive also admitted it was pointless to talk to his brother. The last time they had met, said Clive, he tried unsuccessfully to express his feelings about their father, who had died. His brother refused to talk about it at all and thought him mad.

*Commentary:*

If men are expected to be competitive, inexpressive, as well as powerful and in control; if relationships are hierarchical and if homophobia restricts the display of affection and tenderness between men, male relationships will be challenging and often unsatisfactory. It is very difficult to have an intimate relationship with another man if masculinity is defined, as it is in Western society, as men standing alone; when power, competition and the potential of violence are ever present; and when one's very masculinity is at stake (Kaufman, 1994). Emotional disclosure is connected to vulnerability and dependency (Kimmel, 2000). Therefore, friendships very often amount to shared activities (Kauffman, 1994). To be open and vulnerable with another man raises the spectre of homophobia, which Kimmel (2000) states is one of the central organising principles of same-sex relationships. Coates (2003: 186) confirms this. She states that:

Dominant discourses of masculinity assert independence and downplay connection ... In all-male contexts, men have to affirm their separateness from each other in order to avoid the accusation of homosexuality.

Sadly, the majority of the men appeared to be feeling that "If fathers were the first big male disappointments of our lives, then friends are a close second" (Kaufman, 1994:

195). Even relationships with brothers were mostly described as being unfavourable. As was the case with male friends, they were largely described as devoid of close dialogue or disclosure.

## **Relationships with Children**

A number of the men spoke of parenting their children differently to the way their fathers had done with them. Jeffery spoke of the quality time he spent with his son on his access weekends.

I think as he gets older he'll just be that much closer to me because we've had such close intimate times. Whereas if we were together ... I'd rush home from work and bath him or he'd already be in bed or whatever and it's not the same.

Martin, too, said that he spent a lot more time with his children than his father ever had with him. He had also spoken openly to his son about gay relationships. He had told him that provided:

Who you end up relating with and who relates with you, is warm and honest, and the two of you feel good for it, I have no concern whether it is the same gender or another gender. So long as the two of you are happy, I will be happy too.

Serge said he hoped his children had noticed the emotional side he was showing so that they could learn that it was okay to be emotional. He encouraged his son to be in touch with his emotions.

In that respect, I think he's going to be called a sook; a sissy. But regardless if he is called that, I still feel he should express himself and let people know that he is normal and that he has feelings.

He also was trying to impress upon his children that there needed to be equality between a man and a woman. Simon urged his offspring to one day respect their partner's point of view. He was teaching his son that violence was never acceptable and that he must always be responsible for himself.

Jean-Claude said that it was his wife's decision not to smack their son; that he had actually smacked him a few times "which caused a lot of strife to my wife and now I am very happy we have made the decision not to do it because it forces me to resort to other ways and it's a challenge". Raymond realised that "power and control tactics" with his daughter were disastrous; that when he tried to control her, all he accomplished was to "cut off any life blood that is going to happen between me and her".

However, for some men, the father role still appeared to focus on quality time, rather than quantity time; that men of choice did not embrace childcare or household chores as their own role. Khaled felt that fathers had to be role models; that children ought to know their dads. Contrary to his father's wishes he had helped with looking after his children. Yet, helped, rather than shared, was the operative word. He still believed that the mother was the one who could develop a closer bond with children and ought to be at home to look after them. He also felt very strongly that in becoming a father he had become less of a man because he had to show a softer side of himself.

Just as men revealed their awkwardness or reluctance around childcare, so they perpetuated gendered roles. Simon's gendered way of chastising his children has already been mentioned. There were other examples. Barry said he needed to spend more time playing ball with his son, who as a result of living with his mother, had not been able to really develop his skills, and played chess instead. Aaron worried that his son lacked a sense of aggression in his under-8 soccer game. He claimed that the boy stood back rather than going in and competing for the ball. Yet, he expressed his pride that this little boy liked running into him; played ball games; liked cars; rode a bicycle; was physical and different from his sister. Khaled was also concerned that his son was a "mummy's boy" and hung around her skirts. He worried that the boy was going to be a "wussbag" and would not have what it took to get ahead in his life. Jeffery wanted to make sure that he taught his son to have confidence so that he would never be walked over.

Violent responses were also mentioned. Both Matthew and Roger spoke of continuing the patterns of their fathers. Roger said that he hoped to break the chain, but that he had not managed yet. Timothy admitted that:

They see me go off and go crazy. For example, last night I went off at them. The little boy did a pooh in the bath, with all the others and I



nearly lost it. I got them out the bath and I dried them quickly and sent them off to bed with no story and I just completely lost it.

Clive said that his now adult daughter had told him that he had hit her really hard one day. He had explained to her that he had not meant it but he still carried enormous guilt. It was clear in a statement made by Peter that violence continued to be seen as appropriate in certain situations. He said that there was no other way to “bring a child into line” than to smack them. He thought taking a toy away or not letting the child go out would be more “psychologically damaging”.

***Commentary:***

It would seem that there has been a shift towards more egalitarian attitudes (Pease, 2002). However, McMahon (1999: 116) cautions that the fathering role superficially appears to be “one of sharing and gender convergence, but the underlying story is rather different”; that the reality is that gender differences and male rights are perpetuated. The father role still appears to focus on quality time, rather than quantity time and men of choice do not embrace childcare or household chores as their own role (McMahon, 1998). Khaled is an example. He felt that fathers had to be role models; that children ought to know their dads. Contrary to his father’s wishes he had helped with looking after his children. Yet, helped, rather than shared, is the operative word. He still believed that the mother was the one who could develop a closer bond with children and ought to be at home to look after them. He also felt very strongly that in becoming a father he had become less of a man because he had to show a softer side of himself.

Biddulph (1994: 123) offers men advice on being what he calls a real father. One of his suggestions is for men to teach their boys through wrestling how to show care and how to be a good loser or good winner. He urges men to “back-up” their wives in disciplining the children and suggests they also involve themselves with their daughters. Furthermore, fathers are encouraged to make other men available for their sons to learn from and be admired by.

Whilst clearly, the intention is to involve fathers in the upbringing of their sons and to do away with the absent father and father wound that results, it appears that instead, the status quo is maintained. The father is involved rather than responsible; he is a presence rather than a component; he backs-up rather than instigates. Clearly, it is the wife who

remains the primary care giver. As indicated above, violence (wrestling) and men are still related, and, moreover, violence is a means for fathers and sons to connect. Furthermore, although Biddulph (1994) condemns what he terms compulsive competition, he still advises that boys be taught to win and lose. It is also men that continue to be recognised as role models. Being male is still opposite to being female; women remain “other”. When he therefore says that boys need their fathers around for many hours a day, it begs the question whether this is enough, or even beneficial.

Biddulph (1994) says that boys and girls need different help. The argument is not that diversity should not be recognised. On the contrary, difference even within the genders should be acknowledged to a greater extent (Beynon, 2002; Gilmore, 1990). However, if relationships remain hierarchical; if hegemonic masculinity continues; if women continue to be seen as the inferior and subservient “other”, then it seems unlikely that being male will be any less painful or privileged.

Biddulph (1994) says that *female* (his italics) teachers have been overwhelmingly positive about his ideas. This is concerning because “the search for personal change without efforts to change the institutions within which we live and grow will therefore, be met with only limited reward” (Kimmel, 2000: 214). Serge said he was encouraging his son to be in touch with his emotions:

In that respect I think he’s going to be called a sook, a sissy, but regardless if he is called that, I think, I still feel he should express himself and let people know that he is normal and that he has feelings.

Without institutional change on social, political, economic and cultural levels, Serge’s son, and many other boys, will continue to be compromised. Being male will continue to be a position of both privilege and pain (Kaufman, 1994). The men’s narratives speak for themselves.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear in this chapter that as stated by Beynon (2002: 1):

187

sizes, shapes and appearances), there are numerous forms and expressions of gender, of “being masculine”.

Some of the men actually articulated this. For example, Feodor stated that it is a myth that masculinity can be written about simply as a collective or as being macho and Lane said, “I think we are all different. We all go through different processes and forms ... we all experience different things”. Finally, Chan argued that men are dissimilar as a result of differing testosterone levels; that if a study of this nature was conducted with gay participants, “you may have a different story”.

It was certainly evident that there were cultural group differences, including diversity in class and ethnic practices. Moreover, it is possible that with a larger sample group these differences might have been even more conspicuous. Men stipulated, for example, that there were different standards in codes of manhood around physical appearance, strength and emotional behaviour. There were differences, too, on the emphasis and meaning placed upon sport and its rituals, as well as on drinking habits and pub culture; attitudes to women, social roles; and to relationships with extended family members, people in authority and social security services.

However, the espousal of patriarchal stereotypes, in the way these men spoke of being male, is noteworthy. It seems to far exceed, and to submerge, cultural differences. It appears that the continuity and commonality (to borrow the terminology of Hester, 2000) of this gendered discourse, dwarfs the discontinuities and differences of other cultural discourses. In fact, the most significant, and overwhelming, discovery is that in these men’s narratives, even when cultural differences were both explicitly and implicitly expressed, the notion of an idealised Western patriarchal masculinity is upheld; a hegemonic and androcentric masculinity, over which hangs the “spectre of the sissy” (Kimmel, 2000: 253).

Matthew stated that “Every bloke is not the same, but the majority are”. Sidney also emphasised that whilst every man is different in many ways, “there are essentially similar cultural stereotypes they want the man to provide”. Idealised masculinity is certainly not a Western patriarchal phenomenon. As Gilmore (1990: 10) has stated, “Most societies hold consensual ideals – guiding or admonitory images – for conventional masculinity” by which individuals are judged worthy members of their

society. Western society alone does not distinguish between male and female; nor is it the only society that institutionalises sex appropriate roles (Gilmore, 1990). However, “power relations are reproduced through talk, and it would be naïve to deny that that there must be some relationship between ... gender-differentiated conversational styles and existing power structures” (Coates, 1993: 194). If the narratives of the participants are indicative of a male script (Gilmore, 1990), then it seems that it is one that upholds Western patriarchal notions of masculinity and that whilst it may not be possible to talk of “Universal Male”, nevertheless, a “Ubiquitous Male” (Gilmore, 1990: 223) exists in Western society; one for whom “hegemonic masculine discourse shapes a sense of reality ... and is continually renewed, recreated, defended, and modified through practice” (Messerschmidt, 1998: 130).

## Chapter 6: The Construction of Violence

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This chapter, like Chapter 5 before it, is dedicated to a presentation of the data. Once again, although the selection and organisation of material is my own, every effort has been made to represent the narratives of the participants as closely as possible. This chapter describes the manner in which the participants spoke about violence in response to questions 7 to 15 on the interview schedule and has been organised into the sections: Nature; Nurture; The End Product and Change. As arguments supporting both innate and learnt causes of violence were evident, the first two sections have been called *Nature* and *Nurture* respectively.

### ***Nature***

There were some men who inferred that violence was part of human nature. Serge, for example said that it is inevitable that there will always be violence because “I guess, we’re just humans”. Peter, too, said that even if society dictated that violence was taboo, “it would slow, it would stop a lot of it, but it is always going to be there”. Adrian spoke of the evolution of the human triune brain. He said that instinctive and automatic responses stemmed from man’s ancient and primitive reptilian brain. He admitted that he used to act in what he called an unsustainable fashion. When asked what he thought was the cause of this, he reckoned that he was born that way; that violence was pretty natural.

For Marshall, violence was a natural coping mechanism; moreover, for Aaron, what was natural for men, was different to what was natural for women. He thought that men were born with an aggressive streak and that women were ontologically superior in verbal skills. This, he said, was the reason that women became “emotionally manipulative” whereas men resorted to physical violence. Khaled maintained that men were born to be forceful and to show it, whereas Toby, who like Stefano believed that one’s personality was a key factor, said that “anyone can be aggressive if they are pushed to a limit”. Stefano observed that there are some blokes out there who are total bastards and others for whom aggression was totally out of character.

Look there's some blokes out there that are just total bastards and they're violent, and they'll just hit anyone just to feel good ... But there's blokes out there, it's just out of their character.

Chan argued that, in fact, it was essential for the survival of the human race that men continued to be reactive. He believed that "the design of human genes" and men's DNA prepared them for dealing with "external stress", so that when women and children were in danger, they would be able to save them. If that ability was quashed, he feared that men would not be able to fight in dangerous situations nor save their families. Dave supported Chan's view of genetic coding:

I'm a man that comes from the old world. I come from a lineage of people that fought to keep this world. My name comes from the Crusades ... I came from that and we believed in chivalry, loyalty, fidelity. The Knights of the Round Table, King Arthur, all that sort of crap. This is what I come from. This is in my lineage. This is actually genetic for me. I am a Count of Montpelier ... Because we went to war and the only ones that came back were the ones that were strong, we went the opposite way. We culled the weak gene. Out of the whole generation, maybe only two or three Montpeliers might come back every time. So in that sense we technically culled the weak ones. That is so strongly ingrained within me that I will not deny myself who I am. It is part of my being. I don't just believe in these things, I feel them. I feel love strongly. I feel love, and this is why sometimes I do over react am quite impulsive. Because I feel things very strongly. I believe a part of that is genetically imprinted.

Martin's argument was that human beings are moving away from nature, and as a result their responses are becoming more extreme. He stated:

I feel that one of the biggest problems that we have is that we don't go out to that tree and climb it and fall out of it. We don't stick our hands in soil and get it dirty and having done that, walk inside and eat a sandwich. People will look down their nose if we drop some food on the floor and pick it up and eat it. We have been conditioned to be dust free and disinfectant covered and electronically aided and conditioned, and the stimuli that we receive is alcohol driven or artificial

entertainment inspired. It numbs the senses to the point that the stimuli have to be greater, and the extremes of stimuli in their responses have to be greater, and as a result the people are becoming more extreme in how they respond.

For other men, violence occurred because of their need for release. Pablo said that if a man was angry, he just had to find a way to release it; and, that he would do this with the person who was closest physically to him at the time, whether that was his wife, a friend, his mother or sisters. Toby spoke of a build up of emotions; Aaron of physical energy, and Marshall was of the opinion that aggression is a build up of excitement or anxiety. For Feodor, the release he required was sexual. He said that when, in the past, he had raped his wife, he was on “auto pilot” and “I just knew I needed release”.

***Commentary:***

It is important that those who support physical, biological, or even psychological arguments to explain men’s violent behaviour, the notion of nature rather than nurture, exercise caution and do not simply make excuses for the individual and exempt social responsibility (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997; Yllo, 1993). Kaufman (1993: 163) argues that:

There is nothing purely individual about these acts. The violent man must be held responsible, but he alone is not to blame, for these actions are a ritualised acting-out of our social relations of power.

It seems necessary therefore to protect boys from a culture of violence that upholds and reinforces the mystique of atavistic male traits (Kimmel, 2000).

***Nurture***

Many of the men blamed social, cultural and familial influences for their violence. Raymond said that society actually condoned violence and “up to thirty years ago you could beat your wife with a rod as thick as your thumb”. He felt that men’s violence was defended and reasons found to excuse its occurrence; a man was said to be under a lot of pressure, for example, or his action was justified as being a response to a nagging wife. Roger maintained that:

Socially domestic violence is supposed to be unacceptable, but there is an underlying current that women deserve what they get, I think, amongst some men. And it's okay to react violently towards a woman. So I think there's a conflict in society over that one.

Chan pointed out that "society provides two escape routes for violence"; insanity and provocation. He also said that "if you have a happy country you would not get that sort of stuff [domestic violence]".

Jean-Claude, whilst also defending his position by implicating social practice, nevertheless also spoke of his sense of entitlement to use violence. He said that "For a short moment I think that the limit has been reached. I must now be violent. I am now allowed to be violent". He said that, at that point in time, he was clear in his mind that he was "entitled to violence full stop" and he was certain this came "from education more than physiology"; that it was because "there is always that underlying thing in human societies that if you don't do what you are told, eventually you'll get killed".

***Commentary:***

If violence is not innate then it must be something that has been learnt (Kaufman, 1991). Many of the men blamed social, cultural and familial influences for their violence, and in so doing failed in most cases to take responsibility for their own actions. Roger actually said that "we have a culture of blame. Maybe we expect that the reason for something happening lies with somebody else. It's always somebody else's fault". The participants did not usually convey the understanding that domestic violence, whether it is premeditated or not, is nevertheless purposeful behaviour (Schechter, 1982); that it "is an attempt on the part of the husband to bring about a desired state of affairs" and hence is a "profound lesson about who controls a relationship and how that control will be exercised" (Schechter, 1982; 17). Social discourse legitimises violence when it is retaliatory and violence remains "the most gendered behaviour in our culture" (Kimmel, 2000: 250).

The data pertaining to this section has been divided into further sub-sections. These represent, and are named for, the institutions the men identified as sources of learnt behaviour. They are: Family, School; Sport; Visual, Audio and Electronic Communications; Pub Culture; Church and Armed Forces.



## Family

It was apparent that most of the men were of the belief that violence, rather than being innate, was as a result of one's upbringing and reference was made particularly to family upbringing. Lane described home as a place where people were created, developed and made. He said that home was the place where lives were built beautifully or destroyed. Timothy expressed the view that behaviour was learnt from the examples set by one's parents. He revealed that:

One of my earliest memories of going to my mum's family house ...  
was my grandma, her mother, hitting one of the boys with a beer bottle.  
Broke a beer bottle on his hair.

Barry, too, thought that in a perfect family, where the mother and father loved each other, an example would be passed onto the children and they would learn what a proper father and mother ought to be like; if you did not have that, he asked, how else would you learn what a proper relationship was meant to be like. Roger was eloquent on the subject:

Obviously there are differences between men and women biologically, but it is a terrible trap to blame your problems on nature as opposed to nurture. I think if people have problems in their lives, violent relationships and all sorts of things like that, they come from learning; they come from breeding; they come from the role that boys assume in the family. I don't think they come from nature. The learning comes from the family unit and from society in general, but essentially from the family unit which is just a little microcosm of society, just a reflection of society. And certainly the roles of men have been passed down through the existence of Western civilization. The roles put men in a position in the family where they can do great damage to the succeeding generations coming through by teaching them bad habits; by teaching them things that they do in their own lives, like shutting other people out, isolating themselves, being violent and all those other things that they can carry through ... Taking the opportunity to talk and blame things on nature is a trap. It's a bad trap that people can fall into ... It's an excuse to avoid change.

Clive was another who said he was made to be violent rather than born that way. He said it was his reaction to a father who was violent towards him. Marshall was, likewise, of the opinion that his mother's aggression towards him was the cause of his own violent behaviour. He said that when he was 12 years old, and literally backed into a corner, he realised he could retaliate physically and stop her. "Tough years never change", he said, meaning that violence had remained his way of protecting himself when he felt confronted and fearful in his relationship with his girlfriend, Bess.

It was striking that almost all of the participants spoke of either being a victim, or an observer, of violence in the family home. Some had been both. At times the men described more subtle forms of emotional abuse or neglect. Some examples of these follow. Clive's situation was mentioned in Chapter 5. He said that his father would never respect anyone else's point of view; that his father would call him an idiot whether he was right or wrong. Feodor's description of his father's criticism and put downs has also already been cited, as has the emotional neglect experienced by Adrian. He said that he had been unable to talk within his family because they simply did not want to listen to him. Lane, likewise, claimed to have been shut out by his parents.

Feodor's commented about the patriarchal demonstrations of male power and privilege in his family. He said that when he was about 7 or 8 years of age, he had enjoyed watching his grandfather and other men in the family belittle his "artzy-fartzy" aunt for her "far-flung" ideas; he remembered that if any of the other women said something it was really just a token effort. They would never challenge the men and "just sat there and talked and so forth and just tried their best to ignore the men and that kind of banter". Playboys lay open on the coffee table in the lounge. Feodor said that for him, as a result of his upbringing, there was no absolute line between what was acceptable and unacceptable. He said in tribal societies where rape and domestic violence did not occur, that line was absolute; "it was never questioned; like putting pants on in the morning". When asked how come, when he experienced strong sexual urges, he had not raped women on the streets, yet he had raped his wife, he answered, "I didn't need to because I had my wife at home. If I was able to justify the action for myself, why would I go outside?" Raping a woman he did not know, he said, was more clearly an illegal act; but after forcing sex upon his wife, he admitted being able to settle comfortably in front of the television with a sandwich.

Other men also commented that their treatment of their partners was, to use Barry's words, "a learned thing" because they had observed their father's disrespectful behaviour towards their mothers. Barry also said that he did not know any other way. The more subtle forms of abuse that they identified included, for example, the financial control Clive's father subjected upon his wife and the emotional and verbal abuse that Sidney, Jeffery and Lane had witnessed in their family homes. Whilst Sidney claimed he had very limited recollection of these times, Jeffery on the other hand, recalled how much he had hated it because it made his mother feel so bad. Lane said this was something he kind of just accepted; that he used to stand back and just watch and listen to it.

Marshall commented with fervour on the upbringing of children. He believed that children needed to be nurtured particularly in two age groups, between two and five; and eleven to fifteen. He said they were the most crucial ages of a person's life when a child needed to learn that it was okay to feel; that even feeling overwhelmed was okay. He said that these were times of great change and difficulty, when children were "stewing". If not guided in these age groups, he stressed, they would "turn on themselves" and find their own ways.

The physical abuse that the men talked of experiencing themselves as children, ranged from Lane being beaten with a wooden spoon or sandal and Jean-Claude being "thrashed" and hit "unjustly", to Barry being thrown against a wall during "drunken tirades". Matthew said that he was of a generation where all he knew was the back of the hand or a bit of verbal abuse when he did something wrong. "I was so used to being beaten up and pushed around", said Marshall, that "I didn't feel safe". It has already been mentioned that Clive and his father had a very violent relationship both physically and verbally.

A couple of the men said they knew that in their childhood homes, violence occurred behind closed doors. Whilst Clive had been told about it by his sisters, Timothy spoke of actually hearing his parents fighting and his mother screaming. The next day, or the day after that, he said, she would have black eyes. So extreme and so often did his father demonstrate his rage by smashing things around him that Timothy said:

Wife bashing? I didn't realise that abusing and yelling and intimidation were really abuse. I just thought that was just the way people lived and

the way people carried on with their lives ... Everybody yelled and shouted at each other and slammed doors, and that was normal.

There were many other stories the men told of witnessing violence in their homes. For instance, Roger stated that:

There was plenty of violence in our family and all sorts of fighting and carrying on and my dad was pretty much an alcoholic. So I observed a tremendous amount and I am deeply aware of the effects that had on me.

Likewise, Serge said that he relived his mother and father's relationship and their ways of doing things. He said that there was much violence and "abusive business" in his childhood home and that he saw the violent side of his father right up until he died. Jean-Claude was another who disclosed that: "Once I saw my dad hit my mother which really marked me". Raymond had witnessed knives being pulled; Toby's parents had argued a lot and pushed and shoved each other, although, he felt, they did not hit "each other that often". It is unclear whether by using the words "that often", Toby was minimising the frequency of the violence. However, it does seem that by using the words "each other", his mother was made equally responsible for the violence.

***Commentary:***

Kaufman (1999: 64) argues for the internalisation, individualisation and then reproduction of gender relations. He points to the long period of dependency of children and the family as the place where "complicated conceptions take on flesh and blood form". In the family, he says, femininity is represented by the mother or mother figures, and masculinity by the father or father figures.

Feodor, for example, learnt from his family of origin, that not only are there two sexes but they are different in terms of social significance as well. He would have learnt, therefore, that his own self worth was measured against a yardstick of gender (Kaufman, 1999). The combination of male power and sexual entitlement that he experienced in flesh and blood form (Kaufman, 1999) was certainly reproduced in his later life, when after raping his wife he was able to settle comfortably in front of the television with a sandwich even though she bled anally on one occasion for almost three weeks. Kimmel

(2000) describes rape as a crime of power; an act of conquest and contempt; an expression of entitlement. Interesting then that Feodor, describing his childhood, said:

My opinion of myself is that I kind of just wallowed through until my teenage years, just enjoying things, you know what I mean? Very self absorbed, you know, catered to if you know what I mean?

Kaufman (1999) also acknowledges that it is not just in the immediate family that boys are shaped. Rather the process of rejecting his mother and identifying with what he associates as being a male is reinforced by the entire male dominated society and its patriarchal structures. Kaufman (1993: 30-31) said that

Today patriarchy the world over has become a dense network of social, cultural, economic, religious and political institutions, structures and relationships, which pass on control through men from generation to generation”.

## **School**

Many of the men’s comments hinted that patriarchal notions of power, hierarchy and authority form the basis of school structure, and in so doing reinforce codes of manhood and violence. Marshall declared:

It’s the same with any public school. There’s always aggression. There’s always fights; there’s always power games; there’s always ego’s and there’s always you know, who’s strong and whose tough, and who’s whatever. And that’s just the way it is.

Serge’s comments revealed that he had learnt his lessons about power at school. Initially, he said, he was pushed around all the time, but that, eventually, he joined a group of bullies and became a bully himself. He spoke of the power he achieved in becoming this way:

There was a sense of power and strength just to know that nobody will come near you, and say anything to you, because you would have the power to knock them down or put them back down again. I won’t say it felt great but there was that little bit of security, I guess.

Barry said:

You didn't have to be an aggressor but you had to stand up for your rights. If you didn't, you wouldn't last very long. And you used to see kids that would come and they basically wouldn't stay for very long. I remember the first time. I told a guy he was fat. He broke my nose.

Timothy, too, stressed that if you were not part of it, you were forced to succumb; that you were either a victim or part of the gang. He described the initiation process he was forced to go through so that he was accepted.

I was one of the gang. I wasn't at first when I first went there. I had to go through the initiation and fight the school bully ... I was kind of picked on ... maybe I just looked tough or something but I wasn't. I was scared out of my wits on the first day and I knew this guy was wanting to confront me and it was like three days or so before it actually happened and I was terrified of that moment coming. And it did come and it didn't last very long.

Consequently, for him, "School was fantastic. Yeah. Didn't learn anything but gee, we had good fun. Everyday was splitting sides laughing, usually at the expense of somebody else". He recalled, with glee, the sense of pride and achievement he experienced in throwing the headmaster's lectern and chair out of the top floor window of his school.

David was another who managed not to succumb. He spoke of being thrown into the rough and tumble of school life in Australia which was so totally different from the environment he was used to in Italy, where he was surrounded by his mother and her friends. He said that "I had to learn fast. I did. I was a very fast learner. And I learnt very well". He said by the time six months had passed he had learned skills and was already adept. Not only was he dux of the school, and offered no less than three scholarships, but he was undeniably king of the school as well. He stated that everybody came to know that if, for example, he wanted a seat, he got that seat. All the girls wanted to know and greet him.

Simon spoke of losing his temper one day at school and hitting a class mate. "He was a big guy too", said Simon, "He was much taller than what I was so I think the only sensible thing I could do was stand up so I was taller and whack him as hard as I could;

one in the nose”. As a result, Simon said that he was never bullied or picked upon again. Sidney also made it clear that it was necessary for him to be a bully who showed that he would not be bullied with, and Feodor said that as a boy in Scandinavia, he was known as the tough guy. Though he actually feared the older boys and was not as cocky as he seemed, he knew that they, in turn, feared him and thought that he would be a fair bit to handle. He said that if somebody did something to him, “That was it. They were done for”. As a result, he said, he never had any trouble from boys in the older classes. Peter actually felt that the situation at school was worse than it had been in the past when there were only a few bullies; that in the present, there was a culture of gangs which amounted to “dog eat dog”.

Khaled explained that on the bus going to school, all the boys in Year 7 sat in the front. “It’s a pecking order”, he said. “If you sit up front you are a softie and if you go up the back, they sort of think you’re one of the boys”. He sat at the back. He said:

When I first started school, I used to get bashed every day. When I was in year 7, and then only until I got to about year 9, I was the one doing the bullying and beating people up. Just giving it back to them ... I didn’t feel guilty. It was just part of life. Either you did it or someone else did it to you.

From other comments he made, it was clear that Khaled was made aware that middle class, white heterosexual masculinity was the benchmark against which masculinity was measured. He said that when he first went to school he lived in an area where “there weren’t many like Lebanese or Arabs around”. He said that as the only one he was called a “wog” and used to “cop” it all the time.

Chan’s experience of school, where he also experienced violence, was extremely unpleasant. He said that school was like a prison where children were locked away so that they did not interfere with the rest of society. Teachers were like “prison guards”. He felt that school was not there to teach you anything, and he expressed his doubt that anyone could say their 6 years of high school life was a pleasant experience. After children had passed a series of exams, he continued, they moved to university which, he believed, was essentially the same thing. “At uni”, he said, “there’s a different type of bullying. If you are on the academic side, there’s people that are smart that will bully you in a smart way”.

Race was not the only factor causing men to be marginalised as boys. Martin, small, and effeminate looking, with a thick mop of curls, said:

I was violated in numerous instances at school with the Hendrix hair that I had. The bullies in the school on two occasions dragged me along the ground by the hair, literally. I used to be chased round the school by the school bullies.

He said that he used to live in his own little world and, no matter what they did to him, he would laugh rather than retaliate. This would annoy, and stir up, his aggressors even more. Adrian, who always wanted to talk about his feelings; who thought he had not had a good enough look at what it was to be a bloke; who saw violence as the result of gender identity confusion; who was sexually assaulted walking down the street in his late teens; found school a pretty intimidating experience because of the bullying and intimidation he suffered at the hands of other blokes. Lane, who revealed that finding his sexuality was an issue and part of a journey for him, said that because he had learning difficulties, he was “obviously separate to everyone ... I failed so I was singled out”.

A number of the men spoke of their attempts as schoolboys to avoid the bullies. Stefano said that there were pockets of gangs at his school, but that he would hang around with his own circle of friends and let the others do what they wanted. Simon explained his position:

There's always three distinct groups. Kids who do sport, the bullies and the kids that just sort of never sort of come to get much attention, and I guess I was in the group that didn't come to much attention. I was lucky at school because I didn't find the work very hard ... I actually did straight A subjects, so I didn't get lumped in with the nerds.

Initially, Roger claimed that whilst bullying was true in some schools, it was not true in his. However, he then said:

I mean you can avoid it. You can opt out. I opted out. I took another path which was totally to opt out of mainstream; of what other boys were doing. I mean, as much as I possibly could.



Raymond did not consider himself tough, rather more of a gentle soul. He said that he did not plan it, but it turned out that he hung around with some of the “toughees”. He said that he had a couple of rough mates. He did not remember getting into any fights or being a victim, but he knew that, being a tall child, he “had a reach that if I got in a fight, I could stand back and throw a few punches from a distance”.

The men spoke of being caned at school by their teachers; Peter by the Catholic priests. Matthew said that at school, the teachers used either a meter rule or a cane, but that at technical college, a leather strap was preferred. Toby even said that one of the teachers was sacked for caning a fellow student too many times on his hand. Their personal disclosures were tinged with a sense of bravado. Timothy said that caning was never a painful thing; that it was just a token gesture; Peter spoke of having six cuts of the cane on each hand, which he insisted never hurt him; and Matthew talked, almost with nostalgia, of those being the “old days”.

Simon described the masters as “sadistic” and maintained that violence was actually encouraged in the “big school”. He said that if the masters found boys fighting, they would take them to the gym, put them in the boxing ring with a set of gloves and tell them to go for it. Jean-Claude said something similar. He said violence at school was endemic; that children fought amongst themselves and hit each other. This, he said, was tolerated; teachers or people in charge would not separate them. Simon also spoke of the games they were made to play:

So our sadistic sports master used to create games. They had nice names like “mangle” and other things like this. And mangle, I can remember this now, mangle was played on a basketball court with a chair. You had a wad of rags rolled up as a ball and the idea was to hit it through the legs of the chair to get a goal. You hit it with a stick that you picked up out of the playground and there were no rules. It was just go for it boys. Whack, whack, whack. Brown bruises all over your legs. That was our school sport. So that was violence. That was an encouragement of aggressive violent behaviour in the boys. Girls of course weren’t allowed to do this.

Aaron too, played a game called “Stone Age”, which he described as being like rugby without all the rules. Peter’s words conclude this section. He said, “the message still

stays. It's the teasing and bullying at school that's the thing that prepares you for the outside."

***Commentary:***

School is an example of institutionalised power and control. Even if it aims to be non-sexist, patriarchal notions of power, hierarchy and authority form the basis of its structure (Kimmel, 1993). The men's stories constantly reinforce Mills' (2000) viewpoint that hegemonic masculinity is fragile and that boys have to be constantly prepared to prove themselves; to act out and defend these forms of masculinity. It was noticeable that even the tales of their experiences with caning were a mixture of openness and bravado with careful attention paid to maintaining proof of their laddishness (Coates, 2003). Likewise, important gender work was still, even in the interview room, being accomplished by their boasts of getting away with pranks of various kinds (Coates, 2003). Moreover, it seemed from Aaron and Simon's accounts of the games they played that imbued in the masters was a fear that boys who were not violent would not grow up to be real men and so there was a need to eradicate the "spectre of the sissy" (Kimmel, 2000: 253).

Simon pointed out that activities for girls were different. Mills (2001: 128) asserts that hegemonic processes "ensure that girls comply with dominant constructions of femininity" (Mills, 2001: 128). Coates (1993: 202) states that:

Research into classroom life has discovered many ways both linguistic and non-linguistic, in which girls and boys are treated differently. The differential usage of interactional resources by teachers, girls and boys inside the classroom is a key element in sustaining male dominance.

Mills (2001), citing Connell (1995), named four different ways in which men demonstrate existing gender relations and said that these operated inside all institutions including school. The men's stories provide examples of all four. Men, according to Mills (2001: 67) who fall in the hegemonic category are those who "represent an embodiment of exemplary masculinity"; they are "performing versions of hegemonic masculinity". Timothy, for example, recalled with glee the sense of pride and achievement he experienced in throwing the headmaster's lectern and chair out of the top floor window of his school; the side splitting laughter at the expense of others.

David, too, spoke of being thrown into the rough and tumble of school life in Australia which was so totally different from the environment he was used to in Italy surrounded by his mother and her friends. He said that “I had to learn fast. I did. I was a very fast learner. And I learnt very well”. Sidney too, made it clear that it was necessary for him to be the bully who showed that he would not be toyed with and Feodor, said that as a boy in Scandinavia, he was known as the tough guy. He spoke of actually being feared and as a result never had any trouble from the older classes.

Simon, Roger, Stefano and Raymond are perhaps examples of boys who fall into the category of complicit masculinities in that whilst they did not demonstrate “the worst excesses of hegemonic masculinity” (Mills, 2001: 72), they did little to challenge the patriarchal gender order they found themselves in; they accepted and adapted to its dictates and reaped its rewards in the power they held. They perhaps did not enjoy the same level of status as those boys constantly demonstrating hegemonic masculinity, but nevertheless were complicit in that they maintained a silence that supported and allowed boy’s violence to continue and thrive (Mills, 2001). In some ways, Mills (2001) suggests, they reap the greatest share of the patriarchal dividends because they do not constantly take the same risks to prove their masculinity. Their silence is not only to protect their privilege but through fear of being seen as a traitor to their gender. Simon, for example, after his one and only fight in the classroom mentioned above, explained that because he actually did straight A subjects, he did not get lumped in with the nerds. Stefano said that there were pockets of gangs at his school but that he would hang around his own circle of friends and let the others do what they wanted to do. Roger also admitted that at school he avoided the bullying. He took another path which was to totally opt out of the mainstream. In a similar vein, Raymond said that he could not remember getting into any fights but, somehow, he knew that, if he did, he could handle himself reasonably well.

Adrian, Martin and Lane demonstrate subordinate masculinities. These masculinities are positioned at the bottom end of the hierarchy of masculinities because homophobic discourses place their members outside the norms of real masculinities (Mills, 2001). Martin, with his Jimi Hendrix hair and his effeminate physique, described being dragged and chased around the school. Adrian, who had always wanted to talk about his own feelings (a socially accepted feminine activity); who thought he had not had a good enough look yet at what it is to be a bloke; who saw violence as the result of

gender identity confusion; who was sexually assaulted walking down the street in his late teens; found school a pretty intimidating experience because of the bullying and intimidation he suffered at the hands of other young boys. Lane, who revealed that finding his sexuality was an issue and part of a journey for him, said that because he had learning difficulties, he was “obviously separate to everyone ... I failed so I was singled out”.

Chan and Khaled fall into the grouping, marginalised masculinities. External factors other than gender are also significant in the politics of masculinity (Mills, 2001). For Khaled and Chan, the effect of their ethnicities cannot be ignored when discussing masculinity, violence and school experiences.

## **Sport**

Roger said that more than on the playground, violence was apparent on the sporting field. “You were really aware”, he said, “that other boys were essentially involved in a lifelong ambition to be superior to the next guy no matter what the cost”. He added that those boys who played sport, and particularly those who were good at it, were afforded more attention than those who played no sport at all. Serge, like Roger, stated that he came across more violence and bullying in sport than in school itself. He recalled being hammered, flattened, at basketball because he was small in comparison to the other taller guys.

In Simon’s mind, violence amongst males was actually encouraged in high school by virtue of the fact that boys were forced to play a sport. David admitted that his team would plan before the match to have a punch up with a particular player so that he would be taken out of the game and they would not lose the competition. Toby said that he played football until he was eighteen years old and fights would always break out; the biggest guy on the football field would hit the littlest guy. As Barry argued, “when you go to play football, you don’t go out there to be light or anything. You go out there to win”. Men, he felt, were expected to show toughness and aggression on the football field. He disclosed that his peers were taught by their coach, a well known first league player, and by the Brothers at his Catholic school, to put their fists in the eyes and faces of their opponents. Barry still thought it absurd that spear tackling, and things like that,

had been banned from the game. He justified this comment by pointing out that he had been able to survive playing the game as it used to be. Stefano's view was:

Look, rugby league, you get tackled. Can you call a tackle violence? That's part of the game. But when you get some bloke coming in like during the tackle and punching him one during the tackle and you see him in the ribs, punching the kidneys, that's not needed. You don't need to come in and elbow someone or punch him while they're on the ground and all that ... You've just got to tackle them. There is no need to have violence in sport.

Khaled said that violence on the sports field was okay but not to the degree where you killed someone. He said that if an opponent gave you a head butt, you gave him a head butt back; if he gave you an upper cut, then you just gave that back to him. When asked if he really thought this was okay, he answered with a laugh that it certainly was "as long as the ref didn't see it". Peter said that "a good stoush" was accepted on the football field; that it was part of playing the game. He said it was about showing what you are made of and also what, and how much, you can handle. He believed it demonstrated varying degrees of mental and physical toughness. Aaron was obviously deeply concerned that his son, Sam, despite being fairly competent at positional play, was not more aggressive about taking possession of the ball in his under-8 soccer matches. Whilst he told Sam that there were more ways of competing for the ball than hacking at the other player, and that he ought not to push his opponents from behind, or play foul, he also advised that it was necessary to go in hard. "You actually put in physically 100%. You run as hard as you can commensurate with being able to stay on the field for the entire 40 minutes".

Chan, who acknowledged that he had been marginalised in Australia because he did not drink or play football, because he wore glasses and because he knew little about the use of tools, was very angry about the acceptance of violence in sport. He said competitive sport was essentially blood sport and that football sides were actually allowed to beat each other up. Despite the existence of "the red card" and tribunals, he felt "you are allowed to beat the shit" out of your opponent, even to kick him in the head; that these behaviours were actually approved. Bleeding, he said, was considered alright because there were medics on the sidelines.

Roger said that people went to a sports match to see violence. He said that the authorities pretended to try and stamp it out, but it was a feature of the game. He said “the camera loves it because it knows the ratings love it” and in this way men are encouraged to be violent; in fact, they are “allowed to be violent out there”. Timothy agreed that certain journalists conveyed the idea that for sport to be “fun” it needed to involve a “bit of biff”. Martin commented that the “bulk” of this was “patriarchally oriented”, in that there has to be the “victor and the vanquished” and that ultimately encouragement for violence in sport was “dollar based”. His comments suggested that the situation was worse than ever before. He said that thirty years ago if you had gone to watch a soccer match, pragmatic players would not have demonstrated communal hugging on the field; and the crowd, rather than making stupid public gestures, would have shown a simple jubilation.

Clive was emphatic that in some sports, violence was part of the game. He recalled, too, that his father used to say that a rugby match was not a good one unless there was some “good biff”. He maintained that:

Today’s society is looking at it and saying it should never happen ... I don’t agree with that because it’s a physical sport. It’s contact. Now if someone grabbed my jersey, I’d turn around and belt them as well. But you only do it on the paddock. Once you leave the paddock, the field, you forget about it. It’s part of the game.

Aaron believed that blokes just liked to run into each other; that they needed to release physical energy and that one way to do this was “to sort of crunch into each other”. He spoke of the respect that the Australians “started to learn” on the field for a South African rugby team, who called the Australians a bunch of sooks for complaining about the physical nature of the game. In Aaron’s opinion:

It is a very physical sport in the sense that whole body contact is physical and things can be mistimed and miscued and somebody might go in harder than somebody else. Somebody gets a bit irked by it because it hurts and, maybe, you get to say, well, that was a bit unnecessary. But at the end of the match, most of the time, they shake hands with each other.

Clive remembered playing a game of touch rugby with some “young guys” about five years before. He said that they had touched his backside which was, he reckoned, to see how tough he was. Aaron spoke of the reception he received from his team mates when he returned to the “dressing shed” after a game of rugby, which he had played with sheer persistence and total involvement. The team really appreciated his willingness to get so involved and to be so competitive, which, he pointed out, required a sort of physical grappling. Even though, at the time of the interview, he played volleyball instead of rugby, he said that, whilst it did not involve body contact, it still required absolute determination to get the ball. The more focused he remained, the more he competed for the ball, the better the game he played and the more generous the handshaking thereafter. As previously mentioned, Raymond spoke of getting a pretty fair deal on the football field. He knew he was a good player and that he had all the boys around him. He recalled an incident when on being grounded, an opponent tried to kick him. “My tough mates”, he said, “came in and belted him up and so I was very protected in that way”. Khaled revealed that players in the lower football grades were unconcerned with training. Instead, he said, they just went out for a bit of “biffo” and then had a few beers.

Toby was one of the men who spoke about boxing with reverence. He thought it “fun” and totally different from a “big gang fight” in that it required skill and was one-on-one. It was controlled, he felt, by certain rules and was not about having a knife pulled on you or being beaten from behind. Aaron spoke with admiration of those who were quietly able to take care of themselves. He said his mother thought it was a wonderful quality to be very good at boxing or some other physical activity where you could punish the other person. Raymond revealed that he did not think he was very good at handling himself physically at all but in the navy, he had volunteered to fight because someone was needed in the heavyweight division.

I fought this bloke and he was much bigger than me, and every time I hit him, he hit me twice as hard. But somehow I won so I gained some respect from the guys that I could fight.

A statement by Martin provides a rather thought-provoking conclusion to this section:

Try and name me an aggressive female gymnast ... I can't think of one. Assertive maybe in tennis like the Williams sisters, but not spitting vitriol like some of the male equivalents do.

### ***Commentary:***

The substantial number of stories shared by the men about sport is indicative of the fact that sport is stereotypically a masculine narrative topic focusing on events rather than on people and feelings (Coates, 2003). Moreover, sport is a “signifier of masculinity” (Mills, 2001: 24). It is a vehicle for learning what it means to be a man because it involves competition, success and superiority (Pease, 2002). Peter’s statement that “a good stoush” is accepted on the football field; that it is part of playing the game and about showing what you are made of and also what and how much you can handle, bears witness to the fact that “Violence continues to be accepted within sports culture” (Pease, 2002: 60). It also illustrates the importance placed upon “a commitment to physical suffering”; to playing sport in a manly way, showing toughness and taking what one is dealt without complaint (Pease, 2002: 61). Connell (2002) says substantial pressure is placed upon boys by their peers to show their toughness.

At school, physical education and sport’s programmes have been set up to encourage boys’ and girls’ bodies to be trained differently (Connell, 2002). In Western societies, hegemonic femininity “has long portrayed the female body as a sexual asset and a physical liability, and therefore strong, active women pose a challenge to white, middle-class notions of female frailty” (Lenskyj, 2003: 85). Therefore, different exercise regimes prevail and boys are steered towards competitive sports (Connell, 2002); they are taught the importance of winning and that violence and aggression are legitimate means towards this end.

Mills (2001: 29) says that “The arena of violent sports exists as one public venue that has not been touched to any great extent by liberal feminism”; sport remains hegemonised. Furthermore, he believes that those sports providing the greatest testing arena for masculinity carry the most hegemonic status. He says that, for example, in Australia soccer is seen as less violent and therefore as less masculine than some of the other football codes; rugby union is considered more of an elitist sport than rugby league, the former being associated with middle and upper classes and taught to boys in private schools. Boxing is another sport that is revered because it valorises the extremes of masculinity such as “aggressiveness, strength, speed, competitiveness and domination of the opponent” (Mills, 2001: 25). This, too, was alluded to in statements by Toby and Raymond, for instance.



Pease (2002) adds that whilst middle and upper class men have an attachment to their sporting histories, they seldom continue to play competitive sport after school or university. Instead, he maintains, their masculinity has been proven and continues to be in the workplace. A statement of Chan's, however suggests that this is not altogether accurate and that work as the signifier of masculinity is not always sufficient. Chan spoke of men who are very high on the corporate level playing golf rather than "footy", a clear indication that sport remains the hegemonised proving ground for masculinity even in later years; that the need to demonstrate aggression, competitiveness and solidarity is ongoing. At fifty-one years of age, Aaron spoke with some joy of the camaraderie to be found in the locker room; an observation which endorses Pease's (2002) description of the sanctuary of the locker room.

## **Visual, Audio and Electronic Communications**

Martin was one of the men who were adamant that human beings were subject to subliminal indoctrination from all types of media messages. Feodor was also a good example of this. He showed how he was influenced by the carefully packaged cinematic masculinity of screen heroes. He spoke of always looking up to his grandfather and of trying to emulate him. He thought his grandfather was a very strong, smart and disciplined man, knowledgeable about etiquette and protocol, and respected by all who knew him. He said that the best way of describing his grandfather, was as a very loud Henry Fonda. In so doing, Feodor demonstrated that he perceived Fonda in an idealised form rather than as the flesh-and-blood man he was; a member of a very troubled family. Feodor idealised his grandfather who, through his narrative, may be seen as a man who treated women abusively and as both inferior and subservient sex objects.

Aaron felt that there was no more violence today in movies and videos than there was before, but that the special effects had become more spectacular. Serge said that television and the media had a lot to answer for. He said they depicted male dominance and power. From his perspective, men were expected to show strength and just be the one in power. Clearly, there were others who believed that the situation had deteriorated and they expressed concern about the effect of available material on children. For instance, Timothy said that when he grew up, violence like that which was screened on

television and the movies today, was not available. He said that even comic books were free of those influences. Of the current generation of children, he declared:

They have that all around them. So if that starts to subliminally slip into their brain, I mean we have to only look at those in America where those kids [have] got access to guns and things and they just think it is normal. They're playing out these fancies, but they have got real guns and they don't understand the consequences of what they are doing I am sure.

He mentioned that on the previous day he had been walking through a retail store and his youngest daughter and a little boy, both 5 year olds, were playing this "shoot them dead game" in the video section. He thought it extraordinary that they were playing at killing and blowing people away.

It's really wrong ... Maybe from 8, between 8 and 11, they start to develop a consciousness of what's right and wrong, but up to, certainly below 8, I don't think they understand the difference between what is morally right and wrong. So I don't think they should be allowed to have access to that sort of thing.

Clive likewise said:

A kid with the newspaper sees a kid from Iraq with a gun. Pointing it. "I'm going to shoot you". A kid doesn't know the difference. He thinks, "Mum that kid's got a gun. Why haven't I got one?" Then you go outside and see this kid with a gun shooting everybody because he saw it in the paper or in the movies.

He went on to say that, as far as he was concerned, it was crazy; that there was simply too much violence on television, in the movies and in newspapers. He strongly advocated, "Don't print that crap. Don't show that on television", even though he was aware that people would see this as their freedom of choice being removed. He also spoke of a young guy he knew, who was a real "depresso". I mentioned in Chapter 2 that Clive was concerned about the effect that the music of rapper, Eminem, had on this young person, who thought it was just brilliant. Clive, personally, thought it "sickening" and felt helpless to do anything about the matter. He said that if he turned around and

took the CD away from his friend, the young man would simply go out and buy another one.

Stefano decried the fact that “today children’s stuff is violent”. He said that if you analysed cartoons, you would find violence. Likewise, he was of the opinion that computer games and game boys were about killing, fighting and bashing people up. He spoke about going out for dinner with a friend and her two children, one a baby and the other a little boy. He was struck by the fact that the little boy played with his game boy rather than kicking a ball outside or playing with something else. “That’s what it is today”, said Stefano. “It’s violence. Everything is a push towards violence. If you analyse it, it’s all war games. It’s how to kill that creature and enjoy it”. But, at the same time, Stefano was of a mind that the movie, Terminator III, was different to other street gang movies and “black movies”. The latter were, according to him, totally devoid of any peace whatsoever. Instead, he said, they contained pure and total violence. Gangs would beat each other up to have control of a particular precinct. For him, Terminator III depicted a fight for peace rather than the destruction of it. In contrast, Clive thought Terminator III was senseless violence. He felt that Westerns were “decent” because they told good tales about real Indians like Geronimo or Sitting Bull. Aaron, however, pointed out that Westerns were not immune from violence. “Didn’t we have a lot of people being shot?” he asked. “I mean”, and he laughed, “Everything was settled by having showdowns”.

It was clear that Peter and Simon were extremely pessimistic. Simon said that he could try and behave differently to the way in which he had in the past, and in so doing, set an example in his home environment. However, he felt his children would “still be shaped by the society around them; the television; the fact that they read the newspapers”. After all, Peter asked, “What are you going to change? Every film and everything that comes on TV?” Even though Peter criticised culture and society for the portrayal of violence to women on television as well as in the movies, he still maintained that he would rather go and watch a war film or an action movie than sit “sewn down to something emotional and mushy”. He said: “That’s not me watching a film. That’s why they are called a chick flick ... Action films is what a male would rather go and see”. Aaron, likewise, was able to relate to the male character in the very violent movies, “Once were Warriors” and its follow-up, “What Becomes of the Broken-hearted”.

There was one scene in that movie where he got home. I think he was with some other woman and she'd rejected him for that night, so he went home alone and just about trashed his own place ... I can identify in a sense that there was like this sort of boiling fury that the only release for would have been an explosion, to such an extent that it would be to try and annihilate everything around. Probably including himself. I can identify with that; the only way in which to somehow find completeness is if everything is demolished. Then maybe you're exhausted.

Martin drew attention to the more recent availability of computer pornography. He described the constant flow of adult sites, and said that the contents made him grossly angry, despite the fact that he was a person for whom nothing could raise his eyebrows. He said that he found anything involving children totally offensive and wrong, but that it was clearly there and showed up regularly on his computer screen.

Feodor was of the belief that if he had been brought up in an environment where women were not sexualised he would have had a better view of them and treated them differently. On the one hand, he vilified the fact that women were constantly portrayed as sexual objects on video; yet, at the same time, he also said that being turned on by them was a normal reaction. When he worked in a sex retail store, he used to take magazines and videos home and assumed that his wife, despite her questioning of it, was willing to experiment "like everybody does with something like that". He admitted that his behaviour was excessive.

Yet, Jean-Claude criticised movies and television for allowing violence to be shown but not sex. He said that violent shows were commonplace but programs showing sex were taboo. He said that when, for example, the mating habits of chimpanzees were shown, "all of a sudden the television programs become very shy". In his opinion, the producers were comfortable showing a baby chimp forced from its mother's arms and devoured by a male chimp, yet never put on view the sexual practices of chimpanzees. He also felt that "it's almost ludicrous the way people are obsessed with sexual harassment"; that "you don't hear about domestic violence as much as you hear about sexual harassment on the media".

I conclude this section with a rather enigmatic comment from Chan. He said:

In a lot of cultures like the Aborigines, and the Maoris as well, the written word is not essential because verbal history or story telling is the means of communication ... if we didn't have the written word, would this whole violence thing have gone away?

***Commentary:***

Kimmel (2000) is of the belief that the effect of mass media is not as dramatic as some critics imply because he says, human learning is a steady accumulation of information. However, he agrees that it is another element in the child's process of development; in the conceptualisation, organisation, internalisation and reproduction of gender and that certainly the media encourages the acceptance of current gender arrangements as though they are natural, right and preordained (Kimmel, 2000).

Whilst I agree that gendered violence is not institutionalised in the mass media alone, I possibly take a stronger stance. Like Sobieraj (1998: 27), I suggest that "Television [like other forms of visual, audio and electronic communications] is capable of creating a desire for something and providing directions on how to behave. The culmination of this bombardment is social control".

Kimmel (2000: 157) states that "in our real lives and on TV, gender difference and gender inequality are mutually reinforcing ideologies". Again, like Sobieraj (1998: 28), I posit that:

The social construction of gender [in visual, audio and electronic communications] ... must be acknowledged as something grander than the definition of masculinity and femininity. It is nothing less than the social construction of patriarchy.

Furthermore, the mass media is a linguistic gatekeeper (Graddol & Swann, 1998: 133) which helps in the "dissemination of words and meanings, and as long as these institutions serve men's interests (more than women's) we can expect them to influence language towards 'male' meanings."

## Pub Culture

Men spoke of their exposure to institutionalised pub culture; a culture, which it emerged, was linked with masculinised violence; a culture in which alcohol consumption and fighting seemingly were signifiers of masculinity.

For example, Clive spoke of a friend of his, who told him that whenever he went to a hotel, he would pick on the biggest guy there. His friend said that this was to prove how tough he was. One night his friend went home with his knuckles broken and his jaw twisted, but what was “God knows how” important to him, was that everyone said that he had won. Khaled told that for seven years as a doorman for clubs, pubs and brothels, he had seen a lot of violence, and was often the target. He thought that doormen were seen by many to be aggressors rather than defenders; to be guilty of punching people’s heads in. He admitted that he had worked with a lot of idiots who used to get themselves into trouble. They were, he felt, too “gung-ho” and used to fight rather than talk.

Matthew said a lot of blokes went looking for violence in pubs; that it only took one knock before a fight began. He said that if a woman bumped a drink out of a man’s hand, all this man would say was “whoa”, but that it would be a totally different story if another man had accidentally bumped into him. He explained that “it is a macho type of image where you reckon you can take on six blokes”. Stefano told of having two such experiences:

One was where I bumped into him. I didn’t even know who he was, and I was trying to get to the toilet and bumped into him. He didn’t like it so he took a swipe at me. The second one was when I was in a club, and went to the toilet, and as I was coming out, this bloke decided to hit me because he didn’t like what I was wearing. I didn’t even know who he was.

Timothy admitted that when he was younger, he had reacted badly to that sort of situation; that if somebody pushed him, he would turn around and belt them. He emphasised that it had just been a reaction and that he did not want to do that anymore; that he was a bit more scared of violence and a lot more tolerant of human beings than he ever had been in his life. He said that where he had come from in the east end of

London, whilst graffiti was unknown, vandalism and brawls in pubs were normal things that everybody took part in. He remarked:

It's more in your face than it is here ... Can't remember the last time I saw any violence in Sydney. In England it wouldn't be unusual. There'd be a fight going on and you'd just go ah, fight going on. Hope it is nobody I know.

Peter claimed that amongst his circle of friends, it was quite acceptable for two mates who were having a dispute, to sort the argument out physically and then immediately to carry on as before. Simon, with an apology for being a snob, thought this a pretty old fashioned view and not one that would hold in his social arena. However, he accepted that it might be quite normal in others. Peter, certainly, had had no tertiary education, worked in a blue-collar role and belonged to a very low income group. Aaron, on the other hand, was a university-educated professional in a high income bracket. His view was:

That's okay between consenting adults. They could choose to consider it as some form of sport and if you like put a ring up and don boxing gloves and put mouthguards in and go for it. Have 12 rounds and shake hands afterwards.

Some of the men spoke of being able to avoid violence in pubs. Toby said that he would never drink too much; not to the point where he did not have his wits about him. Simon recollected that as a younger man, if he and his friends were leaving a nightclub and there was someone on the footpath that they did not like the look of, they would cross the road. "We had no problem avoiding that sort of issue", he said, "but other people would sort of walk straight up and say get out of my way. And they're only going to get into a fight". Feodor said that if he spilled someone's drink and the guy was offended, he would apologise and offer to buy him another one; that to avert a fight you had to show this person that you were sorry. However, he believed that if someone was looking for a fight there was nothing you could do either way, and he added, "There's always people looking for a fight". Barry said, "I think you just need to communicate correctly. You can definitely flare it up if you wanted to, but it wouldn't be a very smart thing to do". Sidney thought it was an angry, aggressive person who would take things further. He believed that you get what you give in life; that if "I walk

along barging into people then someone is going to start barging back into me”. Instead, saying “oops, sorry”, might have a different result.

A couple of men significantly minimised violence in pubs. Raymond, for instance, said that his “experiences of pubs was that you don’t see much violence”. Yet, he then said:

I remember one fight in Sawtel where this little fellow was picked on by a big bloke. They went outside and the little fellow just tore shreds off him; boxed him till he was bleeding all over. And I went outside to watch the fight, but rarely did I see much violence at all.

Jeffery also said that “violence just wasn’t there”, but he immediately followed this by talking about an incident when he was 18 or 19 years old. He was drunk and walking up a walkway to a nightclub flicking a balloon up in the air, when a “guy came down and just went whack” and knocked him out. Marshall spoke his mind:

It’s like me with one of my best friends. We did it one night. We had enough of each other for a while, and emotions ran high. We just had a little fight for five minutes and then we both walked off. Within half an hour we were back.

He thought it a useful thing that men, but not women, could do; “Get it out and then move on”. He also felt that violence in pubs was brought on by alcohol “pure and simple”. Men, he stated, get too drunk to know what they are doing but when these same fellows woke in the morning they would be the best of friends again. Later, though, he spoke about seeing “disastrous” situations where people got really badly hurt. He had seen a person thrown through a glass window, landing on the main road, and being “cracked” up by a vehicle coming around the corner.

### ***Commentary:***

It seems clear from the narratives of men that drinking and pub culture serve to construct and maintain norms of hegemonic, albeit alternative, masculinities. Karner (1998: 218) also points out that drinking is simply another means of camaraderie and the suppression of emotions.

Canaan (2000), similarly, found that young men viewed drinking and fighting as key signifiers of masculinity, which were shaped in social, political and economic contexts.



She says that they fought to show their control over both themselves and their peers. If they lost, it proved that they could take a beating and therefore control bodily pain. Fighting was another means of them confirming, and demonstrating, their masculinity through strength and power in a leisure context. Sadly, though, this reflects the contradictory nature of masculinity, for in order to gain the semblance of control, in reality they lose it (Canaan, 2000; McDowell, 2003).

At times it appeared that the men in my own study were “doing” masculinity or were “shaped by the cultural images around them to the point that they could not see beyond them” (Karner, 1998). When asked whether they had experienced violence in pubs, they would at times minimise a violent incident significantly or would answer in the negative only to bring up a particularly nasty experience a short time later. An extract from my conversation with Raymond, not only illustrates this but echoes the unconscious internalisation of hegemonic masculinity:

I remember one fight in Sawtel where this *little fellow was picked on by a big bloke*. They went outside and the little fellow just tore shreds of him, boxed him till he was bleeding all over. [Clearly, Raymond was amused and surprised by this; this was out of the ordinary]. And I went outside to watch the fight *but rarely did I see much violence at all*.

Flood (2004) calls upon licensed premises and state governments to do what they can to improve security in pubs and clubs, but he firmly believes, and I agree, that:

As long as a culture of aggression and male honour persists, violence will continue to happen and men (and women) will be injured and killed.

## **Church**

Very few men mentioned the influence of the church, but it is necessary to include the comments of those men that did. Martin was adamant that religions of all persuasions barring a few, which he did not specify, have historically, and even in contemporary times, promoted an undermining fear based upon ignorance. Raymond, on the other hand, a devout Christian, believed that:

The world's going to stay distorted until it gets back into focus with what God says is the way to do business and He says there is an order of things.

Yet, the pastor who Raymond sought help from for his violence towards his wife was not very helpful.

He started to listen to me, but he wasn't very helpful either. He would look at the leaves on the tree and not look at the root cause of what was going on ... What I needed to hear was mate, you are not cherishing your partner. You are not looking after your wife. I needed to be confronted in my face for that.

In addition, Raymond felt that he had, in many ways, been excluded from the church. Because he had sought help from the pastor, he was not approached to apply for an available church position in drug and alcohol counselling even though he believed he was the most qualified in the congregation to do the work. He said that both he and his wife were rejected and labelled as weirdos. "The spiritual abuse is huge", he said, "my wife and I know things. We see things. And if we point it out, we will become the problem". Clive cited bible teachings. He stated that "the Bible says survival of the fittest. If you are weak you'll die and you'll get crushed. And it's true".

***Commentary:***

Raymond's comments are interesting in that women continue to be portrayed as inferior and needy of continued tutelage from men (Yalom, 2001), yet the burden of contempt is moved away from men through the claim that all is decreed by God (Dworkin, 2000). At the same time, in true hegemonic form, Raymond has also clearly been defined as "other" by those men who are dominant in the church hierarchy and, in his own words, has been excluded from the church. He has been polarised negatively on a continuum of success and failure (Hare-Mustin, 1991). Kimmel (2000: 93-94) states that

Men often feel themselves to be equally constrained by a system of stereotypic conventions that leave them unable to live the lives to which they believe they are entitled.

## Armed Forces

War and the armed forces emerged as another source of masculinised violence. Aaron said that it was hard to say in a social sense that violence was unacceptable when “we’ve got more planes being flown into buildings, and bombs and things going off, and where people are being struck at just because they’re in Bali having a few drinks and whatever”. Furthermore, Pablo said that since before the birth of Christ, men, and not women, had gone to war. Men, he said, would even fight duels and kill other men over women. Women, however, very rarely fought battles even in the old ages. David reasoned that his line of men were strong because they had always waged war and only the strong had come back; the weak, those with the Y-gene, had been culled and only those that were pure X had returned. He was of the view that when a man became a warrior, he became a man.

Raymond stated that as a young man who lacked paternal support, he gathered role models elsewhere. He joined the navy where his role models were mostly alcoholics and controlling abusive men. Their input was not healthy, he said, yet, he admired their charisma, their sense of interest and fun and the lessons they showed him about how to do things. Raymond said that if he was a weakling or had some deformity, he might have been picked on or bullied. Instead, the sailors saw him as okay because, as he said, “If you are good at sport, or have some power in some way ... then the guys respect you much more”.

Jean-Claude said that he was given the message that he was entitled to use violence, in many ways; firstly in his “education” as a child where it was “instilled” in him by his mother, father and peers that violence could be justified; and then in the army. He said that in the army they were drilled to be violent; to be ready to be violent; that the army was a “controlled” form of violence. He said that the people who designed the drills and exercises were happy if recruits were violent to start with. They thought it was efficient to be violent and did not give too much thought to what occurred after men left the army. Raymond described the negative impact that war could have, as was the case with his wife’s family. Her father had been a Japanese prisoner of war for three years and had survived the Sandakan death march. He had become an alcoholic and lived with his family in a two bed roomed housing commission house, where the four children would sleep on a mattress underneath the kitchen table. Very often at night, he would

herd the children into the back of the car and would pack a big bag of potatoes as well. He was taking precautions because he thought that the Japanese were approaching. Of these children, Raymond said, one became an alcoholic, another, a drug addict, the third suffered bipolar disorder and the last, his wife, suffered from Asperger's Syndrome and turned to religion at the age of sixteen.

In terms of war being for the social good, Barry who thought George Bush "an absolute idiot", also had no time for John Howard and thought their involvement in the war in Iraq was a perfect example of bully boy tactics. Yet, he said that war was "obviously", and probably, the only place where violence was acceptable. Clive criticised people in the streets who were against the Iraqi war. He said, "Hold on a minute, you want those Arabs to come and blow the hell out of you? No way, Jose. I agree with what they did". Chan also said that history would judge that war had been waged correctly against Iraq even though no weapons of mass destruction had been found. He said that many would eventually reach the point where they agreed with Tony Blair. He suggested that sometimes one had to do things without a reason to protect mankind; to do mankind a favour.

Khaled commented on the Palestinian situation. He said that the Western world condemned suicide bombers, but that he had personally seen how the Palestinians lived and so supported their cause. He felt they had nothing to live for, no hope nor future, nothing at all. He asked, "I mean if you lived like that, under that sort of rule, what else would you do?" He was against innocent civilians being targeted but believed the suicide bombers were only trying to get their message across and without possessing helicopters and guns, thought they had no other means at their disposal.

Khaled described his unwelcome conscription into the Lebanese army. In so doing, conscription emerged as another socially constructed institution where going to war, and making the ultimate sacrifice, was portrayed, and demanded, as the embodiment of masculinity. Khaled said that on arrival at the airport in Beirut, he was scared shitless because unknown to him, holding joint citizenship and being over eighteen, meant he was eligible to serve in the army. He apparently told an officer "where to go" and in response, the officer pulled out his gun and cocked it. "Anything else to say?" the officer asked. "I shut my mouth", said Khaled, "I was supposed to spend 18 months in it, but it took 6 months and about \$2,000 to get out of it".

### ***Commentary:***

Karner (1998) describes the influence of post World War II culture on the youth of America who later fought in the Vietnam War. America, she maintains, experienced an economic upswing as a result of the war and with it a patriotic optimism. With this were very clear messages of what constituted manly behaviour. “War”, says Karner (1998: 202) “was what ‘good men’ did for the benefit of the ‘greater social good’, and ... righteous, just wars made society stronger”.

A Vietnam veteran in Karner’s (1998: 210) study said that the military “did grow” them up “real fast”, but another suggested he had been in basic training since he was six years old. Certainly, the narratives of the participants support the idea of “warrior” training: schoolyard fracas; sport; electronic war games; television, movies and the media. If family experiences are anything to go by, it could be argued that this training starts even before six years of age.

Ironically, it can be said that militarism is the use of violence to promote peace for the state against its enemies. It is as ironic that in the form of conscription the state has used violence legally against its own citizens, or rather its own male citizens, in the name of the pursuit of liberty. It is indicative that the use of power is an approved means to an end. Conscription is further illustration of a socially constructed and universal patriarchal creed of masculinity, where going to war and making the ultimate sacrifice is portrayed and demanded as the embodiment of masculinity.

### ***The End Product***

This section has been called the *The End Product* because it records the ultimate views men hold on violence. The data has been divided further into subsections. The purpose of the first subsection is to record the participant’s viewpoints on the acceptability of the use of violence, in general, and domestic violence, in particular and hence it is called, *The Acceptability of Violence*.

## **The Acceptability of Violence**

Men spoke of receiving *inconsistent messages* about violence. As Roger stated, for some men there was conflict in society about the acceptability of the use of violence; that whilst socially domestic violence was supposed to be *unacceptable*, there was an underlying current amongst some men that women deserved what they got and that it was *okay* to react violently towards them. Sometimes violence was even described as being *necessary* and even, *inevitable*. These notions will each be dealt with separately.

### ***Inconsistent Messages***

A number of men believed there were inconsistent messages. For example, Serge said:

I guess they are trying to express that they don't want no more violence going around. They don't want to see the violence but to get rid of the violence they have got to use it, which is sort of a contradiction, I guess.

Aaron said that in recent times there had been loads of stuff advertising that domestic violence was unacceptable, even to his amazement on the back of drink coasters in a pub in a little country town, Cobar. Yet, he stated, whilst domestic violence was probably never acceptable, it was in a sort of de facto way what everyone did. Chan maintained that whilst society taught that hitting someone else was not good, it gave parents permission to hit their children on a "supervised basis"; that whilst teachers were never allowed to hit children even if they burned down the classroom, it gave them permission to scream and yell emotional abuse at their pupils.

Simon said that violence against adults was acceptable to a degree; that it was passively condoned because it was not actively spoken about.

Violence against women and partners, and domestic violence doesn't really get that much airtime. I guess in a way, society maybe doesn't condone domestic violence, but in a way it doesn't actively seek to prevent it either. The reaction to it is quite passive.

On the other hand, he felt that a clear message was being given about child abuse:

Violence against children is not acceptable to society ... violence against children is now a pretty taboo area. It is actively followed up in courts; actively, you know spoken about ... the reaction is much more aggressive in terms of stopping it.

He continued:

I know there are workshops and there's a task force about domestic violence, but they really don't get the same sort of airtime. So I don't think there is a real strong message in our society that domestic violence is a heinous crime. If I went to work and, and said "Hey, I beat up my wife last night", people would be shocked and horrified, and they'd probably move away from me, but they wouldn't go running off to the police and report me. And maybe that's a failing in society.

***Commentary:***

If narratives are embedded in temporal, political, social and cultural spheres, then they reveal more than just the individual's life story and are a commentary on the society in which the narrator resides (Karner, 1998).

It is intriguing that information about domestic violence was said to have been printed on the back, rather than on the front (where it could be readily seen) of coasters in a pub in Cobar. Perhaps, Simon explained the reason why this was so when he said that domestic violence does not really get that much airtime; that society maybe does not condone domestic violence, but in a way does not actively seek to prevent it either. Aaron, too, was of the belief that domestic violence was probably never considered acceptable but in a sort of de facto way was what everyone did. Hearn (1998) says that notwithstanding public discourse the dominant construction of men's violence to women remains a private matter. My argument is that men's violence to women would only be seen as a private matter if this tenet was inherent within public discourse.

I cannot help compare the suggested ambiguity in regard to domestic violence by these Western men, to the ethos of the Semai, where all behaviour that could conceivably cause someone else unhappiness is considered taboo, or punan; where they simply say "We do not hit people" (Dentan, 1968: 55). Robarchek and Robarchek (1992: 209) comment:

For the Semai, the possibility of violence is ... limited by individual and cultural values that stress non-violence and affiliation. These are an important part of the motivational context of all social interaction and an important component of self-image as well, exerting a powerful constraining influence on conflict and violence and helping to constitute a reality where violence is not perceived as an option in human relations.

### ***Unacceptable***

Many men said that violence, in *general*, was unacceptable. For example, Aaron said that a bully was never seen as a desirable person; Clive, that donging someone was not going to solve anything except make them sore, angry and in need of retaliation. “Doesn’t prove zilch”, he said. Marshall stated that it was not okay to be violent when there was a feeling for one person that whatever was happening was not fun, was aggressive or had an intention to hurt. Stefano thought that even an altercation in a pub should be left at get lost or whatever; that it should never result in physical violence. He said that he would rather have someone call him every name under the sun than hit him; that he would rather have a screaming match with someone than get physical.

Sidney was of the mind, too, that violence in sport was despicable. There were others who thought the same thing. Simon said that violence in sport was a terrible thing which set a terrible model for both adults and children. He wanted it stamped out in both professional and amateur sport. Feodor was waiting for laws to be enacted so that one could sue an opponent for tackling in rugby. Serge felt that violence in sport was poor sportsmanship; that it was about an inability to control one’s frustrations when events were not going according to plan. He said that it happened when “you’re having a poor game and you’re just frustrated within yourself and clear lashing out at the opponent or something”.

Likewise some men condemned *domestic violence*. Clive stated: “A man should never hit a woman. Like to me, if a man hits a woman he’s a coward”. Simon said that “we shouldn’t accept [domestic violence] because it is not acceptable”. Timothy, too, maintained that there was nothing potentially to gain by it; that the potential damages could be disastrous. He spoke of being ashamed of what he had done and said that he



knew all along that it was wrong. Toby believed that it was the culture of his half Tongan and half Maori brother-in-law to hit women, behaviour he found “bloody unacceptable”. Both Jeffery and David said that domestic violence was never justified. Jeffery added that if a relationship got to a point where it was that abusive, it probably should have split up long ago. David said:

I believe that there is no justification for one person hitting another person, especially or even more so in a domestic relationship because the woman is weaker than the man and you’re not in a public situation. You are in the home.

There were a number of men who had learnt that physical punishment was undesirable when bringing up *children*. Clive said that he had smacked his daughter too hard a couple of times, just out of sheer temper, and he continued to carry enormous guilt and to feel very small. Raymond said that the way he raised his seven year old was far different to the way he had brought up his older children. He said:

When I try and control Lindy, I just cut off any life blood that is going to happen between me and her. But when I get down to her level, I just enjoy it.

Jean-Claude said that he would naturally have smacked his son, and did, but that it had caused much strife between him and his wife. He had come to respect her decision not to punish him in that manner, and found it challenging to find other alternatives for disciplining the little boy. Both Roger and Matthew were making an effort to break the old patterns of their fathers in bringing up their children. Roger said that he had “found myself falling into the same traps that my father fell into and inflicting the same sorts of things on my child that he used to do following the old patterns”.

### ***Commentary:***

It is tempting to accept the statements of the participants that violence is unacceptable at face value, but this is not altogether realistic. The gendered aspect of domestic violence, for example, and their own participation in it is never clearly acknowledged. When the men talk of domestic violence, many things are left unsaid (Hearn, 1998). It as though there is a hidden subtext of material that might not even be known or conscious (Hearn, 1998), and in as much representative of the internalisation of a cultural way of being.

David's comment, for example, reflects his position as a man in a heteropatriarchal society (Hearn, 1998), where "masculinity exists only as a power relationship" (Kaufman, 1993: 47). In a heterosexual relationship, a man is linked with someone who is deemed less powerful than himself. Asserting dominance over his wife is a means for him to reassert his self-worth and manhood (Kaufman, 1993). As Kaufman (1993: 46) acknowledges, "In our hierarchical society we often feel our own power only when we interact with those who have, or at least appear to have, less power." It seems that this might also be the reason for Toby to vilify his Maori/Tongan brother-in-law even though he has been guilty himself of abusing his wife. His comments, true to hegemonic masculinity, reflect a belief that the white male is superior and knows and understands everything (Schaefer, 1981).

Hearn (1998: 70) states that:

Talking about one's own violence can of course be a way of creating a *different self*, of facing or reducing guilt, or redefining oneself as someone who has just not been violent *but moreover who has talked about it ...* The talk accumulates. It may never completely pay off the debt of violence, but it can assist the accumulation of other resources, of positive *gifts to the self* that are *of value* to oneself and perhaps others.

My view is that these men possibly sought to redefine themselves and assuage their guilt, not by talking about their own violence, but in declaring violence (only in a generic sense) as unacceptable.

### ***Acceptable***

Marshall thought that some aggressive and violent behaviour was appropriate to boys being boys and that it was part of life. "Boys", he said, "prefer to have a bit of fun in a different sort of way"; that it was really just having "a muck" around. He said that what really needed to be considered was the intent rather than the action. Many examples have already been mentioned where participants thought the use of violence was *acceptable*, such as in pubs or in sport. For instance, in regards to sport, it has already been stated that Clive thought that violence in rugby was acceptable at times on the field. Barry has also been quoted as having the view that you have to be aggressive on

the football field and Peter for saying that a good stoush is part of the game. One more previously mentioned example is Aaron, who spoke with deference about the physical nature of the game of rugby played by South Africa and the respect this won from their Australian competitors. This was very different outlook to that of Feodor. The latter claimed that Scandinavia was more pacifist than Australia, and that gridiron football had initially been banned in Finland. For his own part, he could not understand how tackling a person when playing rugby was not answerable to assault charges, because in Finland, even tying a dog to a post was considered cruelty to the animal, and its owner faced a penalty.

There were some other, yet unmentioned, examples of the acceptance of violence in sport. For instance, Jean-Claude drew attention to cultures that accept violence in the sport of hunting both in the United States and France. From his point of view, he was aghast that there were blokes who were happy to shoot for the sake of it, despite its cruelty. Matthew said that violence was acceptable in a 12 metre ring and Adrian thought that violence in sport was “healthy”. He said he was glad that there was a place for blokes to go and let it all out; that feelings were real and it was better that they got acted out on a sporting field rather than in isolation in men’s heads.

I think we’ll see a lot more of that toxic, long lived, isolated type violence coming from people acting it out over the internet. You know it’ll fester a lot longer than if it gets out there on a sporting field and people have some biff.

A number of stories that bear testimony to an acceptance of violence for the protection of those in trouble, the weak or infirm, have also been cited. The story of Khaled’s chase after a robber and Marshall’s act of stepping into a fracas outside a pub, have already been referred to. Mention, too, has been made of Feodor, who wrestled with a man who was beating his son in a car park. Khaled maintained that in the Lebanese community, men took exception to “physical stuff”, and if a man beat up his wife for no reason at all, a couple of men would get together and give the perpetrator a flogging, “to wake him up a bit”. Another example was Toby. He spoke of a time when, in a train station, he had come upon an old man who was really being bashed up by a 22 year old guy. Toby stepped in and said “Don’t hit him anymore. He’s had enough. Just leave him alone”. The young man turned on Toby, pulled a knife on him and then, with a

mate, chased Toby, and some of his friends, onto a train. Toby admitted to being pretty scared. He mentioned that punches were thrown and he was kicked between his legs.

Violence also appeared to be regarded as legitimate when it was retaliatory. Khaled argued that violence was necessary to defend oneself, one's home, one's family and property. Timothy agreed that "if somebody in the street or at work, was to abuse me then I would probably stand up for myself. Absolutely stand up for myself". Sidney told of a time when he had knocked all the top teeth out of the mouth of an acquaintance, who accused him of chatting up his lady friend. He said that it was a question of self preservation because this man had thrown a punch at him and did not appear to be going to stop. "I didn't feel in mortal fear", says Sidney, "but it was a way of putting an end to the situation right there". Feodor stated that he never hit first; that he had only been in a handful of fights. Although he had never started these, he had finished them all.

Stefano said that in the Italian culture, men did hit their women. Conversely, David, who as a young child lived in Italy with his Italian parents, said that his experiences in Italy had been of total non-violence which, he surmised, was as a result of growing up too much in the presence of women. However, he stated that on arrival in Australia, living with his parents in Paddington alongside Aboriginal, tin shanty dwellers, he was "thrown into that rough and tumble real quick" and forced to learn real fast. Sidney, a born and bred Australian, spoke too of Aboriginal violence. He told of a young Aboriginal friend of his who had won a scholarship to an elite private school in Sydney, where he was doing exceptionally well. During the week, this young man resided in the school's boarding house but on weekends, he returned home to Waterloo, "a very violent area" in the inner city. There, said Sidney, the lad accepted violence as the norm, and was both attracted and drawn into it.

Simon, who was a business analyst and high income earner, also observed that some men were physically dominating as compensation for being of "different socio-economic circumstance"; for having neither financial nor professional status. Both Khaled and Feodor endorsed this view with their comments that they had seen less violence in the more affluent suburbs on the north shore of Sydney than they had in the less advantaged western suburbs. Khaled said that he had only been working in Parramatta, a western suburb of Sydney, for a day when he had to give chase to a robber

who had robbed a blind woman. Feodor also suggested that a similar situation existed in Finland.

More subtle forms of violence were seen by some as being acceptable. Khaled said that when it came to money, “there needs to be a limit set” for women and Simon, that he expected his wife to plan the finances the way he wanted them done, despite the fact that she was a solicitor and on a substantial salary in her own right. He still believed that he needed to make financial decisions; that she needed to bow to his better judgement, knowledge and experience with finances. Aaron also told of an incident when he stood “eyeball to eyeball” with a woman on the local cycleway shouting at the top of his voice. She had been in a group of four cyclists, and about eight to ten dogs, and Aaron reminded her that it was a shared pathway. He realised that the situation was getting out of hand; that he was being righteous about the matter. However, he felt strongly that he was absolutely right and he wanted her to acknowledge this. He said that when he had a sense that he was right, he drew the line and would not back down.

***Commentary:***

These statements are indicative of the inculcation of these men into traditional masculinity. The stories told are an accomplishment of hegemonic masculinity. They reflect a belief in the courageous man of action, the male hero who displays bravery, determination and physical strength; a rejection of the feminine in all forms (Beynon, 2002). For instance, Marshall does important gender work when he comments that violent behaviour is appropriate to boys being boys and that it was part of life. Solidarity and sociability are other themes that run through his conversation. This is both ironic and sad. It shows that male speakers do need connectedness and rather than being unable to use language to express it, they are forced to do so in a definite context and in a very covert and convoluted manner.

Simon’s expectation that his wife respect his superiority in making financial decisions is interesting in the light of Beynon’s (2002) comment that as working class males age, and are no longer able to drink or command as much physical dominance over younger men, they will continue to exert their domination at home. Simon is not working class but he is aging and his comment that “I don’t like exercising my body, but I like to exercise my brain” is also borne out by his physical appearance. He certainly does not attempt to achieve the “sculptured gym-produced” and “Herculean” body that Beynon

(2002:128) suggests has become another element in the make-up of the male narcissist. Therefore, it seems understandable that in order to maintain his grip on the metaphoric ladder of hegemonic masculinity, he clings to a perception of his competence in the elitist area of corporate finance and his domination at home. When a competent wife thwarts this sense of entitlement, violence results (Kimmel, 2000). It draws to mind Kaufman (1993: 164) who said that:

Control, along with the aggression that is often required to sustain it, and the rejection of “weakness”, together form the dominant values of many patriarchal societies.

### *Necessary*

Peter indicated that his nephew carried a knife for protection all the time; that he was forced to do this as a means of self-protection. In the modern world, declared Peter, it is no longer one on one, but more like ten on one. The idea that violence was not only acceptable, but at times even necessary, appeared in other comments as well. For instance, Marshall, Aaron, Peter and Khaled all said that it was necessary to use aggression to gain acknowledgement and respect. Clive, speaking of violence, stated:

It is necessary. It's got to be. It's called survival of the fittest and if you are not going to stand up, they are going to crush you man. The only reason the Pakeha or the white man, the English, never took over New Zealand and dominated the Maori, was the Maori fought back. That's why they signed the Treaty of Waitangi. Say no more. Because they couldn't beat them. Here, the Aborigine actually got slaughtered. Why? Because they didn't fight back. Simple as that. Bottom line. The Maori is respected compared to the Aboriginal ... The Bible says survival of the fittest. If you are weak you'll die and you'll get crushed and it's true.

However, he seemed to contradict himself at a later point in his interview when he said that violence proved nothing and only created more of the same. He pointed to the war in Serbia and the violence in Ireland as prime examples. He also had been told that it was good for a man to get his aggression out by smashing the hell out of something and screaming his head off behind a closed door. The only caveat, he suggested, was that one “shouldn't do it in front of her. Make her more scared. More nervous. It would”.

A couple of men also spoke about the need to use physical punishment to discipline children. Peter said that “a certain amount of discipline” was good for a child; that there was a need to “whack a child to bring it into line”. He added that providing no bones were broken, “a good whack around the arse” or a “clip around the head” was easier than being deprived of something. Simon said that if he chastised his daughter he would do it verbally. He went on:

If I chastise my son, I occasionally smack him, but I never smack my daughter. It’s just not acceptable. Not the done thing. Why should I smack my son, but not smack my daughter? Why should I smack him at all? I think it’s still a very societal thing. I mean there’s an expectation that men are emotionally tough.

***Commentary:***

Beynon (2002: 130) states that “The traditional concept is of the father as a bridgehead into manhood for the son”. This comment clearly illustrates the prevailing philosophy in patriarchal societies that a woman cannot raise a boy into being a man; that a woman cedes her stake in a son and adheres to words of a popular song; “a boy for you, a girl for me” (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994). This statement is not necessarily unheard of in other non-patriarchal societies but the point is that it is not true to say that all human societies are aggressive. As stated by Montagu (1978: 6-7):

Human beings can learn virtually anything. Among other things, they can learn to be virtually wholly unaggressive ... Whatever humanity’s potentialities for aggression may be, and we know that such potentialities exist, it is clear that their expression will largely depend upon the environmental stimulation they receive ... such potentialities will remain nothing more unless they are organised by experience to function as aggressive behaviour.

Foucault argues that the discourses of social sciences have contributed to make us what we are as people (Talbot, 1998); “that practices and relations between people are brought into being as a result of those socially constructed bodies of knowledge that we call the ‘social science’” (Talbot, 1998: 152).

## ***Inevitable***

To conclude this section on the acceptability of the use of violence, it is necessary to point out that some men even thought that violence was inevitable. Khaled said that “it was just part of life. Either you did it or someone else did it to you”. In fact, Marshall used the very same words. He too, said that he found it all part of life. Serge reasoned in the following manner:

I guess we’re just humans. Some people can just get that frustrated where that’s the only way that they know how to express the way they are feeling. By lashing out and being violent and sometimes that’s the only way they can be understood.

Peter thought that sooner or later if a person was married for sixty years, they were going to have to produce some kind of domestic violence, either physical or emotional. Raymond also thought that there are “dynamics that can come through some relationships that lead to it and when people don’t have the skills or abilities, they resort to violence because they can”. For that very reason, Stefano declared that one should not live with someone who had totally different opinions or a totally different outlook on life. Martin, too, stated that the loveliest sense of ongoing intimacy between two people depended upon them drawing parallels in the practical, logical, physical and emotional aspects of life.

## ***Commentary:***

To my way of thinking, domestic violence is inevitable when notions of hegemony, androcentrism, the subjugation of women and an acceptance of violence are enshrined in social discourse. Levinson (1989) would agree. He reports that the Central Thai, a society he says is free of what he calls family violence (a term to which I am opposed), believe in avoiding disputes and have a basic rule that people can only live together so long as they get on peacefully. He claims that they demonstrate basic respect for others no matter what their role or status and that there is a virtual absence of gendered division of labour in the household. Furthermore, he notes that the Central Thai are determined to control overt displays of aggression with a range of non-violent techniques to control these feelings. He concludes that they are living proof that domestic violence will be more common in societies in which men control women’s lives and where violence is an acceptable form of conflict resolution.



In the literature review, I quoted Montagu (1978: 9), who urges early conditioning in co-operative behaviour and the discouragement of anything resembling aggression. Based upon his knowledge of non-aggressive societies, he argues that this training overrides any genetic potentialities for violence. “That being so,” he states, “the lesson, I think, is clear.”

The following subsection is called *Taking Responsibility* as it records the participant’s expressions of accountability for the violence they had perpetrated.

### **Taking Responsibility**

There were a few statements in which men articulated an understanding of the error of their ways. Simon, for example, said that he had accepted what he had done and could even talk about it; Barry, that what he had done was totally his fault. David acknowledged that he had no excuse for hitting his wife; that he needed to address the issues that had led him to control, and also to lose, control. As was previously mentioned, Matthew said that men had a lot of denial and Roger stated that it was all about blame and victim hood; that men tended to regard themselves as being victims of women and therefore thought they had the right to do what they do. He said men had a total inability to look at themselves and see that they were responsible for what was going on in their lives. Instead, he stated, “we blame other people. We blame the people that are closest to us for our problems. Men do that all the time”. Peter also revealed that he could understand why his ex-partner tried to stop him from being near his son. He realised that she was scared of him and that he had probably done too much damage. Stefano said that there was no need to be violent; that he had told his ex-wife that she should have left him the first time he had punched her.

At times the men indicated an understanding of the more covert forms of abuse. Marshall named domestic violence as intimidation in any shape and form; Peter said that there was a difference between having a discussion and getting a point across on the one hand, to getting abusive and making things personal, on the other. Raymond felt that he was still being violent and controlling; that he allowed his wife to make decisions, so that if they were wrong, he could pin the blame on her. Aaron admitted

that his withdrawal from his partner was really a form of punishment, which penalised the relationship and her sense of self worth and “aliveness”. Clive also admitted that he had a problem; that the way he talked to women was too abrupt and Roger was one of a number of men, who spoke about recurring patterns of dysfunctional behaviour. Roger realised that he needed to do something about this on an ongoing basis.

It is necessary to exercise caution in accepting such disclosures willy-nilly. For every man, who spoke about taking responsibility, also repudiated, minimised, normalised, justified, or excused his behaviour at other points in the interview. This is even apparent in the comments above. Peter, for example, only said it was probable that he done too much damage, rather than that he had definitely or absolutely done so. Stefano also blamed his wife for not leaving the first time he punched her and as a result, being subject to further acts of violence. This was very much a case of passing the buck onto her rather than taking responsibility. Another example is Martin. He said that he could not deny that he and Penny had had some “hiccups”; that he had not been good with his temperament. Yet, he felt things had changed in that he was far calmer and far more regular, though “the occasional bowl’s been broken; the surface has been scratched and the paper has been torn”. His use of the phrase, not good with his temperament, and words such as “hiccups” and “occasional”, minimise the frequency, severity and effect of his behaviour.

At times, too, their abusive behaviour spilled over into the interview context, hardly supporting a stance of taking responsibility. Two examples suffice. For instance, Chan appeared contemptuous and aggressive. At one point he startled me by jumping up, coming close and pointing in my face to make me blink as proof of a point he was making that “a certain part of your body is not under your conscious control”. He amongst other things called me silly; refused to answer a question directly by challenging me in an intimidating fashion to do a role play; and by acknowledging gleefully that he had got me “twisted”. Barry provides another, but more subtle, example. He appeared to be deliberately evasive and unforthcoming when, in answer to a question, he raised an eyebrow condescendingly, lay back in his seat, grinned and answered, “I don’t know, I can’t help you”.

There were different ways in which men denied responsibility for their actions. Some men stated this as a fact and refused to accept blame; others totally removed their

presence from the violent incident. Still others minimised, justified or excused their behaviour. Some men outwardly blamed others. These categories overlap somewhat but examples will be given as though exclusive to each.

Clive stated as a fact that he had never been violent in a relationship. Pablo, too, despite having been charged, found guilty and sentenced to a period of probation, still totally denied being violent with his wife. He said that his hand, not him, had touched her face, and that this had happened only once. Jeffery said that his estranged wife saw him as an extremely controlling person; someone who tried to be in charge of all situations. He fully denied this. However, he then added that his friends had told him that with such a passive wife, if he had not been so controlling, they, as a couple, would have done nothing with their lives.

David totally denied any liability. He claimed that domestic violence occurred as a result of the abuse suffered by a woman in her childhood. As a victim of childhood abuse, a woman would transfer her anger onto her husband, who she would see as her molester. He used his mother as an example. He said that she suffered childhood abuse, and was, therefore, dysfunctional in her relationship with his father; that consequently his siblings, but not him, were unable to function in relationships. It is clear that through generalising; through blaming all women victims of childhood abuse and through diverting attention to his mother, he removed himself from taking responsibility for his violence. He even blamed his mother for the situation he was in legally. He condemned her for not making it “kosher” by approaching a friend of hers who was a judge, to have his assault charges dropped.

Martin was another to separate himself from his actions, as the following quotation indicates:

I have seen instances of wear that are just repeated again and again and again, where, for whatever reason, a message of concern expressed, drifts in one ear and passes out the other, until it reaches a flashpoint and the angry event would occur.

Martin also claimed that he had never been in a “physical brawl in his life”; that he did not know what it was like to get a “wallop” on “the cheekbone or the chin”; that he had

no clue or concept of it. Yet, he later said that he had wrestled with an intruder, who he had found dismantling his office computer.

Another way the men denied their violence was to *minimise* it. There were many examples of this. Martin, for example, described domestic violence:

I suppose the best analogy I can draw with it is it's put up with like a bone that goes out of joint, but pops back in. But it is very uncomfortable when it comes up. You just get it back in and then get on with it.

Chan said he had “only” pulled his wife’s hair rather than “beating her black and blue”; that it still bugged him that, whilst he knew it was a communication thing, his wife insisted it was violence. He also normalised the violence saying that all wives who were the recipients of their husband’s ire, did so simply because they were the one “nearest” to him at that point; that in her absence somebody else, even the dog would have been the victim. Khaled was adamant that what he had done was just a push; that it was not a hit, and that he just wanted to scare his wife a little bit. Timothy described his behaviour as just like a little boy wanting attention and having a tantrum, and Jeffery maintained that he could be a “bit blunt and insensitive at times”. He added, “But I don’t think she would think that I was scary or that she was frightened of me”. Toby suggested he was just very snappy. He thought that taking his frustrations out on something else, on an inanimate object, like the front door rather than his wife, was commendable.

Sidney reduced what he admitted were hostile situations to what he called a situation of “point scoring”, when they would both flare up and say nasty things. He admitted pushing and shoving, but said it was a two-way thing and that his actions were in response to hers. He, like many others, denied responsibility by claiming lack of knowledge. In his case, he said he did not know that he was being violent; “But it didn’t occur to me that the emotional stuff was abuse, was violence”. Feodor could not figure out why he was not more disturbed by what had happened.

I have managed to somehow gloss over the things. I honestly don’t know how I managed to literally pull the wool over my own eyes and just kind of continue as normal. Get a sandwich. Watch some T.V.

Barry said that he did not know how to argue properly; that he did not know any other way and Simon, too, said that he reacted violently because he did not know what to do when he got hurt and angry. Serge claimed not to have known or understood what was going on around him, and Clive had no idea why he got more verbally abusive in later life. Peter asked, "If someone knows how to push your buttons, it's like how do you stop?"

It has been stated that men deny responsibility for their actions by both justifying and excusing the behaviour. The aim now is to differentiate between the two in the manner of Hearn (1998). Both justifications and excuses seek to allocate blame and responsibility but they are actually opposite to each other. *Justifications* accept responsibility, but not blame. Most importantly they have an interpersonal focus. Many felt there was justification for retaliating against their wives. For instance, Khaled said he threw his wife on the lounge sofa because of the pain he was in from an injury and the constant nagging and abuse she was giving him; Stefano believed that he was not the monster that he was with his estranged wife, Jackie; that he had a lot to offer a partner and that the right person for him was going to be a lucky person; Raymond said he felt justified to use violence because he thought his wife was "crazy". David, too, said that he was abusive to his wife and not to his friends because his friends did not "push" him.

It's as simple as that. My friends don't specifically sit down in the room and say I am going to keep on pushing David until I can make him have a drink, and then when he has had a drink, I can keep on pushing him until he gets pissed off. And then when he gets pissed off I am going to keep on pushing him until he does something.

There were many other examples. Pablo said that as a child he had learnt from an old man that "two don't fight if one doesn't want to". Sidney maintained he had just been responding to his wife's negativity; Matthew that his violence was because his wife came home a little snappy after working the night shift. Peter made it clear that if a woman called him a liar, he would start to get his back up; that if she began the mud slinging, "well I'll sling mud with you". "Why", he asked, "should I have to sit there and cop it from her? You abuse me and I'll abuse you back". He said that it was all up to the female; that females had the power to take action in violent situations: "It's easy; they've got two legs. Walk straight to the police station". Matthew agreed that it depended on women and that whilst he would not use them as an excuse, he did wonder

what happened out there; how it was that men got “the harder shoulder” from women who instigated domestic violence.

Chan asked why a guy should be blamed for hitting a woman, when she would be the one to press his buttons; that when a woman waved a red flag in front of a bull, she would be the one to get it. Stefano was another who felt sorry for the blokes out there. He could understand how blokes sometimes snapped and hit a woman; that if a female did not want violence to happen again, she should remove herself from it. Aaron observed:

I saw in the men’s group that the women were participating in the violence. Certainly, some of the guys were in a dreadful state and yes, their response was to be physically violent, but ... you think, well wait a minute. It is not just one person on their own here.

*Excuses*, says Hearn (1998), are different to justifications in that when making excuses men accept the blame but not the responsibility. Excuses “construct the man as the object of other forces – social, psychological, chemical – that are beyond him and beyond his control” (Hearn, 1998: 122).

Chan blamed “parental trauma” and stress over his driver’s license for his violence whilst Toby claimed that the pain he was going through as a result of a work injury, and the frustrations of being without work, were the cause of his actions. Feodor linked the raping of his wife to his need for medication and the possibility that he suffered a mild form of autism. He did say that he did not rape women on the street because it was obviously an illegal and awful act. However, he made no mention of how, in the past, he was able to restrain himself on the streets without medication but was unable to do so in his home.

It has already been mentioned that Adrian believed that automatic and aggressive responses were as a result of the reptilian brain and Chan talked about being genetically coded to react to external stress. Timothy explained his violence as an “unconscious experience”, just a “natural instinct” and Feodor, likewise, commented that a lot of things are so habitual that they become subconscious. Both Lane and Clive believed that some people were able to control themselves and others were not.

Some participants condemned society, on a macro level, and the community, at a more micro level, for the occurrence of domestic violence. Roger maintained that “certainly, in the light of the way our society tends to bring up boys, I think it is inevitable” and Martin argued that “it does not matter what you do with the incarceration system. It is simply going to be the bandage on a problem the community tries to fob off to another”. Chan concluded that society had not trained wives to think it a priority to understand the other half, men, and therefore, you would continuously have domestic violence. David blamed feminism for completely destroying the “whole climate” and claimed that even feminists, and Germaine Greer herself, were saying that they had made a mistake and that things were completely out of control.

Aaron pointed out that the only people who understood all the stuff learnt in the men’s group were the men who had attended. Raymond echoed this comment. He asked, “Who understands? Not many people understand”. He said that when he involved any community services, like the police and the ambulance, things got worse because they did not comprehend or have the skills to help. Raymond said the police were always willing to gloss over his violence and not hold him accountable; that even when they placed him in the paddy wagon, they would ask what the matter was with his “missus”; that she seemed a bit strange. David suggested that the knowledge base in the whole industry was very biased; that in his case he was immediately labelled as a predator and an abusive husband. Chan, Marshall and Sidney made similar comments. Chan was angry that what had happened was immediately turned into something else by the authorities, and Sidney claimed that he was labelled as a bastard. As far as Marshall was concerned, everyone focused on what his partner was saying.

Roger and David blamed the situation on the disintegration of the community. Roger said that families today are isolated in their little houses and that their bad “little” habits are therefore never revealed. David believed there was no more society as it had been known; no more village or community. Like Roger, he felt people were alienated and hiding in their houses; that social security and welfare, the Department of Community Services and other organisations, had been introduced to fill a void, but, instead, they had created one because the more the government put in place, the more people did not feel the need to take responsibility for their own families. He pointed out that in Thailand, where he lived for 18 months, people still had community and disputes were

settled with the entire family's involvement. There, he said, they did not have refuges, a welfare system or social security.

***Commentary:***

These narratives need to be read with Hearn (1998: 144) in mind. He maintains that, "Men's accounts and explanations of violence take place in the context of men's power and control, and generally reflect, indeed *reproduce*, these power relations". Their explanations are embedded within the patriarchal society of which they are members; a society in which they are oblivious of their position and, therefore, anything beyond (Karner, 1998). At times, some statements demonstrate total oblivion to the existing imbalance of power in heteropatriarchal relationships and the incorrect assumption that because men have the necessary resources to remove themselves from a situation of coercion (Myers Avis, 1966), women have as well. Schaef (1981) says that men have difficulty understanding what it is like being born with a birthright of innate inferiority; that women grow up in an environment where the white male system is always seen as being right and men are placed on pedestals.

It is important to hold men accountable for their individual and collective behaviour but equally so not to blame them simply by virtue of the fact that they are men (Pease, 2000). The suggestion that the narratives of the participants reflect the enculturation, internalisation and re-enactment of the patriarchal culture in which these men are situated, is not to deny the importance of men's subjective experiences (Pease, 2000) nor to discount the immense pain, isolation and alienation that they feel (Kimmel, 1999).

The men spoke about experiencing many emotions including fear, frustration, hurt and anger. They talked about feeling weak, helpless, insecure and inadequate. Hence, the following subsection has been called, *Associated Feelings*.

**Associated Feelings**

Other than Serge, Simon and Raymond, who became visibly emotional and teary, and Chan, who was noticeably frustrated and angry, the men, generally, talked about their experiences and their feelings without demonstrating emotion at all. Serge began to cry



when he spoke of being petrified of just reaching out and putting his arms out to his wife; Simon sniffled when he talked about disclosing his problems to someone else for the first time – a man whose problems made his own seem insignificant; and Raymond shed tears when he spoke of being rejected by his young daughter. It seemed that they were emotional when they spoke of their own upset rather than that of others.

Most of all the men spoke of their fear: fear at school, on the sporting ground, in the streets and in relationships. Yet, this fear was spoken about in a rational rather than an expressive manner. Toby said imperturbably that he was scared of killing his wife because she was so tiny. Both Roger and Raymond expressed a fear of being vulnerable, of being rejected, and Serge said that he was too scared to face reality. Lane divulged that he had felt threatened, scared and shaky for most of his life. When asked why he thought he had retaliated in an argument with his girlfriend, and become violent, he said it was because he was scared. Certainly, Jeffery believed that if you were a confident person, there was no need to be violent; that a lot of violence came from people being scared.

Feodor also thought that the reason violence occurred, the reason for all anger, was fear.

One of the things I have noticed was the fact that if I stubbed my toe ... I feel fear and then I feel a blinding rage. Those two; always together. It literally feels like the fear comes because you don't know what happened. If it is a sudden pain like bashing in the wrong spot, you know if you're bashing a nail, you might hit your thumb. That's different. But say you bash your head against something suddenly, you don't know what happened; you don't know the source of it. It's instant ... and I feel a fair bit of fear. It's like that cold rush you get. I get that instantly and as soon as that has registered, I feel anger takes over; washes over like a blanket. And then I swear and carry on or whatever.

He also described what happens between a “husband and a wife” when violence occurs. He said that if a wife called her husband “fucking stupid”, the husband, in his “emotional state”, rather than telling her that it really hurt him, and because he feared her saying that she “does not give a shit”, would cover his fear with anger and he would retaliate instead. When Marshall spoke of fear, his comments were made with a mixture of bravado and desperation. Hence, these will be included below when the way in

which some men countered their revelations with a display of more conventionally accepted “male” behaviour, is documented.

A number of men spoke of feeling inadequate. Matthew explained that he did not think he was doing a good job of providing. He felt bad and angry with himself and would take it out on the person who was closest to him emotionally, his wife. Aaron said he would think that he was not good enough and then he would make a point of withdrawing, and so punish himself and also his wife, for pointing it out to him. The more wrong he felt about feeling angry, the angrier he became. There were other similar stories. Lane said when he felt hurt, he would threaten her back. “Violence”, said David, “is 50% of the time man’s weakness; it’s the man’s insecurity and it’s manifesting itself in him having to be in a position of power with somebody who is lower than him, like a woman or a child”. For Raymond, the quick of the matter was that he felt inadequate; that “to get a sense of control is to control people”.

Barry stated that showing your feelings was a sign of weakness. It certainly seemed that a number of the men were bothered by their disclosures and expressions of feeling; that in demonstrating alternative masculinity, they then needed to simultaneously perform more conventional gendered behaviour. For instance, when Adrian was asked what qualities he thought made up a real man, he actually demonstrated his understanding of masculinity both physically and verbally by putting his leg up over the arm of the chair, leaning backwards in a superior fashion, and saying “I don’t think people have a fucking idea”. Later, he stated that if you were comfortable with yourself you would not need to perpetrate violence in a relationship; that violence sprung from frustration; and that the blokes that did that, were not comfortable in their gender role. The latter statement, when he talked of blokes rather than of himself, indicated that he needed to distance himself from being too open and hence, vulnerable, in his disclosures.

Lane, in one breath said that he had learnt what it felt like to love and feel happy. In the next, in a totally different and noticeably sinister voice, he added that he also knew what it was like to be in control and powerful and how it felt to be dangerous. Toby, also commented that “anyone can be aggressive if they are pushed to a limit, I guess”, and then he added, “but, yeah, like I’ve been a mouse in here in front of you”.

Within the interview room Marshall was inconsistent. There was a sense of bravado as though he was trying to demonstrate he was one of the lads. Yet, the fact that he used an extraordinary number of hedges in his dialogue, such as “you know”, “um” and “it’s like”, indicated some anxiety and discomfort. He admitted that he believed in the value of a sixth sense, intuition, even though “Some guys aren’t up to it because it is not fact”. He also revealed linking aggression and fear in relationships. Aggression is more of a feeling, he said. “It’s more of a build up of excitement or anxiety ... It’s like you know it all comes out of fear”. Yet, regardless of these admissions, he seemed determined, both verbally and by his mannerisms, to make it clear that he was rarely scared; that when he was at home he left the whole house open and unlocked. “I don’t walk around with fear”, he stated; ultimately a knife and a gun cannot be challenged; it is a bit of a figures game and “It’s like if something is going to happen, something’s going to happen”.

***Commentary:***

Kaufman (1993) maintains that men are taught to suppress their emotions and the capacity to be emotional. Therefore, as a boy becomes a man, his own sense of alienation, self-doubt and confusion change into emotions that he identifies with masculinity; he starts to turn a range of feelings into aggression and violence. Feelings of inadequacy, weakness, insecurity and discomfort are turned into aggression and hostility (Kaufman, 1993). As Kaufman (1998: 170) acknowledges “when their emotional dam breaks, the flood pours out – mostly on women and children”.

It seemed that a number of the men were bothered by their disclosures and expression of feelings; that in demonstrating alternative masculinities they then needed to simultaneously perform more conventional gendered behaviour and selves (Coates, 2003). Todd for example, said that anyone can be aggressive if they are pushed to a limit, but that he in the interview had been a mouse, clearly indicating his understanding and need to demonstrate that masculinity is still equated with a capacity for violence (Kimmel, 2000). Lane, similarly, made it known that whilst he had learnt what it feels like to love and feel happy, he also knows what it is like to be in control and powerful and how it feels to be dangerous. When Adrian was asked what qualities he thought make up a real man, he demonstrated his understanding of masculinity both physically and verbally. He put his leg up over the arm of the chair and said “I don’t think people have a fucking idea”.

Swearing has been used historically to demonstrate toughness (Coates, 2003) but the other important point here, is that these language routines function as a means of maintaining emotional restraint (Coates, 2003). It helps men set a safe distance from their felt experience (Coates, 2003) and in so doing allows them to demonstrate the self-control demanded by Western patriarchal society for those worthy of the male gender role. Marshall used an extraordinary number of hedges in his dialogue, such as “you know”, “um” and “it’s like”, which is unusual in men’s talk but more typical of all female conversation around a sensitive topic. This indicates his anxiety (Coates, 2003) and perhaps a sense of fear in that he recognises too much that is culturally considered “feminine” within himself. Chan, in demonstrating his anger was trying to find a safe avenue of emotional expression; one that was in keeping with normal manhood (Kaufman, 1993: 169), for anytime emotions like fear, pain, sadness, and embarrassment:

Rear their heads we [men] feel a sense of unconscious dread that warns us to stay away from that feeling. There’s a bad smell about these things. It tells us, No trespassing. Off limits to men.

Notwithstanding, it is vital to remain cognisant of the fact that women’s oppression remains systemic and systematic, a point that the men do not articulate or allude to when they speak of the effect of their violence. In most cases, the horridness of the experience for the women has been negated (Paymar, 2000).

The final subsection of *The End Product*, is a review of statements pointing towards the men’s comprehension of the effect of their violence and hence has been called, *Effect of Violence*.

## **Effect of Violence**

Sidney acknowledged that the potential damage of violence could be disastrous, and that he once could have killed a guy if he had hit him in a slightly different way. Timothy also made the point that “life is a precious thing and biff is dangerous”. However, once again, the majority of the comments that the men made about the effects of their violence, concerned themselves rather than their female partners, children or

relationships. Adrian disclosed that he had suffered symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder until the age of thirty because of the “amount and kind” of violence he went through. Lane, too, spoke of feeling threatened, scared and shaky for most of his life because of his experiences with violence. Below, are some examples which show the way the men’s responses focused on themselves almost exclusively.

Raymond, for instance, spoke about the time when:

I went to push Wanda away and I pushed her with my arm like that, here right across the bridge of the nose. She fell back on a concrete based floor on the carpet. Hit her head and I believe she had concussion. I broke her nose. I could of killed her. She could have been dead. All I was concerned about was what the police were going to say about me. That’s how selfish I was. I was crying because I was frightened of what was going to happen. I wasn’t crying because she was hurt.

Raymond also disclosed that he had been concerned about “the shame that it would bring onto *me* if people find out who I am”.

David said that eighty percent of the time, the man feels worse than the woman about the violence; that in other words, this is why women win. Stefano, too, believed that in hurting someone physically you actually hurt yourself more both mentally and emotionally. Whilst he also said he felt hurt and humiliated that he had acted out of character, and was violent, his regret appeared more about himself than any physical or emotional pain experienced by Jackie.

It is scary, because that is not me. It’s not who I am. I feel very hurt inside and humiliated because I was violent and I don’t condone violence and for me to do it is out of my character.

Jeffery spoke about the effect it had on him when his father would yell at his mother. He was oblivious, however, to the effect he had on his wife, Lana, and consequently on his little boy. Despite admitting that he could be blunt and insensitive he said “I don’t think she would think that I was scary or she was frightened of me”.

Timothy said that he used to be more violent, more frequently, in the past. He stated that he probably knew, even then, that what he was doing was wrong, and would have been ashamed about it. However, he was definitely not as ashamed in the past as he was presently; that previously his main concern was that she would forgive him. His violence, he continued, was a call for attention, “some kind of, you know, look at me, look at me. I’m the one who needs help”. Whilst he had reached the point where he knew he had to stop behaving that way because of his children, he still did not articulate any sense of concern for his partner’s physical or emotional well being.

Serge revealed:

Inside I felt that there was something wrong. But I didn’t understand what was wrong or how to fix it or what to do to fix it. I was ashamed. I was just ashamed. I had an opportunity a few years ago to talk about it but in the back of my head I said to myself, I don’t really want nobody to find out the real truths.

He claimed that ultimately he had suffered; that whilst his wife was living with someone else and would not come back to him because of all the memories and pain that she had; it was him who was left “dealing with it” and “it’s a very long process”.

Matthew disclosed that until a few years ago, he used to feel better after being violent towards his wife, but that in the last year or two, he had begun to feel bad; he was, however, unable to pinpoint the feeling exactly. The part that still scared him the most was the possibility that he and his wife would not reconcile, and that his children would be living with another man who might treat them badly. He seemed oblivious to the effect that his behaviour would have had on his son even though the boy had commented one day that “Dad always speaks like that”.

Toby thought that Lois’s idea of a trial separation was not the answer to their situation. He felt that she was actually controlling him by telling him when he could see the children. He said that even when they were together, she would frustrate him by taking the children away, and by going to stay with her sister. That she might be frightened of him, and concerned about her safety and that of the children, did not occur to him.

Feodor believed that his wife would not explain all the “gory” details of him raping her to their son. “I can trust my wife”, he said, “to give a balanced view ... Even in the worst case, she will give both views”. His concern was that his son would judge *him* harshly. He was not protecting his wife, nor showing any need to accurately reflect his wife’s experience. He was also not acknowledging, or showing any concern, that his children had experienced sexual violence in their home. Moreover, he still expected his wife to show deference and respect towards him.

Martin was aware that the verbal altercations between him and Penny deeply affected his children, but these continued and, in two cases, it was clear that he purposely baited her whilst driving in the car with Helen and Barak.

Peter was still irate about the five years he had spent in the Family Law Court trying to get access to his son. He complained of being stuffed around, disadvantaged in having to write letters and send gifts, which he was unsure that his son ever received. Although he admitted that he could, perhaps, understand why his ex-partner felt he should not see his son, he expressed no concern for either what his son had gone through, his needs and loss, or the difficulties experienced by his ex-partner, before or as a sole parent.

Clive said that human beings do things at times that they regret. Clearly, he had reflected upon the effect his hidings had on his now grown daughter, and he did acknowledge that he should never have smacked her so hard. He also realised that the way he treated, and spoke, to the women in his life, as well as his selfishness, was a “shocker” and he claimed he did not want to stuff up someone else’s life again. He really regretted, he said, the things he used to do. “I want to have peace within me”, he said. “I don’t want to be hated by anybody”. Being hated caused him, he said, to have nightmares and his concern was that when you showed violence like he had, people did not forget. At the end of the day, he said, it is hard to get their trust back and as a result *he* lived alone; *he* felt lonely and sad and cried sometimes for the intimacy and closeness that he did not have. He reflected, sadly, that *he* was paying for his actions now.

As a final point, Khaled, on the one hand, admitted that “swearing, you know, that sort of abuse, does hurt a woman”. He realised that it made a woman feel weak and miserable. On the other hand, his concern was that “it doesn’t bring a woman any closer

to you. They actually drift away. Don't want to be with you". In addition, his view was that verbal abuse could only be damaging if it was done "day by day". He was adamant that he had learnt, growing up, that sticks and stones could break your bones but words could never harm you.

***Commentary:***

Feodor said:

I mean my wife didn't explain to him [his son] all the gory details, and what I had done for obvious reasons. I still don't think it's probably ever necessary for him to know, depending on how things go or something. We'll see then but now at this age I don't think it an appropriate thing to do ...I mean I can trust my wife to give a balanced view, if you know what I mean, even in the worst case, she'll give both views.

Feodor does not name the sexual violence he perpetrated upon his wife nor does he accurately reflect, or validate, the misery of her experiences. He does not acknowledge that his children have experienced sexual violence before they even have the vocabulary to understand and describe it (Kelly, 1990). Moreover, his statement reflects an assumption of the patriarchal belief that as a husband he can even now regulate his relationship with his wife (O'Sullivan, 1998) and she is still expected to subordinate herself to it and him (Schaefer, 1981). It is hard to understand how there can be a balanced view of rape.

Hearn (1998) says that men are ambiguous about the violence they perpetrate upon their wives. They feel that it is both partly legitimate and partly illegitimate. Indeed, it seemed that the men at times expressed a degree of shame and embarrassment, but generally their comments, like those of Feodor, were egocentric; they were mainly concerned with the damage done to themselves rather than their female partners, children or relationships.

Even though there was a sense that these men realised that "traditional" forms of masculinity had left them unfulfilled and discontented (Kimmel, 2000), they still seemed to be talking in a manner that assuaged their guilt and payed off the debt of violence (Hearn, 1998). They seemed to portray themselves to me in a way that elicited



sympathy; placed them in a position of vulnerability or diminished responsibility and prevented them from being categorised as simply violent men (Hearn, 1998). Certainly, men are in a tenuous position as violence has historically been understood as the best way to ensure that one's masculinity is publicly recognised (Kimmel, 2000). And after all, masculinity, according to Kaufman (1999: 64), is:

A bond, a glue, to the patriarchal world. It is the thing which makes that world mine, which makes it more or less comfortable to live in. Through the incorporation of a dominant form of masculinity particular to my class, race, nationality, era, sexual orientation, and religion, I gained benefits and an individual sense of self-worth.

However, it is important to remember that this sense of self-worth occurs at the expense of the "other"; women, children; and men on a lower rung of the hegemonic scale. It is insufficient for men to be given permission to cry if they are unable to recognise women's pain at the same time; it is insufficient that men are concerned not only about their own partner but women in general (Pease, 2000) or, as sometimes seems the case, insufficient to be concerned about women in general and not their own partner.

Questions 13, 14 and 15 (See Appendix I) specifically asked about change and the following section records participant responses.

## ***Change***

This section reports what was said about individual and social changes that have been accomplished, and those still needing to be made.

### **Accomplished Change**

Clearly some men's comments indicated awareness that change was possible. Adrian, for instance, said that "this level of introspection is like a new thing you know". Before, he admitted, violence was inevitable for him in a relationship with a woman. He recognised in hindsight that he was like a fucking toddler but that "at the time I didn't even see myself. I was just in it". He added that he was seriously, fucking mad before and in another world and that even now he had a long way to go; that he still did not

trust women, and would not be in a relationship with one. However, he was also “getting an idea of kind of how it is going to work out”.

Timothy expressed the belief that the program that he was in was very good for him because he was changing his beliefs about what was acceptable. He also said that he believed that he was more of an idiot and more of a fool in the past; that he was now more tolerant and forgiving of people than ever before; that he had also come to understand more about his own psyche and about taking responsibility for both emotions and behaviour. Matthew described how he had changed:

Twelve months ago I would probably say to you a bit of biff never hurt anybody, but now it's just not worth the hassle. What do you get out of it? I mean you belt up a guy, you put him in hospital, next week you're up in court on assault charges ... I didn't think [domestic violence] was acceptable before. I think it was just a way to get my point of view across; that was the only way to make her and the kids understand ... and that was the easiest way of making people understand. I think there's other ways of showing her, them, the masculine, the male, instead of just biff. You know, sit down and talk to somebody. I mean everyone has a point of view. The old point of view was two hits. I hit you. You hit the floor. Problem solved, okay?

Simon maintained that he had learnt how to express an opinion firmly to his wife, in a way that was neither aggressive nor abusive. Clive revealed that he was no longer selfish. In the past, if there had been a rugby game, he would have watched it even if a dinner party had been organised by his partner. “No way,” he said, would he do this now, “I give and take, man”. A further example was Roger. He said that he allowed himself to be more vulnerable both with his wife and other men; that he had discovered that you could actually extend yourself to others in a different way and that, once you started doing that, it became easier. “I think”, he said, “you have to put the whole thing into practise and, just by putting it into practise on an ongoing basis, that makes it work”. For him, it was all about self-revelation and being prepared to state his role in things; that “unless you get out there and actually do something about it, stop blaming people for what happens to you, then nothing will change”.

Others made similar remarks. Timothy disclosed that he always had it in his mind that he had been pushed; that someone else had done something to him. “I wouldn’t these days”, he commented, “I think my actions are my actions, belong to me, not to anyone. I am responsible for my own actions”. Serge, too, realised that he did not have to be in control but that “I have to look after myself and everything else will come along with it”; Sidney was of the view that it is important to share with people that we are all responsible for our actions, and Barry felt that he would be better off if he looked directly at himself. He said, “I don’t think anyone is going to do something that they don’t actually want to learn”. Roger also concluded that “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink”.

In many cases, it appeared that the impetus for change was the occurrence of a crisis. As Jeffery stated, “it took a crisis for me to make some change. It took a crisis for me to ask for some help”. Adrian felt that the reason people looked at themselves was that they were not happy. As far as he was concerned he “came to a hard place”; he kind of needed to have a look at himself because he was acting in a really unsustainable fashion. Matthew also admitted that it took a very big shock for him to see where he was heading and to want change. Whilst Barry said that he had returned to the men’s program, after seven years, so that he could polish up on a lot of good stuff there, this action seemed to have been precipitated by an argument which had “basically” turned into a screaming match, before he lashed out and kicked his wife. Matthew, Feodor, and Serge had joined men’s programs because their wives had left them and they hoped that they might reconcile; Chan, Toby, Stefano and Jeffery sought counselling for similar reasons; Raymond had violated an existing apprehended violence order served against him and Sidney and Pablo had served periods of probation. David sought help as a result of being advised to do so by solicitors. He was due to appear in court for assaulting his wife, who was living with their new born baby in a refuge.

Some men expressed the desire for change even if it took a long time. Lane realised that doing the program was a long term thing much like his psychotherapy. Despite that, he said, he knew he could do it. Serge also revealed that he was seeking as much help as he possibly could; that it was going to be a very long process for him and that he was still learning. However, he observed that there had been some noticeable change “within” his friends who had watched him going through his experience. Serge

reasoned that “they’ve got a little bit of a scare themselves that it could actually happen to them as well”.

Some men, as mentioned before, spoke of belonging to men’s programs. Roger, for example, had been motivated to join a program so that his child’s behaviour would not be changed as a result of the things he observed in the family. He felt he was getting so much out of the group. Aaron also said these programs were useful in that they showed that there were other ways of behaving, such as taking time-outs, which people then could learn to do in an automatic way; Lane believed that something he could learn in the group was how to manage his anger so that he did not become uncomfortable and Barry, as has been mentioned, returned to the group to, polish up on the good stuff. Simon cautioned that doing the program was not a magic wand for all behaviour problems but a means of exploring yourself:

The only way that a participant benefits from that program, is if you are honest with yourself. If I just came into the program each week and sat there and said, “Ah, what do they want to hear tonight?” I’ll just tell them that, well, it’s going to do nothing. But if you approach that program honestly and openly, and I think admit to yourself, it’s just like being an alcoholic; the first step is to admit it. You have to admit that you have a problem; that my behaviour was violent. Because another interesting thing is that every guy that comes to this group would not classify themselves as a violent person.

When asked what needed to be changed, Matthew said “Shoot us all and start again”. Peter’s belief was that “You’ve got a helluva lot of wrongs to be righted”. He maintained that if you started slowly, over a period of time of say fifty years, things might be different; that “sooner or later you have to start somewhere”. Some of the men made the point that they had been shaped by a lifetime of learning prior to any intervention. Barry said he had gone back to the men’s group because he had fallen back into bad habits; that, after all, for thirty-five years he had not been able to talk about his feelings or anything like that. Feodor asked how one could break a true habit and Simon, too, questioned whether it was possible to change a mindset that thought that domestic violence was acceptable. Matthew maintained that he had been on the same contour for so long that it was hard to get off it. He was really trying to keep all he was learning on the surface but this was so hard to do. Adrian felt that change was

“fucking hard work” and Roger thought that “it’s been in place a long time to actually shift”. He had tried for years to control his impulses to be violent, but that, eventually, it would leak out somewhere. What you have to do, he said, is to change your belief system, which means being prepared to lay yourself on the line and allow yourself to be vulnerable.

The men spoke of social change. Adrian felt that society was going in a good direction, and that things had happened in the last 100 years that had never happened in society before. He perceived, and was positive about, a new awareness for gender. He maintained that people were starting to understand a little bit more. However, most men appeared less optimistic. Peter, for one, thought that violence in society had increased to a point where young people felt it was necessary to carry a knife. Bullying at school, he suggested, had progressed to the development of gangs. Today, he observed, there was a totally different society. It was “dog eats dog”.

Although reference has been made before to the beliefs of a number of the men that society, as it was known had disappeared; that there was no longer a village, and that the structure of society, and even the family, had changed to the detriment of its members; it is necessary to mention this here in the light of pessimistic views of social change. Martin argued that the metropolis was the antithesis of the small familiar community; that it was sliced by roads, electronic communication, material assets and misguided concepts of what words meant. David agreed that there had been a breakdown in the structure of society; that there was no longer community; no longer, the village. He said that there was also a breakdown in the structure of family organisation; that there was no longer an expansive family; just the nuclear family without concern for cousins and uncles and things like that anymore. He continued:

We are actually a communal animal. We need to live in a community, not just live with three million people ... Having lost [this], we have lost touch of who we are as a social animal. So this is making us anti-social and so this is why we have more anti-social behaviour coming out in society.

He pointed towards the manner in which domestic violence was handled in Thailand, where whole families were involved and took responsibility. That, he insisted, was

contrary to the judicial system in Australia which, he felt, isolated the parties and antagonised the problem by pitting husband and wife against each other.

Roger concurred in that he believed that families had become isolated in their little houses, so that domestic violence was neither adequately exposed nor dealt with as a result. He insisted that learning comes from both the family unit, a “little microcosm of society”, and society in general. Change he felt would occur if men were taught differently; that this would come from fathers changing. He stated:

I see the core problems as being the way that the family has sort of evolved in our society and that everything else stems from that. So you can do everything else you like out there, but if the family is still the same, exactly the same, nothing will change.

Feodor also brought up the Industrial Revolution in England and said it was probably the major factor in determining the split between who went to work and who stayed home. He maintained that up until then it had been more of a fifty-fifty relationship but with it, men got put into factories, because it was heavier work, and women did not. He said there was a separation and that it took until the latter half of the last century for things to become more equal. In Australia, he declared, we are 20 years behind, if not more.

Confusion articulated by the men around gender roles in modern society has also already been documented. However, a comment by Pablo has yet to be mentioned in this respect of social change. Pablo said that women had become less tolerant and had more help, education and freedom to the disadvantage of men. He felt that, in Australia, in the olden times, more respect used to be shown between spouses; that men were losing power by virtue of the fact that their wives were able to go to work and earn for themselves, as well as by receiving “good money”, and help, from the government for children less than fifteen years of age. He lamented the fact that, as a result, women were less dependent upon their husbands. “She can go ahead without me”, he said. “I am not the king anymore and this can create frustration”.

There were men who spoke of being different towards their children than they had been before, and of trying to parent them in an alternative manner to the traditional model, where fathers were absent and uninvolved. Khaled’s statement about being less of a

man because he was showing a softer side; Toby's comment about feeling a bit funny about staying home with his children, as well as Timothy's experience with bathing his son, are indications that this transition had not been easy nor comfortable. Timothy said that maybe it was just having children that made you realise that life was a precious thing and that "biffo" was dangerous. Some men spoke of allowing and even encouraging their sons to express how they were feeling and even to be emotional. Serge said that his children had previously only experienced him as angry and frustrated; that they had never seen him hurting. He had learnt not only to show them an emotional side, which he hoped would give them permission to do the same, but he was also telling them that it was okay for them to express their feelings and cry. Matthew praised his son for being the "biggest snag in Australia". He said that "it is beautiful. He is such a warm caring little boy. And to be 10 years old, and be like that, is unbelievable". He said that a few years ago, he would have told him to stop his "bloody whinging and get going". Sidney shared that he and his son talked about anything and everything; Simon that he was going to teach his children about equality between a husband and wife. He also respected their right to have their own point of view.

***Commentary:***

Whilst the family has come to be seen as the most important institution of modern industrial society it is not grounded in reality but in ideology; "Family ideology has been a vital – the vital means – of holding together and legitimising the existing social, economic, political and gender systems" (Gittins, 1993: 168). Family households in some form are a vital and necessary part of any society. However, family ideology is not (Gittins, 1993). Gittins (1993) is adamant that when politicians articulate a fear that the family is in crisis, what they are really concerned about is not divorce rates, domestic violence and child abuse, but that the existing patriarchal family ideology is being challenged.

I have acknowledged that patriarchy distorts men's lives as well as that of women. In previous sections, much emphasis was placed upon the fact that whilst the position of men in society carries with it power and privilege, it also brings with it pain and the burden of responsibility (Kaufman, 1993; 1998; Pease, 2000). Men are the victims, products and producers of a patriarchal society, which is highly competitive and hierarchical, a society that sustains "a culture of violent solutions" (Turpin & Kurtz, 1999: 335) and where cultural definitions link masculinity and violence (Turpin &

Kurtz, 1999). However, it is critical that in engaging with men, the actual experiences of their victims, both women and children, are not silenced; that women's "truth" is not confined and marginalised, nor admissible only to the extent that is in the interests of those more powerful (Breckenridge, 1999).

In many of the men's stories, it appeared that the impetus for change was the occurrence of a crisis, an outcome that was similarly evident in the research of Dobash et al. (2000). It would be naïve to expect that new behaviours can be learnt easily especially since men have had their attitudes and behaviours shaped by a lifetime of learning prior to any intervention (Dobash et al., 2000). However, it is insufficient that men change their personal behaviour some of the time. It is a tall order but necessary that men acknowledge the folly of patriarchal ways; that they "look at the overall system and construct a notion of what an ethical relationship between men and women should look like" (Pease, 2000: 17). It is vital that they change their orientation not only to their individual partner but women in general; and challenge anti-feminist perspectives of other men even if in so doing they lose their regard (Pease, 2000).

Furthermore, whilst individual responsibility for violence is necessary and ought to be encouraged, it is paramount that violence and domestic violence in particular, not be seen as "aberrant behaviour committed by deviant individuals at the margins of society", for this "obscures the central role violence plays in the very foundations of the social order and the fundamental dilemmas that humans face" (Turpin & Kurtz, 1999: 334). Individual change can only be meaningful and long-lasting if it occurs within a context of social change where social forces act against that violence (Hearn, 1998). This means change within and throughout patriarchal society so that even the agencies responding to men's violence are themselves not constructed in the context of men's domination of women (Hearn, 1998).

## **Change Needed**

Men spoke of both personal and social change that was needed. In terms of personal change, men like Barry and Roger spoke of needing to break habitual and recurring patterns of behaviour; Lane was keen to learn to control his anger; and David felt he ought to learn why he lost control of his impulses, and hit his wife, when there was no



excuse for that. He also was adamant that women needed to be made aware of the fact that they should not enter a seriously intimate relationship before they had dealt with their own issues. He argued that it would eliminate 50% of all domestic violence. Raymond also suggested that women needed to make changes for “a lot of the people who destroy women’s power are women”. He felt that whilst women needed to be given more power, they also needed to start learning to respect and value women and to stop taking responsibility for what men were doing.

As has already been mentioned, Roger spoke about needing to change one’s personal beliefs. He thought that everyone had the best intentions, but that it was one thing to be aware of the need to take responsibility and another to actually translate this into behavioural terms. There were other ideas suggested. Pablo said that men have to use less power and women have to be more tolerant; Matthew believed that if every bloke learned to be a “snag”, the world would be an amazing place. Roger, on the other hand, said that men did not need to be sensitive new age guys. Rather:

I think they just need to take responsibility for themselves. They can still be men. They don’t have to be like women in that sense but I think that the real snag, as it were, is someone who’s looking after themselves in the sense that they are not blaming anyone else.

Feodor stated that men ought to be at home more to have an appreciation of what a forty hour week with young children was about and Raymond, acknowledging that his house was full of “really extreme clutter”, and that a woman was coming for the first time the next day to suggest ways of coping better, observed that men needed to open their world and let others come in and help. He also said that men needed to respect and value women more and he called for men to take the lead in setting an example because, he said, men would not listen to women. Serge needed to get rid of negative thoughts that constantly went through his head and Martin, recognising that he might be challenged as reductionist and simplistic, said he firmly believed that what was necessary to reduce violent negative responses, was that “we let go of our fears. Just let go”.

Serge expressed feeling sad that people put such high expectations upon men. Similarly, men like David, Sidney and Chan felt that there ought to be less condemnation and judgements made about men who perpetrated violence. David honestly believed that the knowledge base in that whole industry was biased.

Counsellors, psychiatrists, church ministers, the police, courts, refuges, hospitals and ambulance services were all identified as being somewhat lacking by different interviewees. Chan argued that recognition should be made of the underlying problems, and that these needed to be addressed empathically. Raymond, too, was scathing of the lack of skills he had observed:

There's not much help for men in general ... Not many people understand ... No-one understands there are some underlying problems there. No-one has the skills or the expertise to actually look into it and say: "Gee, you guys are struggling. You need some help".

Serge called for more community support groups for men; just somewhere for men to be able go and talk; to say the things they needed to. He felt that there definitely should be a lot more counselling enterprises specifically targeted at men. Pablo also suggested that there ought to be centres where men could go "for free" to do things like punch a sack for release. He blamed government gambling and housing policies; the latter because he felt it increased the pressure on male breadwinners and caused house ownership to become the "Australian dream". Barry criticised the Australian government for spending billions of dollars on terrorism whilst giving domestic violence "low priority".

Many of the men stressed the importance of education. Sidney said that if society wanted to rid itself of domestic violence, then it had to start with the children. Toby, Barry and Jeffery all said that children needed to be taught at an early age; at school level. Timothy declared that there should be a basic unit at school to teach men before they made errors and got into dire straits. He felt that psychology should replace religion; that it should teach how the human mind worked and what behaviour was acceptable.

The men also spoke of the need for men's programs and Matthew said that much could be learnt from people who have already experienced "such problems". David opined that education, as always, was the way to go. Besides school education and men's programs, the men proposed that the media, including television and the radio, had the responsibility of making information available to both men and women. Jeffery called for commercials and promotions similar to those for the drink driving and quit smoking campaigns. He believed that a lot had been heard about drunks but not about

relationships. He proposed an idea for an advertisement on television: “A man could have a massive house and a beautiful boat and whatever; and children around him” and then be reduced to “living in a little unit alone eating canned food”.

Both Simon and Serge thought that it was a matter of making the situation more visible. For Serge, greater awareness would result in the number of families breaking apart being reduced; and for Simon, domestic violence would then become less socially acceptable. It has already been mentioned that Simon thought that violence was passively condoned in our society because it was not actively spoken against; that violence against women, as well as domestic violence, did not get much air time; that the reaction to it was quite passive. As mentioned previously, he concluded, “So I don’t think there is a real strong message in our society that domestic violence is a heinous crime”. Sidney argued that the unacceptability of domestic violence should become a cultural norm. Chan, similarly, felt that the answer lay in the adoption of a social paradigm, which insisted that violence was only to be used as a last resort. A Cambodian friend, said Raymond, had reminded him of an Australian term, “That’s not on”. However, he continued, whilst domestic violence “is condoned, it’s going to be on”.

### ***Commentary:***

The men’s comments bear witness to Dobash et al. (2000: 164) who said that:

Long-held and unquestioned notions about the right to use violence against a woman partner along with the language of denying responsibility, blaming others, and minimising the harm done constitute the fundamental elements of the discourse used by men when they talk about violence.

For instance, Martin said that he could not deny that he and Penny had had some “hiccups”; that he had not been good with his temperament. Yet he tended to feel that where things have changed is that he is far calmer and far more regular even though “the occasional bowl’s been broken; the surface has been scratched and the paper has been torn”. I will not question Martin’s good intentions but to allow his story to go unchallenged would privilege his way of talking about violence over Penny’s “truth” of the experience. It is not simply about not being good with his temperament. Martin has used violent behaviour. To address it any other way is to obscure at the individual level

his self-interest in acting violently, however enduring or short-lived the benefit of this might be, and at the societal level, it masks “the male domination underlying violence against women” (Ptacek, 1990: 155). Using the word “occasional” might allow Martin to feel better but it minimises the severity and the effect of the violent act of smashing a dish; it does not come close to portraying what it is like for Penny to live within an unsafe home (Stanko, 1990). Paymar (2000: 98) says “The more you downplay what you did, the more difficult it will be to come to terms with your behaviour. You will also miss precious opportunities to change”. Therefore, for Martin’s sake, as well as Penny, Helen and Barak, his defensive denial must not be tolerated for this is tantamount to silent complicity and the condoning of violence (Kimmel, 2000).

It is necessary not to be too pessimistic, nor to be guilty of taking a stance where men can do no right (Pease, 2000). Whilst there are some who will claim that men will never change; that their dominance is inevitable and that they are biologically programmed to be this way, I argue that masculinity is a culturally discursive phenomena and that therefore change is possible (Dobash et al., 2000; Pease, 2000).

However, when the participants suggest education as a panacea for the occurrence of violence, they express in “an unconscious way the disposition of their time as well as their own disposition” (Denby, 1997: 62). There has to be a shift from a position where men believe that they will lose out if women compete with them for status and money and where they fear being emasculated as a result of women’s equality (Pease, 2000). Men must shift from seeing themselves as an object being acted upon by external events, to seeing themselves as subjects responsible for their own choices and decisions about the use of violence (Dobash et al., 2000).

Unless men believe that change is within their own material self-interest it cannot be forthcoming (Pease, 2000). For change to be meaningful and lasting, men need to believe that their own self interest may be served by feminism; that the burden of responsibility and pain they carry is the price they pay for their dominance and oppression of others. As Dobash et al. (2000: 154) state “Individuals cannot even begin the process of personal change unless and until they come to see it as a real prospect”. There are other caveats. It is not enough to simply perceive change as possible. It is also necessary to be motivated to begin this process. In addition, whilst change on an individual level must be governed by the individual, and ought not to be reliant upon the

surveillance and control of others (Dobash et al., 2000), it is too simple to conceive men's change as an individual journey (Hearn, 1998). Politics cannot, and must not, be reduced to individual struggles in personal lives (Pease, 2000).

## **Conclusion**

Kimmel (2000) states that whilst violence against women knows no class, race or ethnic bounds, there are indeed some differences. Certainly, as in the previous chapter, cultural differences were articulated. For example, Feodor's perception of violence in sport was very different to that of Aaron. Feodor grew up in a country where originally gridiron had been banned and, by the same token, where tying a dog to a pole was a punishable offence. On the other hand, Aaron held respect for the toughness of the South African team, who played a far more aggressive, if not violent, game than the Australians. Khaled spoke of the culture of rugby teams in lower divisions. They were not keen to practice. The enjoyment for these men, unlike the higher grades, was "biffo" and a beer afterwards. Jean-Claude had been struck by countries where hunting was a pastime, certainly different to the pastimes favoured in his native France. Furthermore, whilst Stefano declared that Italian men hit women, Khaled told that Lebanese men would confront a suspected wife beater and wake him up a bit. However, as a "wog" in Australia, he would cop it all the time. Clive respected the response of the Maori to the pakeha; he thought the less aggressive response of the Australian Aboriginal had resulted in them being less highly regarded. Khaled, too, saw Palestinian violence as necessary for survival, a very different stance to that of David, whose romantic outlook towards war reflected French chivalry and Knights of old. David also identified differences in the way he experienced social response to domestic violence in Thailand, where he felt the approach taken was far more holistic than it was in Australia.

Kimmel (2000) also suggests that in many cases, racial and ethnic differences disappear when social class is taken into account. Certainly, in speaking of pub culture and attitudes to violence, Simon was clear that economic status played a role. Suggesting he might be a snob, he said pub violence did not occur in his social arena whereas he could see it being quite normal in others. He also spoke of some men needing to be physically dominating as compensation for the fact that they are not financially dominant. David

spoke of the absence of violence in Italy, a statement in opposition to that of Stefano. This might well be attributable to class in terms of the lifestyle he described, which allowed him to have a daily afternoon rest with his mother as a young boy. Likewise, Timothy's descriptions of violence in the east end of London and Sidney's account of his young Aboriginal friend going home to the violent Sydney suburb of Waterloo from his private boarding school in an affluent northern suburb, might also be examples of what Kimmel (2002) is speaking of.

Notwithstanding, in this thesis, "a" culture has been defined as a group of people who, by virtue of their association, assume both consciously and inadvertently "the" culture of the group; the shared information, knowledge and codes for appropriate ways of being. Ethnicity provides one such group membership, but gender and class are other examples, as are memberships of national, religious, age, sporting and interest groups. The object of the research was to discover how discourses of all of these different cultural groups shape men's sense of entitlement to use violence in a heterosexual relationship. As was the case in Chapter 5, the striking discovery was that whilst cultural group differences, class, ethnic or otherwise, were evident, as in those examples cited above, these cultural differences were totally belittled by the blatant embodiment of Western patriarchal codes of violence in the narratives of these men. The comments of Kimmel (2000: 246), that "men's violence against women is the result of entitlement thwarted", and that of Hearn (1998: 37), who said that "being violent is an accepted, if not always an acceptable way, of being a man" were only too evident. The emergent data, which has been recorded in chapters 5 and 6, provides the basis for the conclusions drawn in the next, and final, chapter that violence is a discursive phenomenon and that patriarchy is the font of domestic violence. They are the reason why at this point of the journey, it was clear that another title, *Patriarchy: the predominant discourse and font of domestic violence* was a far more accurate reflection of the research findings. However, as this chapter concludes, it is necessary to draw attention to another significant, and poignant, discovery arising out of what was articulated by the men in regards to change. This is that the participants, i.e. men as individuals, can be seen, in the main, to be calling for a change in social discourses and for the community to share responsibility for a culture that supports violence for men.

## Chapter 7: Reflections

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This journey began as a quest to discover why domestic violence is so often a feature of intimate heterosexual relationships. In reviewing the literature, it became evident that there have been societies in which domestic violence was absent or minimal. Despite an awareness of the limitations of ethnographic accounts, this knowledge prompted the desire to explore the manner in which discourses of different cultural groups, as defined in Chapter 1, shape men's understandings of masculinity and sense of entitlement to use violence in a heterosexual relationship. Furthermore, it was apparent that other researchers were calling for an investigation into the intersection of domestic violence, ethnicity, gender and culture. There seemed to be a need to determine the cultural continuities, discontinuities, commonalities and differences (Hester, 2000) that play a role in the presence, or absence, of violence in heterosexual relationships. Hence the working title *Class, ethnicity and gender: How these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship* was formulated.

Qualitative research methods, based upon grounded theory and narrative principles, seemed the most apt method of conducting the research. Hence, men from as many different cultural groups as possible (eg. ethnic, religious, age, and class groups) were sought to participate in in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Conversations were finally conducted with 24 participants, and without doubt, cultural differences became evident. These have been written about in the concluding remarks made at the end of Chapters 5 and 6, but included, for example, attitudes to extended families; expectations of women; drinking habits and pub culture; as well as, the emphasis and meaning placed upon sport and its rituals. Further examples that were evident were the different codes of violence identified in war times; in class groups and residential areas; in international and local sport; in pubs and homes. However, by far the most overwhelming discovery was that cultural differences were eclipsed by the pre-eminence and strength of gendered discourse in keeping with Western patriarchal dictates in regards to masculinity and violence. It appeared that the continuity and commonality (Hester, 2000) of gendered discourse dwarfed the discontinuities and differences of other cultural discourses. In fact, even when cultural differences were both explicitly and implicitly expressed, the notion of an idealised Western patriarchal masculinity was upheld; a hegemonic masculinity, over which hung the "spectre of the sissy" (Kimmel,

2000: 253); where “being violent is an accepted, if not always an acceptable way, of being a man” (Hearn, 1998: 37); and where “men’s violence against women is the result of entitlement thwarted” (Kimmel, 2000: 246). The emergent data indicated that a far more relevant title for the thesis is *Patriarchy: The predominant discourse and font of domestic violence*. In the preface, I made it clear that this does not mean that I disregard the concept of intersectionality. I do see the significance of intersecting cultural discourses, such as class, religion, age and ethnicity, in reconciling what is accepted as truth; what it is possible to say or not say; and by extension what it is possible to do or not do (Talbot, 2003). However, I do suggest that cultural discourses operate almost universally today beneath an umbrella of patriarchal discourse.

It is necessary to concede that the sample group is small and that all the participants lived in the vicinity of Sydney, Australia. However, I argue that the size of the group is at direct odds with the richness of the data that was obtained (and is reported in Chapters 5 and 6) as a result of such close and direct contact with these men. Whilst Pease (2000; 2002), Kaufman (1991; 1993; 1999; 2001) and others might have alluded previously to some of the contentions made, and those yet to be made, the value of this research must surely be in the potency afforded by the voices of the men.

Furthermore, in accordance with grounded theory practice, comparisons will be made in this chapter between the emergent data and that of ethnographic studies. Even though ethnographic accounts are obviously only “a” version of “truth” written by Western anthropologists, they add to the value of this thesis by providing distance and a broader perspective on which to build theory; a window of opportunity, so to speak, to approach domestic violence in a new and imaginative way. I believe that the more detached positioning afforded by comparisons of ethnographical accounts, in combination with the subjective, and candid, narratives of the men provide a powerful argument that ought not to be dismissed or ignored.

The argument will be twofold; firstly, that violence is a discursive phenomenon and social discourse will influence, if not determine, the level of acceptance and manifestation of aggressive and violent behaviour; and, secondly, that violence in heterosexual relationships will occur, not simply when the prevailing discourse sanctions violence and promotes an idealised masculinity, but when patriarchal ideology



is paramount; when women are defined as inferior to men, and their attributes both held in contempt and devalued of their intrinsic worth.

### ***Violence: a discursive phenomenon***

The examples of indigenous societies mentioned in the introductory chapter, and explored briefly in Chapter 2, in which domestic violence is, or was, absent or infrequent, ought not to be devalued or discarded because in some cases, the data was recorded over thirty years ago. These accounts uphold the possibility of intimate heterosexual relationships being devoid of violence. They suggest the possibility that violent behaviour might not be inevitable; that just as man appears to have a limitless capacity for violence, he also has the potential for non-violence; that cultural discourses appear to have the power, except perhaps in the most extreme cases, to override any other impulses an individual may have towards violence (Turnbull, 1978). Furthermore, Turnbull (1978: 162) states that it is not that:

“Primitive” man was or is any more moral than ourselves, nor necessarily pragmatic; if he sees the wisdom of minimising violence and aggressivity, reducing hostility to a level far below his mental and technological potential, it is perhaps simply because that best answers his overall needs for survival just as our own maximal development of the aggressive potential may answer our needs, if not our tastes.

The Semai of the Malay Peninsula are a good example. They have been described by Dentan (1968; 1978), Gilmore (1990); and Robarchek and Robarchek (1992) as one of the most peaceful and retiring indigenous tribes ever known. Robarchek and Robarchek (1992: 192) say of the Semai that “physical violence of any sort is extremely uncommon: adults do not fight, husbands do not beat their wives nor parents their children, and homicide is so rare as to be virtually nonexistent”. The following account of Semai life summarises the works of Dentan (1968; 1978); Gilmore (1990); and Robarchek and Robarchek (1992; 1998).

The Semai live in a society whose discourses promote its homogenous, egalitarian, intimate and peaceful environment; and where most importantly, the children are educated not only in the classroom but by a code of non-violence which is implicit in all

that goes on around them. Semai children are acculturated from infancy into an environment where power struggles, hierarchies and authority are non-existent. They place little importance upon material ambition, personal property and individualism. Instead, non-aggression, dependency and sharing are important cultural values which are enshrined and manifested in their daily way of life. In fact, the Semai do not even have sporting competitions or contests for fear a person could lose and feel bad.

Semai children are taught to avoid violence. Being afraid is considered smart rather than blameworthy. Timidity is a virtue and flight is far better than fight. If a Semai man feels peeved at the actions of another, he simply walks away or sulks. Children are shown that cautious reserve is proper and that failure to maintain this brings the possibility of retribution by the spirits. The expectation that children conform to non-violence is manifest in subtle daily ways. For example, the most aggressive game that is taught, and was observed being played by Semai children, involved everyone between the ages of 3 and 12. With great excitement, they assumed threatening poses and flailed away at each other with large sticks. However, in a rehearsal of self control, they would freeze about an inch from their target and would never hit their opponents. Furthermore, parents demonstrate absolute shock when a child loses its temper and do not actively seek to punish aggression but rather to fend it off with laughter or threats. When a parent, on a rare occasion, snatches up a wailing child and takes it into its house, the intervention is all the more frightening to the child because of its uncommon occurrence.

Semai children are shown, by the example set for them by their parents, that coercion and force are unacceptable. At a very young age, they are taught the word “bood”, which roughly translated means “not to feel like doing something”. If a parent tells a child to do something and the child replies, I “bood”, the matter is simply closed. The Semai parent will not try to coerce or force the child. In fact, to do so is “punan” or taboo. The function of “punan” is to enforce “proper” behaviour and any act, which denies or frustrates another person, no matter how large or small, is considered an act of aggression.

I suggest that as Talbot (1998: 155) argues, discourse is a form of social practice and “language use is not just an individual’s activity but a social act”. The Semai not only idealise a non-violent image but incorporate it into their social discourse. Rather than

saying that “Anger is bad”, or that “It is forbidden to hit people”, they insist that “We do not get angry” and “We do not hit people” (Gilmore, 1990: 212). Therefore, as Dentan (1978) maintains, violence in the Semai context is insane; it is non-violence that makes sense in their traditional environment. It is not that the Semai do not have a propensity for violence, or that they cannot be ferocious fighters when they need to be. This was evident when they were recruited into the Malaysian government forces during communist uprisings of the 1950’s, and proved themselves to be fiercer fighters than other ethnic groups. This shows that “in a differentiated, hierarchical, impersonal and violent setting, even adult Semai may act very differently from the way they act in their own settlements” (Dentan, 1978: 95). In a setting where violence was required and valued, the Semai responded to social dictates. This surely shows that violence is a discursive phenomenon and that it is the prevailing social discourse which will influence, if not determine, the level of acceptance and manifestation of aggressive and violent behaviour.

The Waorani, from Amazonian Ecuador, provide further evidence of the discursive nature of violence. They were known as the most violent society to anthropologists because sixty percent of their deaths were attributed to homicide (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1992; 1998). Yet, despite their ferociousness and savagery, Robarchek and Robarchek (1998) never witnessed domestic violence amongst them and have even reported that the Waorani were disturbed by the fact that their neighbours, the Quichua, beat their wives.

Most significant for the argument at hand, is the claim by Robarchek and Robarchek (1998) that the Waorani were able to abruptly abandon their historical culture of war i.e. violence both within and without their society. Although occasional spearings still occur in Waorani reserves, their rate of homicide has been reduced by 90% and large scale raiding has ceased. For this to happen, the Waorani were not defeated in battle, incarcerated or even accepted as equals in the Ecuadorian socio-economic system. Robarchek and Robarchek (1998) state that there were no biological or ecological reasons for the changes that occurred in the violent patterns of behaviour that for so long characterised Waorani society; nothing had changed when they suddenly stopped killing people.

I argue that there might not have been militaristic, economic, biological or ecological changes but that the discourse around violence changed. As Talbot (1998: 151) posits, “knowledge does not arise out of things and reflect their essential truth: it is not the essence of things in the world. Discourses are constituted in history and society”. Violence apparently ended when the Waorani collectively pursued different goals as a result of new cultural knowledge.

This knowledge came about when three women headed into the jungle after the death of one of their children and allegations of witchcraft. Their departure was possibly an attempt at suicide, but instead these women came into contact with two widows of missionaries who had been slain by the Waorani. The Waorani women eventually returned to the tribe and gained permission for these widows to live in close proximity to the Waorani and to spread the word of God. Robarchek and Robarchek (1998: 156) report that these two women made little progress at first. In fact, some of their informants disclosed that “had they not been women”, (and thus not perceived as threatening), “we would have killed them right away”. Robarchek and Robarchek (1998) are of the belief that the ending of vendettas is directly attributable to these women who brought a Christian message to the people; and that for many Waorani, being peaceful, and Christian, are inseparably linked. Robarchek and Robarchek (1998: 174) state:

When new information became available, however, it generated new constructions of reality, and that allowed the formulation of new individual and social goals. People pursued those new goals by choosing courses of action directed towards gaining what they wanted from this new reality. The arrival of Protestant missionaries and their introduction of Christian ideas and values played key strategic roles in this transformation ... It was the desire of the Waorani themselves to end the killing – once that was revealed as a practical possibility – that ultimately made the rapid transformation possible.

Discourses are structures of possibility and constraint (Talbot, 1998); “the way a certain world view is sustained” (Hare-Mustin, 1991: 64). I argue that the Waorani organised new descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual action in regard to violence (Talbot, 1998) when it became socially viable to do so. Van Krieken (1989: 212) maintains that social change is not unplanned; that “differences in

behaviour can be explained much more parsimoniously, as direct responses to a particular social environment, instead of in terms of a significantly different personality structure". Most importantly, as Weedon (1987), cited by Graddol and Swann (1998), assert:

Meanings do not exist prior to their circulation in language and language is not an abstract system, but is always socially and historically located in discourses.

Social realities are embedded in discourses and "necessarily activated during acts of comprehension and production" (Graddol & Swann, 1998: 172).

In his book entitled "What trouble I have seen", David Peterson del Mar (1996) traces the history of domestic violence in Oregon, in the United States of America. He explains that wife beating was quietly condoned during the state's settlement era until a production-oriented ethos became popular in the late nineteenth century, which emphasised discipline and self-control. Wife beating became less acceptable and apparently less common than before. However, with the development of a culture of consumption, pleasure and self-fulfilment in the early twentieth century, the situation was reversed. My argument is that this is another example of people producing and reproducing meanings of social reality embedded in discourses; of social discourse being "both the medium and the product of human activities" (Hare-Mustin, 1991: 64). Social practices are ordered by the rules inherent in what is being written, or spoken, at a particular time and behaviour, and violent practices, are not arbitrary but derived from these dominant discourses.

It is also worth exploring the Iroquois in this respect. Iroquois is actually a name of Algonkian origin imposed upon the Haudenosaunee people. It is thought to mean "snakes" and refers to the silent way in which this tribe would strike at its enemies (George-Kanentiio, 2000). In olden times, despite their war-faring traditions, violence against women was not part of their culture (Wagner, 2001). In fact, "this great regard for the person of woman was not limited to the persons of native Iroquois women, but women of alien blood and origin shared with them this respect"; so much so that there is evidence that they would never violate even their women prisoners (Wagner, 2001: 68). A 19<sup>th</sup> century white woman wrote that amongst the Onodaga, an Iroquois tribe, women were able to walk alone in the reservation at any time of the day or night in perfect

safety and without fear (Wagner, 2001). This writer described specifically the nocturnal wanderings of a Miss Remington, who was in charge of the mission house, and was able to leave for a hike between eight and nine in the evening, travelling safely with nothing more than a lantern in one hand, some supplies and an alpenstock. A Tuscarora chief, writing as far back as 1881 about the absence of rape among Iroquois men, commented wryly that European men had held the same respect for women until they became civilised (Wagner, 1996).

Violence against women was dealt with seriously when it occurred (Wagner, 2001). The Iroquois Code of Handsome Lake clearly spelt out the punishments awaiting the wife batterer in the afterlife. Such a text is “part of the activity of discourse on particular occasions” (Talbot, 1998: 155). It was said that a wife batterer would be taken to a red-hot statue of a woman and told to treat it as he had his wife (Wagner, 1996). However, for them, retribution was swift and harsh for those who violated traditional customs. In the case of rape, for example, the perpetrator would be branded on his face and driven from the community. In a situation of abuse, very rarely was a husband allowed to remain with his wife, and should a second act of violence be committed, the man was taken to the top of a line of women bearing clubs and sticks, and made to run through it as they beat him as hard, and as often, as they could (George-Kanentiio, 2000).

According to George-Kanentiio (2000), the situation has changed. He argues that as a result of the fairly recent influx of American consumerism into the reserves, attitudes have changed from the fish-harvesting days of earlier times. Gone are the days when total community solidarity and co-operation with regards to the protection of women were evident. I would suggest that the fact that domestic violence has become a serious problem necessitating the building of shelters for battered women is a direct consequence of a change in accepted social discourse. After all, “rape and battering of women was virtually unknown until contact with white people” (Wagner, 2001: 51).

Domains of knowledge are not timeless but historical constructions (Talbot, 1998). The Iroquois were exposed to the ideological effects of alternative discourses, which embodied different meanings and attributions of value to power; alternative versions of social reality. New objects of knowledge began to take shape and a new regime of

discourses was formed (Talbot, 1998). As Macdonnell (1986: 164), cited by Graddol and Swann (1998) states:

To see subjectivity as a process open to change is not to imply that the material structures such as the family, education and the whole process which constitute and discipline our sense of ourselves both conscious and unconscious, can be changed merely at the level of language. Discursive practices are embedded in material power relations which also require transformation for change to be realised.

The findings of McKee (1999) in Ecuador, although in stark contrast to the aforementioned accounts of the Semai, the Waorani and the traditional Iroquois are further testimony to the point being made that violence is a discursive phenomenon and that the manifestation of violent behaviour is determined by social discourse. Similarly, in other societies, female infanticide, wearing of the hijab, the practice of concubines, dowries and wife burning are some of the behaviours sanctioned by the discourses of the relevant society in which they occur. For instance, a Mayan woman can be beaten by a jealous husband even if he only has a suspicion and no proof of any infidelity (McClusky, 2001). Discourses give positions of power to some but not to others (Talbot, 1998). Talbot (1998: 157) argues that:

We are “subjugated knowers” and constrained actors. Our sense of self, of autonomy as thinking individuals who have a command of language, is constituted in discourse.

Within those constraints people construct and perform their gender identities.

In summary, the argument being made is that violence is a discursive phenomenon; that mainstream discourse shapes beliefs and attitudes and provides “prevailing codes of meaning” (Sanday, 1996a: 147), and models of acceptable behaviour, which are internalised by individuals guiding and informing the behavioural choices they make (Sanday, 1996a). Diverse societies have different notions of what is, and is not, important in demonstrating manhood (Gilmore, 1990) and what is acceptable use of physical force. Whilst human beings might have a potential for aggression, it is cultural discourse that activates this potential (Sanday, 1996a). Violence prone societies are “not the result of biology but of cultural selection”; “the attribution of male sexual aggression

to human biology and evolutionary progress is an epistemological and not a biological truth” (Sanday, 1996a: 157).

### ***Patriarchal Discourse: the font of domestic violence***

The second point is that social discourse condoning the use of violence in general does not *necessarily* generate its use in intimate relationships. Although, it seems likely that domestic violence would have to be more probable if violence is socially accepted as a means of demonstrating masculinity, and/or in the case of self-defence and self-protection in times of provocation or duress, I maintain that domestic violence occurs when patriarchal ideology is pivotal to the prevailing discourse. In accordance with Sanday and Goodenough (1990), I argue that it is not a universal truth that women have always held secondary status within cultural groups. The Waorani and early Iroquois tribes illustrate this point clearly. It was not that these societies eschewed violence; on the contrary, they had reputations for being fierce and aggressive warriors. However, egalitarian and respectful attitudes towards women were, certainly at one time, enshrined in their discourse and social institutions, and, I would suggest, is the reason that domestic violence was reported as being absent or minimal at that time. Further ethnographic studies will support my argument.

The Minangkabau are a literate Indonesian tribe whose traditional homeland is in Western Sumatra (Sanday 1996a). Sanday (1990) says that Minangkabau intellectuals speak of their social system with pride saying that it has survived a history of external patriarchal influences. Today they claim to live according to two interconnected ideological systems: the one based upon traditional custom (adat), which is matricentric, and the other constituted by religious code (Islam), which is patrilineal and androcentric (Sanday, 1990). Minangkabau men, according to Sanday (1990), actually feel morally superior to men in patriarchal societies because of their protection of the power of women, and their promotion and maintenance of the matrifocal control of property. She cites the words of a well known male leader who she interviewed. He said that “Women and men are all the same, but women are more respected and given more privileges” (Sanday, 1990: 144).



Sanday (1996a: 155) explains that “Daily life in West Sumatra is guided by an overarching natural philosophy expressed in a widely circulating metadiscourse whose central tenet is found in a proverb that ends with the line “Growth in nature must be our teacher”. Sanday (1990) says that, according to informants, the matrilineal system of the Minangkabau is the most important social consequence of looking to nature for a model of living. In order to counteract what they see as the evil in wild nature, the Minangkabau have devised, and adhere, to a system of rules called *adat* (Sanday, 1990) which emphasises consensus as a means of resolving conflict (Sanday, 2002). Sanday (1990: 148-149) reveals the words of one of her informants:

As we all know, Minangkabau *adat* comes from nature according to the proverb *Alam takambang jadi guru* (the unfurling, blooming, expansion of nature is our teacher). In nature all that is born into the world is born from the female, not from the father. *Adat* knows that the mother is closest to her children and is therefore more dominant than the father in establishing the character of the generations. Thus, we must protect women and their offspring because they are also weaker than men. Just as the weak becomes the strong in nature, we must make the weaker the stronger in human life.

The Minangkabau believe that aggression weakens rather than strengthens the body’s ties to nature and society (Sanday, 1996a); that, without *adat*, human beings would be like animals in the jungle where the strong conquer the weak, the tallest defeat the shortest and the strongest hold down the weakest (Sanday, 2002). *Adat*, declared a male leader, “is central to our life, it determines the way we act, and gives rules for living” (Sanday, 1990: 146). Women are thought to symbolise *adat*, whereas youthful male energy is regarded as disorderly and immature. Natural man has to be transformed, shaped and channelled by the authoritative mother and the revamped mature male, who both follow and administer the dictates of *adat* (Sanday, 2002).

The Minangkabau therefore make distinctions between male/female, strong/weak and culture/nature, but their ideology does not allow the physically strong to either obliterate or subordinate the weak (Sanday, 1990: 149). The Minangkabau believe that by providing for the weak, they will all be strong. Men do hold more power in the village and council house i.e. in “government” (Sanday, 1990: 145) and women in the domestic realm. However, it would seem that the implications for women’s power are very

different to that of the public-private split of Western patriarchal discourse. In fact, Sanday (1990:145) warns Western readers not to be misled and to assume that the domestic realm is unimportant or peripheral. Rather, she insists, the “domestic realm is conceived as the centre of power because all decisions are made first in discussions with women in the domestic realm before moving to the council house”. The Minangkabau believe that each sex has its own realm of social responsibility and leadership. Women, for example, are also responsible for economic matters relating to the use of ancestral property and matters concerning lineage in ceremonial affairs; men for formal political matters. Therefore, to the Minangkabau, males and females have different rights, but since both are necessary for the perpetuation of *adat*, they are seen as being at the same level (Sanday, 1990). Peggy Reeves Sanday (private communication, 2002) said that she lived for 20 years off and on amongst the Minangkabau and never came across a case of domestic violence or rape. She said that in this area, that simply would not be tolerated. She concludes that “Men who are conditioned to respect the female virtues of growth and the sacredness of life, do not violate women. It is significant that in societies where nature is held sacred, rape occurs only rarely” (Sanday, 1981: 25-26).

The Iroquois tribes also ascribed to this view. Women and Mother Earth were seen as one (Wagner, 2001). A recent Iroquois leader, George-Kanentiio (2000: 53) writes that:

In all too many societies women are denied full equality with men by custom, economics, and law, while their inherent creativity is cruelly suppressed by placing unreasonable qualifications upon their biological role as life givers.

He maintains that in traditional Iroquois society, women were the centre of all things; that, as nature had given them the ability to create, it was natural that they were in positions of power to protect this function. A female baby, he asserts, was considered a blessing from the Creator because the child meant that the cycle of life would continue. The infant was encouraged to take a leading role in her family and group; “never to hesitate to express her feelings, and never to qualify her creative impulses in order to please a man” (George-Kanentiio, 2000: 54). Girls were expected to be physically strong and were taught skills of survival. As givers of life, they were thought to naturally regulate the feeding of the people, and were taught planting techniques, food preparation and preservation.

Iroquois clans were traced through women who were also mandated full equality in the political system. George-Kanentiio (2000) points out that American women only gained the vote in 1920, a right that Iroquois women held for hundreds of years before. However, the Iroquois believed that natural laws had to be respected and that the sexes were “not to be blended together” (George-Kanentiio, 2002, private communication). The political structure reflected this. Men had a title system created for them in recognition of the fact that they were the opposite of women (George-Kanentiio, 2002, private communication). For example, the chief or *rotiane* was a position that was only able to be held by men (George-Kanentiio, 2000; Wagner, 2001). However, it was the female leader of the clan, the life-appointed clan mother, who would nominate, discipline and instruct the man given this role. Decision-making was by consensus and everyone had a voice. The women also held veto power over the actions of men while having the right to recall, or impeach, a male who acted in a manner they deemed inappropriate. George-Kanentiio (private communication, 2002) maintains that “actually, women wielded greater authority than men in many instances since they controlled the land and its resources as well as the economic distribution methods”. George-Kanentiio (2000: 54-55) states that:

In all countries, real wealth stems from the control of land and its resources. Our Iroquois philosophers knew this as well as we knew natural law. To us it made sense for women to control the land since they were far more sensitive to the rhythms of the Mother Earth.

Women, as life-givers, as custodians of life, also determined all issues regarding the taking of human life. They had to approve declarations of war and treaties of peace as well as make decisions on capital punishment. They controlled immigration and were ceremonial faith-keepers; they were teachers, counsellors and carers of the elderly. The point being made is that the Iroquois believed that respect for women was simply recognition of natural law as determined by the Creator. Consequently, as women were the life-givers and “the centre of the culture” (Wagner, 2001: 51), any crimes against them were considered repulsive. Rather, the best a man could do was to protect women as they went about preserving the nation (George-Kanentiio, 2000).

There are still other examples. Lepowsky (1990), for instance, describes the people of Vanatinai, an island southeast of New Guinea, where there is no ethic of male dominance and where rape and wife abuse are extremely rare and strongly disapproved

of. It would be remiss not to identify the Semai and the Waorani in this respect as well. By comparing these two tribes, it is also possible to clarify what is meant when cultural differences are said to be eclipsed by overarching patriarchal gender discourse. Amongst the Semai, menstrual fluid is likened to fish poison. As a result, a number of constraints are placed upon menstruating women, although it appears these are usually ignored (Dentan, 1968). These women are only supposed to leave their homes to defecate or urinate. Bathing is, in theory, prohibited at this time and the women are also supposed to cook for themselves and eat separately. Copulating with a menstruating woman is considered dirty, but not thought to have any ill effects. Conversely, the Waorani do not see women as polluting or defiling to men or to their activities (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1998). So whilst the Waorani and Semai have differing approaches to menstruation, for instance, it seems even more significant that their overarching attitudes to women and gender roles parallel each other. Both of these tribes are according to Robarchek and Robarchek (1992: 199):

Highly egalitarian, with few rank differentials of any sort. In neither society does gender entail a significant distinction in rank, nor are gender roles highly differentiated in either. With no strong sex dichotomies, there are no puberty rites, men's clubs, or other associations in either society ... Socialisation in both societies is indulgent and non-punishing; both husbands and wives tend children, and children's relations with both parents are warm and affectionate.

Amongst the Waorani, gender roles are not rigid (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1998). Men usually hunt and women garden, but this is often reversed and women are known to run down game using a machete to kill their prey. Both women and men fish, although men often use explosives to do so whilst women use nets and poisons. There is no marked contrast in ideals of masculinity and femininity. Both men and women are expected to be autonomous, independent, self-confident, assertive, capable and physically strong. Women are known to have accompanied men on raids and to have killed the enemy. They were also accepted as political leaders. Furthermore, both sexes had the opportunity for robust and diverse sex lives. Clearly, homophobia was also not an issue for Waorani men and homosexual sex was accepted and common (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1998).

Similarly, says Gilmore (1990), the Semai place little importance on sex role differences in terms of assigning roles or assessing temperament. They have few gender distinctions in their speech and do not distinguish between a male (public) and female (private) realm. Whilst they prefer a sexual division of labour, there are no rigid rules and either sex can engage in any activity they feel suited to without incurring criticism (Gilmore, 1990). It is true that only the men hunt, but this is by no means a strenuous or dangerous affair. The Semai do not go far into the forest, and feel no hesitation or shame at running away or hiding if they encounter any form of danger. Only small game is taken; the largest animal being small pigs. Both men and women fish, and women participate in political affairs as much as men do. It is true that the Semai male regards the blowpipe as a symbol of virility but there is no other apparent indication of concern about their sexual prowess. In fact, according to Dentan (1968: 63), the Semai often talk about their first sexual experience as if it had been very frightening. It would be very unlikely in Western society for a man to feely admit his reluctance to copulate with his first women, by saying, “Her vagina looked like a house to me, a *big* house”. After all, the consequences for his masculinity would be dire.

Gilmore (1990) says that the Semai express no sexual jealousy and adultery is rampant. Semai women are not secluded or protected and Semai men have no concern for male honour or paternity. Any illegitimate child conceived as a result of an extra-marital liaison is equally loved and well treated, a fact, that appears to strongly undermine the biological and evolutionary approaches of Belsky (2001) and Wilson and Daly (2001) mentioned in Chapter 2, who espouse the notions of proliferation of the species and male sexual rivalry to explain domestic violence. Gilmore (1990: 216) suggests that:

So few are the recognised differences between the sexes that the one visible sartorial distinction has achieved the status of a classic aphorism: “Men’s loincloths are long. Women’s loincloths are short”. Otherwise, men and women are pretty much the same. No machismo here!

Talbot (1998: 156) asserts that there is a danger in treating everyday language and experiences as though they occur independently of society.

With the model of discourse as social practice that is used in critical discourse analysis, we cannot just forget the social nature of all discourse. It helps to counteract the tendency for the discourse in which we perform our gender identification to be naturalised.

Discourse is both action and convention; never one or the other (Talbot, 1998). It seems necessary, therefore, to compare the above mentioned codes of behaviour to those of Western and developed societies. I shall do so by hypothesizing what might transpire if a traditional Waorani tribesman was preparing to take up residence in a Western or developed society and all he had in his possession were the recorded tapes or transcripts of the interviews with the research participants. What would he glean about accepted codes of manhood? How would he believe he needs to act so as to conform and be accepted as a gendered member of this society? A Waorani is being considered here rather than a Semai because the emergent codes of manhood, attitudes to women and acceptance of violence might be incomprehensible to the traditional Semai (Dentan, 1978). On the other hand, Robarchek and Robarchek (1998: 177) maintain that:

The Waorani case offers us a particularly valuable perspective because in many ways, they are an extreme version of ourselves. They, too, see humankind as dominant over nature and in charge of their own destiny ... their culture, like our own, is suffused with violence.

However, whilst both our cultures might be similar in these respects and similarly suffused with violence, based upon ethnographical accounts as they have been described above, the overarching discourse of Western patriarchy appears completely at odds with Waorani discourse on gender and heterosexual relationships; and that, therefore, comparing the two could be significant in regards to the occurrence of domestic violence. I contend that in Western and developed societies, rather than gender roles being established on the basis of egalitarianism, the social construction of gender is equivalent to the social construction of patriarchy (Sobieraj, 1998); and that hegemonic masculinity and androcentric relationships based upon power, are enshrined and endorsed by cultural discourses. It seems that in Western and developed societies men continue to hold the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true; that the “White Male System” “decides what *is* knowledge and how it is to be taught” (Schaefer, 1981: 8); and that within this system are embedded the notions of competition, male superiority, dominance, privilege and entitlement with devastating ramifications for the well being and safety of women.

Using the participants’ words as closely as possible, because these reflect the cultural norms, roles, identities and ethos of this society, and the social discourse that defines

and maintains its male population, I will propose the probable conclusions drawn by a Waorani tribesman of what is necessary for his inclusion into Western society. Although these conclusions have been drawn from the narratives of only 24 participants, to my way of thinking, they represent a Western male script; and are indicative of the “ubiquitous” rather than “universal” Western male that Gilmore (1990: 223) refers to in his book, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*.

***To be accepted as a man in Western society: a Waorani checklist***

*I need to be superior; a go-getter and a leader. I need to be dominant and the one in power; the driver, so to speak, rather than the navigator, which is a woman's job. I must not be a follower. I need to have the balls to really go for something and do what needs to be done, because it appears that opportunities and hope for success decline as time goes on. I need to display aggression and have the strength to win; demonstrate strength of purpose and a certain level of decisiveness. I need to be able to show what I can handle physically and mentally. It is also an advantage to have brute strength and a body as strong as a brick, so that I am able to do blokey things like lift weights, crash into other men, play ball games, open jars, drive motor cars better than women do, build and fix things.*

*I need to be different from women. I must definitely not wear frills or the colour pink. Unlike them, I need to be able to switch off from emotional things, be dispassionate, analytical and have an icy exterior. I must be strong, silent and independent which means being in control and able to sort out problems without too much difficulty and with little assistance. I have to look like I can handle any situation and bear the brunt of pressure. If I let my guard down, I will not be perceived as a real man but as a weak bastard, a softie, a sissy or a big girl. I have to be emotionally tough which means that I am not able to break down and cry, particularly in any public place. In fact, I mustn't share my feelings at all because people might hurt and reject me; might hold these things against me. This can even be the case with fathers, who mostly aren't there for you, and mothers, who might dump you. Apparently, men don't listen either; they're narrow minded and don't chew the fat about relationships. I'll have to try and bottle up my emotions inside me, and not let my anger and frustration out, unless I'm at*

*home and can do it on the nearest thing to me physically, even if it is my wife. I must definitely not show emotion at work because I will be shot down and lose my job.*

*It seems I need to be aggressive to gain acknowledgement and respect. I can swear; in fact, if I put a bit of language and colour into my speech people will sit up and listen. Women apparently want macho men. It is so important to show that one is a man of masculinity that cowards will even try and do this as a group by gang raping a female. Therefore, if I don't make it financially or professionally, if I don't climb the corporate ladder, I probably need to demonstrate physically that I am tough and in control. In fact, it seems that if I have sons, I ought to be physical with them and toughen them from birth; a whack around the arse or a clip around the head (rather than taking away toys or privileges) might be good to bring them into line and make them emotionally strong.*

*Apparently, it's a good idea to deal with hostile situations aggressively and to compensate for feeling out of control by being overly powerful; by getting into a position of power with someone lower than you like women and children. If I have a bit to drink or I am on the sports field, I am allowed not to care too much, be a bit more irresponsible, brag a bit, and even get closer physically to my male friends. In fact, sometimes, with some men, I need to drink and smoke a lot to show that I am better and tougher than them, even if they are my mates. I really need to be able to handle my drink and be alert for trouble when drinking in men's company, because it can start to get bad. I mustn't talk about intimate details. Instead, I need to be able to talk about footy, motor racing, drag cars, the woman in the coffee shop down the road, schooners, sex and sport. But, I must remember to call this woman something like a bird, a good fuck, a good lay, a cunt, or a cheesecake that is do-able.*

*I have to remember to think about women like Western men do. It appears that Western men think that women bring out the weakness in a man; that many men are a mess because of women's emotional abuse and really sly stuff. They think women are twisted and allowed to go crazy with feelings;*



*that they yell, scream and make snide comments; press men's buttons and do a lot to fuck men up. I must remember that women make demands and are incapable of doing everything; that they just haven't got it when it really counts. Women, apparently, don't set themselves goals. They have issues and bear grudges; are manipulative, materialistic, untrustworthy and conservative. They are certainly deemed to be the weaker sex and haven't been taught to think, but they can multitask and are able to find the soy sauce in the fridge. Western men are more knowledgeable in any area than women are; men can do everything. Therefore, women have it much easier than them; in fact, they have the best of both worlds. Children are at school most of the day so women are able to watch television and do the ironing at the same time. In fact, they are even able to talk on the phone and watch television all at once. The areas in which women are expected to perform are not nearly as critical to survival as those of men. For example, they are the nurturers; they understand pretty much any topic of conversation; can talk about relationship problems; are affectionate and warm; and drop anything they are doing to look at you.*

*Without doubt, I have to be the head of the household; dominant and with the most say in the making of decisions. In fact, sometimes it seems okay to have the attitude, shit what she thinks; to make a decision and not care if she is shitty about it. I also have to be the main breadwinner; the higher income wage earner. Not only must I provide for a wife and children, but I must do it well. I might even need to care for parents too. We have to have a better house, holidays, schools and toys than other people. I just have to be successful; better than the next bloke. I have to try and outdo them and be into one upmanship. I have to be competitive, constantly compare myself with other guys and be on the winning side even if I have to tread all over people. Making money seems to be one of the ways I might do all this and if I make a lot, I'll be a better catch. However, if a beautiful girl comes along, it is expected that I am more likely going to get into her than a female that is not so attractive.*

*A woman's job is to stay at home and look after the children, clean the house, feed, please and love her man. I need to try and remember only to*

*help with certain chores around the house, but spend more time with the children and allow her to get a part time job to help pay the mortgage. If I get a woman pregnant, I must remember I will suffer for the rest of my life and therefore, I must be careful to choose a good one, an attractive, comforting and nurturing one; a good lover who will show me kindness. If I don't it will cost me; I'll firstly lose my freedom and then, she could take me well and truly to the cleaners, and I will get no help from the police and law courts either.*

*I can be violent in most places – well, at least it appears that's what happens. It's about boys being boys and us having a muck around. On the other hand, it's unusual - and funny - to see women going at it hammer and tongs. It seems that violence is common in families amongst spouses, as well as other family members; amongst peers in school and on the playground. Even teachers and priests used the cane on boys in the past, and still encourage them to play violent games and be aggressive in sport. I'll be able to experience violence on the streets, on public transport, in offices, sports fields and in pubs, sometimes even amongst friends who try to resolve the odd difference of opinion, rather than stewing on it like women do. I'll also hear it regularly on the radio; see it on television, on videos and in the movies. The news will report on the battlefields in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine, to name a few; show the deaths as a result of 9-11 and Bali. Newspapers will show pictures of children holding guns. I'll hear violence sung about in songs, be able to access it on computer and even be able to play computer and video games featuring it. Children seem to enjoy doing this a lot.*

*It looks as though I will have to be violent to survive, something about dog eats dog. Either I do it, or someone else will do it to me. I need to be able to absolutely stand up for myself if someone abuses me; i.e. use violence for self-protection. I am also expected to be a protector. To do this, I can use violence to defend my home, my family and property, as well as others who are in need of protection, the blind and the young, for instance. It seems that females can't feel safe on the streets at all. Some men rape, mug and attack them in dark alleys. As for home – well, it seems like violence there*

*is passively condoned; not given too much air time. If I do tell anyone that I hit my wife, they would be horrified but they wouldn't call the police or do anything else. It seems that in a sort of de facto way, it is what all men do; that, in fact, some domestic violence must be produced if you are married for a long time. There is an underlying current that women get what they deserve; that it is okay to react violently towards them. So, it's like if women push your buttons, how are you supposed to stop then? I mean, it seems that women do this a lot; that the minute men relax, women stuff it up for them because they don't like to see men happy. So, the idea is, if she slings mud, then I can too. I don't have to sit there and cop it from her. If she wants to abuse me, then I can abuse her back. I'll have to learn about point scoring too.*

*It also seems that I am supposed to speak differently to a wife and children than I do to those at work or in the world at large. Women apparently don't really grasp things if you say them quietly anyway. I can also control my wife and children because women, although maybe not second class, must do what they are told. I need, for instance, to set limits for a wife when it comes to money and I can expect to be obeyed once I am married. My wife is an accessory, a prize, as well as a partner and companion. I own her and she does what I say. If she does not show sensitivity, it seems she has to suffer the consequences.*

*At the best of times it seems it is an advantage to be a man. It is certainly supposed to be a man's world. We can lead our own lives and have a good drink up with some female we might pick up. Women even put on makeup to please us. Yet, I am going to be lonely, and isolated. I will lose the ability to reach out to others. I'll shut people out and reach a point where I feel like I have bad separation problems; a pretty toxic place. I will feel inadequate and insecure; guilty, ashamed, hurt, fearful and angry. However, I can't think freely or originally even if all this bothers me as it does a lot of men. I have to fly with the rest of them because the consequences of thinking originally in the social context, of being too much at the edge, is that I will be seen as unacceptable and an unsocial eccentric.*

It seems that the reason that parts of this male script would be unfamiliar and strange to the Waorani tribesman, and probably all of it for a Semai (for whom any form of coercion is regarded as violent behaviour and not what decent people would do (Dentan, 1978), is because men are not predisposed to aggression. As Beynon (2002: 2) says:

Men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up; rather it is something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behaviour which they learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways.

A person does not exist independently of discourse; rather Talbot (1998: 156) states that he or:

She is constituted *as a person* in the act of working within various discourses. From the beginning of [his or] her entry into social life [he or] she is positioned within institutional and societal structures, which bestow upon [him or] her social roles.

I suggest that just as the Semai reproduced culturally appropriate ways of being in the Malaysian army, the Waorani tribesman would do likewise on arrival in Western society. Even if he wished, it would probably be impossible for him to rise up and resist. The voices of the men in this study bear witness to this. Whilst as individuals, they can be seen in the main to be calling for change in social discourses and for the community to share responsibility for a culture that supports violence for men, taken as a group, their narratives are the embodiment of Western patriarchal codes of masculinity and violence. As Kaufman (1993: 13) states, "The pathway to cracking the armour is not simply personal". The Waorani tribesman would be up against an established oppressive order where patriarchal dividend is of benefit to men as a group (Connell, 2002), and where individual men do not benefit equally (Pease, 2002). As Connell (2002) states, those men who do not conform to the dominant discourse pay a considerable price and are often the targets of violence. They are likely to be ostracised and punished (Pease, 2002). Kaufman (1993; 2001) suggests that the way men construct their power and privilege is the source of their pain. For my part, I believe that the Waorani tribesman would soon decide that for men, the rewards of maleness still outweigh its constraints and responsibilities, and in a short space of time, gendered Western discourse would permeate his understanding, and then his worldview, in a subtle and taken-for-granted manner (Karner, 1990).

If violence is not innate then it surely must be something that has been taught, and learnt (Kaufman, 1998). Golden (1992) argues that Western men use violence against women because of the culture they live in which allows, tolerates and has historically encouraged such behaviour. These men, she states, use violence because they think they can. Bart and Moran (1992) concur, but not only do they say that the subjugation of women is historically rooted in political, educational, economic, religious, familial, medical and legal social institutions, but that it is also contemporarily reinforced. It seems, as Karner (1998) argues, that creating one's gender identity is a lifelong process and that with each change in the life cycle and life circumstances, new lessons are learnt. Like Lott (1990: 79), I am of the mind that "we can expect that a person of either gender can learn virtually any behaviour under conditions appropriate for its acquisition". The traditional Waorani and Semai tribes were not privy to the discourse of patriarchal Western society, and therefore, did not have the same gender rules or cultural manifestations of masculinity and femininity (Myers Avis, 1996) and, according to Kimmel (2000), violence remains the most gendered behaviour in Western culture. Semai and Waorani men, and equally so men from traditional Iroquois and Minangkabau societies, were not socially positioned in a system of heteropatriarchy (see Hearn, 1998); masculinity does not appear to have been measured by the power men have over women. Likewise, having superiority and asserting dominance over their wives was not a means of reasserting masculine self-worth and manhood. Heterosexual relationships did not require a man to be linked with someone deemed less powerful than himself (see Kaufman 1993).

To my way of thinking, there can be no doubt that the male script above, which comes directly out of my conversations with the male participants and uses actual words spoken by them, shows that these men have been brought up in a society where the cultural discourse, accepted as the "dominant creed of manhood" (Kaufman, 1993: 163), polarises men from women and sets them in two opposing camps (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994); that for a man to attain Western idealised masculinity, to be seen as courageous and able to display necessary qualities like bravery, determination and physical strength, the feminine must be rejected in all forms (Beynon, 2002). Consequently, men are unable, indeed are not allowed, to identify empathically with women and misogyny (as is seen in the script) is the end product (Pease, 2000; Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994).

The script also vividly illustrates that the Western family is symbolic of notions of patriarchal authority, inequality and deference (Gittins, 1993). It shows, too, that a discourse regarding man's ownership of women lingers on as does the patriarchal assumption that it is a man's place and right to correct, control and dominate the woman in a relationship (Hearn, 1998). I argue that it shows that these men have been fed an idealised Western stereotypical model of masculinity which they continually strive to attain; that as men they have been socialised into keeping their women in line and violence is one of the mechanisms in their patriarchal arsenal for doing so (Websdale & Chesney-Lind, 1998).

The word, *unable*, has been used two paragraphs above because it seems apparent that patriarchy distorts men's lives as well as women's (Pease, 2000). The conversations with the men and the script derived from them, well and truly bear witness to this fact. It seems to me, like to Kaufman (2001: 41), that it is critical, if we are going to understand the individual use of violence, to acknowledge the paradox of men's power and "men's contradictory experiences of power". Power is the property of men as a group, but not of the individual; "for although men are in power everywhere one cares to look, individual men are not 'in power'" (Kimmel, 2000: 93). It seems, too, that hegemonic masculinity is fragile and that men, from boyhood, have to be prepared to constantly prove themselves; to act out and defend their masculinity (Mills, 2001). Self-worth is consequently also measured against a yardstick of gender (Kaufman, 1999). Men are positioned on a continuum of success and failure and the violation of gender role requirements have dire consequences for them (Hare-Mustin, 1991). Overconformity, maintains Hare-Mustin (1991), is the consequence of gender roles; men are forced to conform more than women because the consequences of violating prescribed role requirements are even more negative for them.

Therefore, whilst I believe, as does Pease (2000), that all men benefit, albeit not equally, from patriarchy, I contend that the script and conversations prove that masculinity can be equated with a "psychic pressure cooker", and that men feel the need to adopt the "psychic armour of manhood" (Kaufman, 2001: 42). It was stated above that violence is one mechanism in the masculine arsenal for keeping women in line. Like Karner (1998) and Kaufman (1999; 2001), however, I suggest that in the context of Western patriarchy, where idealised masculinity is an ever unattainable target; where the pleasure and pain

experienced by men as a result of unearned privilege are the source and the result of each other; and where emotionality is scorned as a female attribute, violence becomes, a “compensatory mechanism ... It is a way of re-establishing the masculine equilibrium, of asserting to oneself and to others one’s masculine credentials” (Kaufman, 2001: 41).

This, however, needs clarification and enlargement. Flood (2004) contends that as long as a culture of aggression and male honour persists, violence will continue to happen and men (and women) will be injured and killed. The argument here is that when considering domestic violence specifically, it is necessary to accept that idealised masculinity is by no means exclusive to Western society, and to other societies that have adopted similar patriarchal ideologies and discursive practises; and that whilst it is a contributing factor, it does not go all the way in explaining the occurrence of domestic violence. Neither do Western discourses alone legitimise and promote violence when it is retaliatory. Rather, I suggest that the patriarchal notions of hegemony and androcentrism enshrined in Western social discourse, and above all creeds that subordinate and label women as the second sex, permit, if not encourage, Western men to target those physically weaker and more vulnerable than themselves, particularly their intimate partners, and even children. It seems apparent that the degree to which women are represented, valued and empowered in every aspect of society will be reflected in intimate relationships (Myers Avis, 1996) and will be the major influence in the presence, or absence, of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships. It is neither the goal of this thesis, nor does space allow, a discussion of domestic violence in gay and lesbian relationships. However, it seems that discursive explanations, containing Western hegemonic principles of sexual and social power, are no less significant.

It appears that cultural ways of being are so deeply internalised that it is as though much is unconscious and unknown (Hearn, 1998); that being shaped by cultural images prevents one from seeing beyond them (Karner, 1998). Women, like men, are subject to cultural dictates. However, this thesis is about men and so the comments will be reserved to those about men. It seems that in a patriarchal society, men have the luxury of blindness associated with belonging to a dominant group (Kimmel, 2000) and therefore, much will be left unsaid when men speak of domestic violence (Hearn, 1998). Judging by the response to my questions, I think this is true too of the notion of entitlement. One man, Jean-Claude, admitted that the reason he got violent was because he had reached a point where he thought he was entitled to do so. Another, Roger, said

that men tended to regard themselves as victims of women and therefore thought they had the right to do what they do. For the rest, questions about entitlement and the right to use violence in a heterosexual relationship were avoided or met with denial, uncertainty and surprise. This is concerning because “this will to forget, this selective inattention, is an integral part of the continuation of violence” (Dobash et al., 2000: 36). Some examples of the participant’s responses will be cited to show the apparent blindness and ignorance of entitlement afforded to them by their dominant and privileged position; which, I suggest, is the consequence and manifestation of an unconscious internalisation, individualisation (of which more will be said shortly) and reproduction of discursive inequitable gender relations (Kaufman, 1999) and the most gendered form of behaviour, namely, violence.

Khaled said that there was no entitlement about it; that it was just about looking at how much nagging the wife did, and about trying to control your temper so that you did not listen to it and lose control. Feodor said he had used the excuse of his marital rights for sex with his wife in the past, but that he had not actually believed them; that, to be honest, he had no idea why previously he felt he had the right to be opinionated. Nor did he understand how he got his “will through” when he had not wanted to do things that would hurt his wife. He said that he would have answered negatively if asked whether he did what he wanted, when he wanted, and that this made him more confused. “It just”, he said, “gets me deeper into my particular hole of how I was able to do it (rape his wife)”. Stefano had no idea whether he held beliefs around rights to do as he wanted, and Jeffery said that he did not know about entitlement; that he thought it was more about the closeness of a relationship with a wife. When Toby was asked if men believe that they have the right to control their wives and put them in their place, his answer showed both his uncertainty but also the tunnel vision afforded to his gender on this issue:

Yeah, I ... (silence) ... Well, there must be because it happens a lot, and like since we have separated, my wife said that I have been controlling, which I don’t really understand because I never stopped her from doing anything, and if there was something that I didn’t like her doing, I would voice my opinion. I would say, look you know, why are you going to do that, and I don’t like you doing that. But I would never have said I don’t want you to do that.



Similarly, Peter felt that he had the right to express an opinion especially when it affected both partners; not to change the other person, not even to stop them totally, but hopefully to “think they would rethink it and *come around* themselves”. Sidney, when asked if he felt he had the right to expect her to listen to him when he wanted to tell her something, answered, “Yes, more so *adjust*”. Aaron said:

The belief that underpins it is that there is something that I have that I want to get out and it has to be heard. And you have to listen. So therefore, if you are not listening I am going to keep at it until you hear it. I think it is like demanding to be acknowledged.

The point being made about the unconscious internalisation of cultural ways and not being able to see beyond them, is well illustrated in this final example, an extract from my conversation with Timothy:

Timothy: My beliefs were that it was socially acceptable to bully, yeah, bully, intimidate. It was acceptable to have an argument with your wife and if you felt that she was being unjust, to me then it was my right to abuse, yell at her, and abuse her any way ...

Researcher: You said you thought then that you had the right to do that. Why did you have the right? What was your belief about that then?

Timothy: Because, I didn't believe, I didn't understand why it was my right. I guess I thought that abusing people was acceptable. Verbally or using other methods.

Whilst examples have been given here of direct answers to specific questions around entitlement and perceived rights, it is arguable that all behaviour reflects beliefs about what one is entitled to do in a particular situation; that therefore all the descriptions of violence recorded in this research may be considered the re-enactment and embodiment of internalised Western notions of male rights and entitlements associated with violence.

I contend that the complex mix of blatant intention and blind entitlement were even played out in the interview room. Martin, David and Chan are examples of this. Martin expressed his belief that his emotions come directly from his words; that his words represent, and are carefully selected, to describe something that he has a passionate view

about. He said that his words and passion are the facets of an emotional make-up. Within the interview room, Martin used his voice with great skill, raising and lowering its tone considerably to make a point. He did not seem, or chose not to comprehend, the effect of both his words, which he admitted to selecting with care, and the passion with which he delivered them. It either did not occur to him that he might, as he did, cause me to feel fear or the staff of the organisation to gather outside the door of the interview room in concern for my safety, or this was the result he intended to achieve. Either way, I argue that such behaviour represents the embodiment of male dominance and entitlement.

Likewise, David was a dominating and intimidating presence in the interview room. He seemed to feel entitled to control proceedings to the point where I noted afterwards:

David talked over me on many occasions. This does not always come across in the transcription of the interview, but there are times when I cannot even make out what I am saying on the audio tape.

He was arrogant, superior and self-righteous, to the point of patronising me. This is illustrated in the following extract:

This gives me a chance to sort of give some feedback and help them too, right. Put something back into the system so that I may be able to help the next guy that comes along to get a better service because *you're* better informed ... I'm going to give it to you on a silver platter, okay, because *I* know about this subject and that's why *I* have come to see you. I want to help you and I want to help the system. I am going to give it to you right here and now.

Later in the interview:

Has that blown you away? So, now you can ask me, "okay David, give me the proof. Give me the proof that this is right. You've given me a very good argument but I can't make a thesis out of this until you give me the proof. Finish it off. Give me the cherry on the cake". Okay, I will.

He added:

This is why I know so much about the subject. I have cured all my wives. Okay? ... I'm the only one that all my girlfriends ever talked to about it. And I was the one who opened the door for them so that they could eventually come out of there, right, and they could speak of it and they could go and confront and do therapy and counselling and overcome it, okay?

Likewise, if one was to ask Chan about his interview, I would suggest, his performance of masculinity, his sense of entitlement to do so and the resultant violent nature of the interview would be beyond his immediate comprehension. I noted:

During our initial chat, Chan was quite childlike. It was clear he wanted to be heard and understood; that he wanted sympathy. Once we began recording, he changed and became bossy, even aggressive, dominant and critical. I also found him very patronising, insensitive and derogatory. He was extremely controlling in the use of time and the whole structure of the interview. I recognise his stress and anxiety but I felt trivialised as he gave the impression of knowing all the answers. He wanted my total attention and it seemed if he did not get it, he was scathing. I found him quite forceful in the way he threw questions at me and came up to my face. I felt like I was walking on egg shells and, at the same time, hated being quite submissive. Of all the men I have interviewed to this point, and despite his small physical frame, I have found Chan to be the most intimidating and aggressive. I felt diminished at the end of our talk and wondered how his wife had been affected if this was how I felt after only a couple of hours.

I promised to expand upon the idea of *individualisation* in regard to the internalisation and reproduction of discursive inequitable gender relations and the most gendered form of behaviour, violence. I am well aware that critics might ask how come all men are not violent if violence is indeed a discursive phenomena. I stated, in Chapters 1 and 2, that like Boyd (2000), Brownridge (2002), Hearn (1996), Kaufman (2001), O'Leary (1993), Peterson del Mar (1996) and Ptacek (1990), I believe that all men have many avenues of control available to them which vary on a continuum from coercive to consensual; and that there are both lethal and non-lethal forms of violence to women (Websdale &

Chesney-Lind, 1998). Adrian, himself, said that he thought that domestic violence runs a spectrum; a spectrum of impact. I wish now to further reflect upon this in regards to individualisation.

It seems to me that men's positions on this continuum of violence and controlling behaviour are determined by a number of mitigating factors and circumstances such as cultural group differences, life cycle events, individual attributes, traits and intrapsychic processes. These might be superseded by an overarching patriarchal code of idealised, hegemonic masculinity, but continue to play a part in shaping an individual's identity and responses. Therefore, the work of researchers espousing systemic, intersectional and multivariate frameworks appears significant. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Heise (1998) for example, seeks answers to questions like: Which factors must occur together for violence to exist? What factors are missing? As I am pessimistic about the "metanoia: a great change of heart" that Golden (1992: 27) encourages, I suggest that integrated and ecologically inclusive models investigating the interplay among personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors (see Heise, 1998; Malik & Lindahl, 1998) might go some way in helping to at least reduce the incidence and virulence of domestic violence, as well as shape constructive responses to it.

Whilst I state above that I am pessimistic about "metanoia: a great change of heart", this does not mean that I believe change is impossible. Nor do I feel the same way as Matthew, one of the participants, who perhaps, tongue in cheek, suggested that all men be shot so that we can start again. Schaef (1981) says that the fact that what is under contention is a system, (which she has dubbed the White Male System), means that change can be made. Rather, like Dobash et al. (2000), as well as Pease (2000), I prefer to think in terms of violence being a discursive phenomenon and, therefore, able to be redefined. Like Lorber (1991), I am of a mind that what is socially constructed can be reconstructed; that social relationships may be rearranged. Murphy (2001: 13) suggests that:

Literature, popular culture and discourse in general reinforce our beliefs about gender, but as powerful as they may be they are not omnipotent ... if we can introduce new verbal descriptors, we can affect the way we think about ourselves as cultural beings ... If, as I believe, masculinity is largely a social and cultural construction, we can affect

its meaning. How we talk about ourselves as men can alter the way we live as men.

The role of language in producing and maintaining inequalities has often been underestimated probably through a rather narrow definition of language (Graddol & Swann, 1998). However, it is also exaggerated to suggest that there is a “single linguistic panacea for the problems of sexual inequality” (Graddol & Swann, 1998: 173); rather that “action seems to be required on all fronts simultaneously”. It is my view, like Talbot (1998) that discourse is seen as three-dimensional where language, or text, as well as discursive practices, are seen as a form of social practice. It seems important to hold in mind Graddol and Swann’s (1998: 173) view that:

When people talk to each other they are engaged in an important political activity, in which existing power relations dictate the way in which social reality is renegotiated amongst participants.

As stated previously, Pease (2000) believes that men remain the dominant and threatening sex and that outside academia and the media, masculinity, and the so-called crisis of masculinity, is not a major issue in the real world. In fact, Kimm (2004: 147), at the end of her book on Aboriginal women, asks, “Is anybody listening?; and Kimmel (2000) queries whether we are going to organise our society so as to maximise a propensity for violence or minimise it. One of the very questions identified, and described, in the introductory chapter, was why societies, in which domestic violence was absent or minimal, were not being held up by the leaders of Western and developed societies, feminists and researchers of domestic violence, as possibilities or models for change. Turpin and Kurtz (1999: 347) point out the difficulties involved in a transition from a violent to a non-violent culture. The three major problems they identify are:

(1) cultural resistance and the complexity of such a transformation, (2) our collective ignorance about alternatives to violence and a lack of structures for facilitating non-violent conflict and (3) the virtually inevitable resistance by powerful interests who profit from the status quo and will fight to maintain it.

As this journey comes to its end, it seems this explanation falls short of the mark. Like Kimmel (2000), I am of the mind that there are political questions that deserve political answers. To my way of thinking, Turpin and Kurtz (1999), even though they are

speaking of violence in general, ought to identify unequivocally the reasons behind resistance to change. They need to name those who do profit in Western society from the status quo; those who are responsible for the establishment of structures and agencies dealing with violence. Ira Horowitz (2001) comments upon men's resistance to change. He pinpoints the strength of the early socialisation of both genders; the pervasiveness of gender differentiation in social institutions; the way it is represented in the media; and the fear of ridicule as a result of change

Michael Kaufman's (1993) comments in his book "Cracking the Armour" spring to mind. He says that it is difficult for a man to become a "new" man without ever having been secure about being an "old one" (Kaufman, 1993: 13). He urges men to admit joyfully that they are a bundle of contradictions and tells them that it is liberating to shout out that both societies' old and new expectations "*just don't sit comfortably with us*" (Kaufman, 1993: 34). One can accept, as Pease (2000: 52) points out, that the process of change for men might be distressing as there is much involved, but that "change is in conflict with men's interests as they have been constituted". It seems that resistance to change is another case of doing gender. Men do not see their failure to act equitably as resistance for the very reason that they hold the power to resist (McMahon, 1999).

Kimmel (2000) calls for the meaning of masculinity to be transformed. He believes that the goal should not be for men and women to be thought of as more similar but rather as more equal. Certainly, as was said by Hogg and Brown (1992), masculinity is absolutely central to the question of violence. However, this is so because patriarchal ideologies remain the "energy source" (Websdale & Chesney-Lind, 1998: 58) of Western cultural discourses. It seems unlikely that men could even conceive of themselves as equal to women if they continue to be brought up identifying themselves as masculine by virtue of the fact that they are not feminine (Branaman, 2000: Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994). Therefore, in the case of domestic violence it is, of course, necessary but, nevertheless, insufficient to identify, for example, that boys are taught from a very early age that they must demonstrate their strength through violence and the use of weapons (Turpin & Kurtz, 1999). Pease (2000) argues that change is not possible unless men acknowledge the injustice of their historical privilege; that men need to understand the wrong that has been done to women and the distortion to their own lives. In my opinion, when addressing the problem of domestic violence, it is

paramount not to overlook hegemony and androcentrism, which promote women being accepted as inferior and men being given the right to dominate them. Male domination, says Ptacek (1990), underlies violence against women. It is paramount to oppose unequal power between men and women and directly challenge the social permission given to the use of violence.

Pease (2000: 38) states that men are extremely sensitive to moral and ethical issues and are “able to make significant changes when they begin to recognise the limitations and potential destructiveness of traditional masculinity”. However, he maintains that many men’s responses to feminism have been personal and private. It would seem that the reason for this is that any attempt to rehabilitate individual men, whether through counselling, men’s program’s, support groups or incarceration, cannot be the ultimate solution if social structures do not change accordingly and give permission for men to dispose of their armour (Robarchek & Robarchek, 1998). These are simply band-aid approaches that attempt to deal with the symptoms rather than the cause. As Turpin and Kurtz (1999: 334) say, current perspectives on violence encourage efforts to find a “technical fix”; that “technical solutions often provide temporary relief, but they also deflect our attention from the underlying non-technical problems that are not easily remedied”. Men are socialised into a culture of violence from the top, through the overarching hetero-patriarchal society and the structures that support it. Individual men then link themselves to the ongoing process as they replicate the culture and hand it down to future generations. The men in this study, who spoke of their patterns of violence, of falling back into their old ways and needing to come back to the men’s program, are clear evidence of this. For change to take place, to be meaningful and long-lasting, it has to occur at both the macro and micro-levels of society, for in a circular way, these reproduce and sustain each other (Hearn, 1998; Pease, 2002; Turpin & Kurtz, 1999).

Robarchek and Robarchek (1998: 178) say of small close knit communities:

Individuals regardless of their own inclinations, are expected to conform to the community’s norms, and the hand of day-to-day social control, manifested in gossip, shaming and ridicule, can be heavy if they do not. But such sanctions are effective only because the community has some psychological salience: it *matters* to individuals because they

locate their identities within it and willingly or not, they put its demands and expectations ahead of their own impulses.

Whilst Robarchek and Robarchek (1998) say this is not true for larger urban neighbourhoods, I argue otherwise. Individuals are expected to conform to community norms and discourses. For this reason, class and ethnicity, as well as the cultural discourses of other groups, provide interesting and noteworthy variations. But individual men also belong, and are subject to the overarching discourses of the larger community of Western patriarchal society, where gossip, shaming and ridicule exist alongside those agencies which are constructed in the context of men's domination of women (Hearn, 1998) and which monitor compliance to these expectations. Men locate their identities within this superseding patriarchal community and it matters very much to them that they meet its demands and expectations despite the pain this brings.

Therefore, it is surely too simple to conceive change around the use of violence against a heterosexual partner as an individual journey. Whilst it is important to focus on individual responsibility, broader social and political structures cannot be overlooked. Social forces need to be structured so that they act against violence; so that men are given permission, are invited and affirmed, for entertaining the idea that individual change is within their own self-interest; that it is both a real prospect and a possibility (Hearn, 1998; Pease, 2000). For this to happen, there needs to be a complete shift from an overriding patriarchal culture to one in which egalitarianism is upheld; where, particularly, as Kimmel (2000) says, men and women are equal. If social discourse promotes a gender ethos that does not separate people from one another, or from parts of themselves (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994), men could well be invited to take responsibility and address their violent ways; they could become subjects responsible for their own choices, rather than objects forced to act in accordance with outside pressures (Dobash et al., 2000).

This particular journey is coming to an end. Having conversed with the participants, analysed the emergent data, and deliberated upon it with the broader perspective afforded by ethnographic studies, I argue now that violence is a discursive phenomenon; that the prevailing discourse of a society will determine whether or not domestic violence is acceptable or not. This means that societies do not necessarily have to eschew violence totally for domestic violence to be absent or infrequent. In societies



where egalitarian and respectful attitudes towards women are enshrined in discourse, and upheld by social institutions, domestic violence will be considered taboo. It seems clear that in Western societies, membership of different cultural groups, be they class, ethnic, religious, sporting or otherwise, allows for variation in beliefs, attitudes and behaviour but that patriarchal principles of hegemony, androcentrism and the consequent subordination of women, are pivotal and all-precedent. In all societies, culturally discursive ways of being are often so deeply internalised that one is prevented from, but not incapable of, seeing beyond them. In Western societies, men have, as Kimmel (2000), says the luxury of blindness associated with belonging to the dominant gender. Men reproduce discursive and inequitable gender relations without being conscious of entitlement, nor the unearned privileges afforded to them by Western patriarchal discourse. It is true that as a result of hegemony, all men do not benefit equally; that particularly as individuals they experience pain – and powerlessness; a vicious circle as this pain is caused by the patriarchal society that men as a group strive to preserve. This circle cannot, and will not, be broken unless men are motivated to begin the process.

Dentan (1978: 96) says that “non-violence makes sense in the traditional Semai context”. When I spoke with Matthew, he had discovered that “there’s other ways of showing her the male instead of just biff”. I contend that as long as Western patriarchal discourse persists, men are taught, permitted, encouraged and pressured to show her the male and that it “makes sense” that they will use both lethal and non-lethal forms of violence to do so. After all, they cannot be seen as a weak bastard, a homosexual, a sissy, a softie; in fact, a big girl.

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# Appendix I: Interview Schedule

## Interview Schedule

These questions are to be used as prompts for discussion in the interviews, which will have minimal structure. The aim is to encourage each participant his story.

1. What is it like to be a man in society today? What does masculinity mean to you? What is expected of men today? Are there qualities that men are expected to demonstrate and if so what are they and what effect does this have on you?
2. What are the advantages/disadvantages of being male in society today?
3. How are things the same or different today as compared to the past?
4. What are your views on women? What do you understand by femininity?
5. What are men's/women's roles in a relationship?
6. What are men's/women's expectations of a relationship?
7. What will you be teaching your children about relationships and how does it compare with what you learnt growing up?
8. What do you think are the rules, messages and views of society to violence in general?
9. What experiences of violence have you had in your lifetime?
10. When is violence acceptable or justified?
11. What are the messages, rules or views of society on domestic violence in particular?
12. What do you understand by domestic violence?
13. Is domestic violence ever justifiable or acceptable? Is it in fact inevitable?
14. What needs to happen for domestic violence to become less of a problem for men, women and children?
15. Men enter the program and are challenged. They work pretty hard, allow themselves to be vulnerable and share openly with other group members. Then they walk out of the door. How much of this can they take out there? How much does the real world really allow? How much can they really put into practice?

## Appendix II: Relationships Australia Permission



NEW SOUTH WALES

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**RE: Ethics Application  
Cathy Bettman  
"Class, gender & ethnicity: how these factors speak to entitlement for men  
who have used violence in relationships"**

Relationships Australia supports the project developed by Ms Cathy Bettman for her PhD research, and I give my approval for Ms Bettman to approach clients of Relationships Australia to invite them to participate in the study.

Our support of this application is grounded in the fact that we know and trust the abilities of the researcher, Cathy Bettman, to conduct the interviews and manage the material in an ethical and professional manner. Also, our experience in undertaking similar research would suggest that our clients will benefit from participation in this research. As a counselling organisation, we are able to provide services to any participant who needs further assistance arising from their participation.

This is an important area to investigate and we look forward to being able to integrate the findings of this research into our services for men.

Yours sincerely

Kerrie James  
Clinical Director



## Appendix III: Questionnaire

1



UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY

College of Social and Health Sciences

School of Applied Social and Human Sciences

*"Class, Gender and Ethnicity: How these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship".*

### Questionnaire.

Thank you for your patience in completing this form. Please be assured that no identifying information will be revealed or passed on to any person, organization or government body.

#### **I. Personal Details:**

\*a) What is your first name (optional)?

.....

b) What suburb do you live in? .....

c) What year were you born? .....

d) What country were you born in? .....

e) If you were born in a country other than Australia, in what year did you arrive here? .....

f) Where were your parents born?

Mother .....

Father .....

g) What was/is your father's occupation? .....

h) What was/is your mother's occupation? .....

i) Are you of Aboriginal, Torres Islander or South Sea Islander origin?

☐ Aboriginal

☐ South Sea Islander

☐ Torres Strait Islander

☐ No

j) What is your first language? .....

k) What is your religion? .....

l) What are your interests and/or hobbies? .....

## 2. Current Situation:

a) What is your highest level of educational achievement?

- ☐ Tertiary degree or diploma  
☐ Vocational education/trade certificate  
☐ Secondary School  
☐ Primary School

b) What is your occupation? .....

c) What is your current work situation?

- ☐ Employed, including self-employment ☐ Unemployed – looking for a job  
☐ Unemployed – not looking for a job ☐ Retired  
☐ Pensioner ☐ Home Duties  
☐ Studying

d) Into what range does your income fall?

- ☐ Low (\$0 - \$22,999) ☐ Medium (\$23,000 - \$60,999)  
☐ High (\$61,000 and over)

e) What is the main source of your income?

- ☐ Earned – from wages, salary etc. ☐ Unearned – private income eg. rent  
☐ Gov. pension/benefit/allowance ☐ Other. Please specify below  
☐ Nil income

f) What best describes your current family membership?

- ☐ A couple family with children ☐ A couple family without children  
☐ A one parent family ☐ Live with other family eg. siblings  
☐ Live alone ☐ Live in a shared house  
☐ Other. Please specify

g) What is your current marital status?

- ☐ Married (registered) ☐ De facto marriage  
☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced  
☐ Separated ☐ Never married

h) Do you currently have a relationship with a partner?

- ☐ Living together ☐ Not living together  
☐ No

i) Do you have children living with you? If so, how many? Please specify foster or stepchildren. ....

j) Do you have any children that do not live with you? .....

3. What abusive behaviour have you used in a relationship?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Appendix IV: Information Sheet and Consent Form



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College of Social and Health Sciences  
School of Applied Social and Human Science

***"Class, Gender and Ethnicity: How these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship".***

#### Information Sheet for Participants

You are invited to participate in a study of how class, gender, ethnicity, and culture influence men who have used abusive behaviour in a relationship. It is becoming increasingly clear that domestic violence has a significant impact upon men as well as women and children. Men experience personal, emotional and financial consequences, but very little attention is given to their experiences. This study's focus is on hearing the perspectives of men, which will assist in the framing and implementation of social policies and programmes.

Researcher: Cathy Bettman  
Phone: 02 9418 8800  
Purpose of Research: Doctor of Philosophy (Social Policy)  
Supervisor: Dr. Carolyn Noble, Associate Professor in Social Work  
University of Western Sydney  
Phone: 02 9772 6244.

#### What's involved?

- The first stage of the study involves a **focus group discussion** where you will meet with me and approximately four other men at Relationships Australia for approximately 2 hours to discuss a series of questions relating to the topic as described above. You are not expected to reveal anything that you might consider too personal, and you are advised that the researcher is bound by law to disclose information relating to the commission of a crime and is obliged to act if anyone is at risk.
- You will also be invited to take part in an **individual interview** in the second stage of the study. This will also take place at Relationships Australia and will last for about an hour. These sessions are usually beneficial to follow-up any concerns which might have developed for you either during or as a result of the focus group.
- **Please Note:**

1. You may choose to participate in either the focus group or individual session if you would prefer not to attend both.
2. Both the focus group meeting and the individual session will be tape-recorded.

- I will also ask you to complete a **very brief questionnaire** to gain some background information about your circumstances. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential, with the exception of any disclosure of a crime or risk of harm to any person, in which case the researcher is obliged by law to act. The

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results need to be published and read as a requirement of my degree candidature, but information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified.

**In making your decision about whether to participate, it should be clear that there are no penalties, disadvantages or adverse consequences for choosing not to be involved or for withdrawing at any stage from the project. No other organization or department is involved. Should you decide to withdraw, any information you have given will not be used unless you give permission for its inclusion.**

***Note:** This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (tel: 02 4570 1136). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

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### CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the study *"Class, Gender and Ethnicity: How these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship"*, by filling in a questionnaire, joining in a focus group and/or attending an individual interview. I consent to the information I give being used for the purpose of a doctoral thesis and am aware that a translator will be arranged if I so desire because I do not speak English very well.

I have read and understood the information supplied on the information sheet and know whom I might contact if I want further information.

I understand that the researcher is bound by law to disclose information relating to the commission of a crime and is obliged to act if anyone is at risk. Other than this, I am aware that my confidentiality will be respected; any statements I make will remain anonymous and that any identifying information will be removed from the questionnaire, tapes and transcriptions. I also understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and without having to give a reason. This also means that I can decline to answer any questions and stop the interview at any time without consequence and again without supplying a reason. Neither of these actions will affect my standing with the Department of Corrective Services or any other counselling or health service. These bodies are not involved in this project in any way.

I undertake to respect the confidentiality of other members of the focus group and not to reveal anything that is said at the meeting.

The information on this form and the questionnaire will be kept separately from the tape recordings and transcriptions, and will be kept solely for the purpose of the study. It will not be made available to any person other than the researcher.

I have been given a copy of this form and the information sheet to keep.

- ☐ I agree to participate in the focus group only.  
☐ I agree to participate in an individual interview only.  
☐ I agree to participate in both the focus group and the individual interview.

SIGNATURE (Participant): \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE (Witness): \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics committee through the Research Ethics Officers (tel: 02 4570 1136). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

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Campbelltown 2560  
Hawkesbury  
Bourke Street  
Richmond 2753  
Parramatta  
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and Victoria Road  
Rydalmere 2116  
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# Appendix V: University of Western Sydney Ethics Approval



## UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY

Locked Bag 1797  
PENRITH SOUTH, DC NSW 1797

28 October 2002

Cathy Bettman  
33 The Point Road  
Woolich NSW 2110

Dear Cathy


**Re: Research Project : Class, Gender and Ethnicity: How these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship Registration Number HEC 02/161**

The Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed to grant your project a conditional approval. Please address the following issues and your project will then be considered for full endorsement.

1. You are advised that the transcripts should be anonymous. A factor to consider is that the tapes may be called to court.
2. You are advised that the issues of disclosure may arise in this research. It is likely that things that are criminal will come up in the focus groups. The groups should also be warned before the focus group session that disclosures of criminal actions are reportable by law. You should be mindful of this point, particularly in cases of child abuse where the reporting requirements are mandatory. You should seek out some legal advice on your obligations.
3. Please ensure that you obtain from the Focus groups members written consent that what transpires in the group is confidential.

You should address the specific issues raised and your responses should be forwarded to Kay Buckley and will be accepted via Email to [k.buckley@uws.edu.au](mailto:k.buckley@uws.edu.au). Please ensure that you note the name of the project and the registration number in your response.

Yours sincerely

  
**Professor Elizabeth Deane**  
**Chairperson**  
**UWS Human Research Ethics Committee**

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## UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY

Locked Bag 1797  
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21 November 2002

Cathy Bettman  
33 The Point Road  
Woolich NSW 2110

Dear Cathy

**Re: Research Project : Class, Gender and Ethnicity: How these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship Registration Number HEC 02/161**


The Committee has reviewed your responses to the issues raised and has agreed to grant an ethics approval for the above research project.

You are advised that the Committee should be notified of any further change/s to the research methodology should there be any in the future. You will be required to provide a report on the ethical aspects of your project at the completion of this project. The form is attached and also located on the Research Services Web Page.

The Protocol No. HEC 02/161 should be quoted in all future correspondence about this project. Your approval will expire 30 December 2004. Please contact the Human Ethics Officer, Kay Buckley on tel: 4570 1136 if you require any further information.

The Committee wishes you well with your research.

Yours sincerely

  
**Professor Elizabeth Deane**  
**Chairperson**  
**UWS Human Research Ethics Committee**

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## Appendix VI: Department of Corrective Services Ethics Approval

New South Wales Government



### Department of Corrective Services



Roden Cutler House  
24 Campbell Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Telephone: (02) 9289 1333  
Facsimile: (02) 9289 1010  
DX: 22

Our Reference: 02/1776

Your Reference:

Ms Cathy Bettman  
33 The Point Road  
Woolwich NSW 2110

Dear Ms Bettman

I refer to your research application entitled "*Class, Gender and Ethnicity: How these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship*".

Based upon your revised research application and subsequent correspondence, I understand that you are seeking to conduct one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions with offenders currently under the supervision of the NSW Probation and Parole Service.


I am pleased to inform you that conditional approval has been given for your research project subject to your strict compliance with the attached "Terms and Conditions of Research Approval" (Attachment 1).

I recommend that you contact the District Managers of the relevant Probation and Parole Offices, in the first instance, in order to arrange the necessary access for your project.

I understand that you have already been advised that Probation and Parole Officers are in no way to be asked to assist you in directly recruiting participants for your study and that your documentation to offenders clearly states that your project does not involve the department in any way. As the chief investigator, it will be your sole responsibility to select and recruit individuals for your study where this may involve you attending the Probation and Parole Office in person.

I wish you every success in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely

  
**RON WOODHAM**  
Commissioner

25 February 2003

c.c. Senior Assistant Commissioner, Community Offender Services



## Department of Corrective Services



Ms Cathy Bettman  
33 The Point Road  
Woolwich NSW 2110

Roden Cutler House  
24 Campbell Street  
Sydney N.S.W. 2000

Telephone: (02) 9289 1333  
Facsimile: (02) 9289 1010  
DX: 22

Our Reference: 02/1776

Your Reference:

Dear Ms Bettman

I refer to your research study entitled *"Class, gender and ethnicity: How these factors speak to entitlement for men who have used violence in a heterosexual relationship"* which was approved on 25 February 2003.

As part of your original research application, you were granted permission to conduct research with up to 30 individuals including those persons under the supervision of the NSW Probation and Parole Service in the Sydney metropolitan region.

As you are aware, this approval was contingent upon Probation and Parole Officers in no way being involved in directly selecting and recruiting participants for your study and that your documentation to offenders clearly stated that your project did not involve the department in any way. As I am sure you can appreciate, this strategy was implemented in order to avoid any possible sense of coercion which the offender may feel in being approached and/or recruited for the study by departmental staff.

I understand that you are now seeking further clarification on the role which Probation and Parole Officers may have in relation to your project. Whilst Probation and Parole Officers must not be involved in signing up candidates for your research study, the following procedures could be put into place to enable participant information kits to be distributed to Probation and Parole clients.

- (1) Sealed envelopes with research information for participants can be left on the office desk for clients to takeaway with them.
- (2) The envelope should be marked as from "Relationships Australia".
- (3) It should be stressed to Probation and Parole officers that they should not:
  - (a) actively encourage participation in the research study
  - (b) discuss the project during their P&P client interview
  - (c) state that the research is endorsed by Corrective Services.

These instructions are consistent with the department's original position on this matter.

You are also reminded that you should continue to adhere to the original terms of approval dated 25 February 2003.

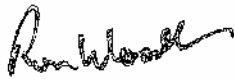
Lastly, may I also take this opportunity to comment on your proposed amendment to your existing research design. It appears that you are replacing your one-to-one research interviews with self-administered surveys. If this is correct, I have been advised by Mr Simon Eyland, Director, Corporate Research, Evaluation and Statistics, that you are possibly introducing systematic measurement error and may compromise the comparability and reliability of your overall research findings.

If you are altering your research methodology during the course of your fieldwork, I would recommend that you discuss any changes with your academic supervisor.


Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Eyland (ph.: 02 - 9289 1557) if you require any further assistance.

I wish you every success with your project.

Yours sincerely



**RON WOODHAM**  
Commissioner

 September 2003

c.c. Senior Assistant Commissioner, Community Offender Services

New South Wales Government



## Department of Corrective Services



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Roden Cutler House  
24 Campbell Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Telephone: (02) 9289 1333  
Facsimile: (02) 9289 1010 CO: 03/0388  
DX: 22 SR:rd

Our Reference:

Your Reference:


Dear Ms Bettman

I refer to your letter of 14 April 2003 requesting a change in the approved protocol to conduct your research project namely, that questionnaires be distributed to parolees by probation and parole officers.

As you are aware I approved your original request to conduct your research project provided that several conditions were strictly adhered to. One of the main conditions was that probation and parole officers were in no way to be asked to assist you in directly recruiting participants for your study. It was also agreed that it would be your sole responsibility to select and recruit individuals for your project where this may involve your attending the Probation and Parole Office in person.

In the circumstances it is not possible for the Department to accede to your current request.

Yours sincerely

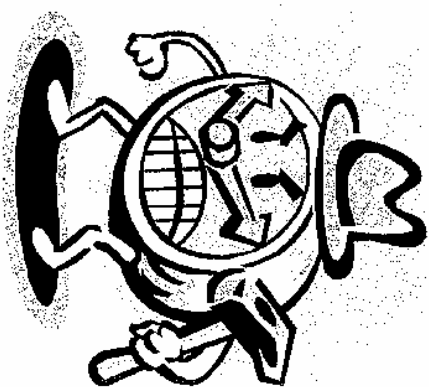
  
RON WOODHAM  
Commissioner  
19 May 2003

## Appendix VII: Brochure

I am doing a PhD at the University of Western Sydney. I am interested in the effect of social influences, culture and ethnicity, on domestic violence. Men don't often get the opportunity to tell their story and so I invite you to do this. All I ask is a minimum of 1 hour of your time and I am prepared to pay your travel expenses. What you tell me will be described in my thesis, but of course you will remain totally anonymous and rules of confidentiality apply. If you feel you have it in you to help, please call Cathy Bettman on 9418 8800 or email me on [cbettman1@ozemail.com.au](mailto:cbettman1@ozemail.com.au). Thank you so much.

Cathy Bettman  
Ph 9418 8800  
[cbettman1@ozemail.com.au](mailto:cbettman1@ozemail.com.au)

PLEASE HELP ME!



*If you are male and have  
ever used abusive behaviour  
(physical, verbal or  
otherwise) in an intimate  
relationship with a woman,  
then you can help me – and  
in so doing help others as  
well. Please read on!*

Domestic violence has a huge impact upon men as well as women and children.

Men experience personal, emotional and financial consequences, but very little attention is given to their experiences.

My study's focus is on hearing the perspectives of men, which will assist in the framing and implementation of social policies and programmes.

What is expected of you?

You can choose between taking part in a group session with about four men or have a session on your own – or both if you want. I will also ask you to complete a very brief questionnaire to gain some background information

about your circumstances.

The meetings will be tape-recorded, so that I don't have to make notes and can give you my full attention. You are not expected to reveal anything that you might consider too personal. I ask questions like what your expectations are in a relationship; whether there is an advantage or disadvantage in being male; your views on violence in general and its role in your society or culture.

Any information that you give me will be used for my thesis and treated in such a way that you cannot be identified. However, I am bound by law to disclose information relating to the

commission of a crime and to act if anyone is at risk.

**In making your decision about whether to participate, it should be clear that there are no penalties, disadvantages or adverse consequences for choosing not to be involved or for withdrawing at any stage from the project. No other organization or department is involved. Should you decide to withdraw, any information you have given will not be used unless you give permission for its inclusion.**

**Note:** *This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (tel: 02 4570 1136). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.*