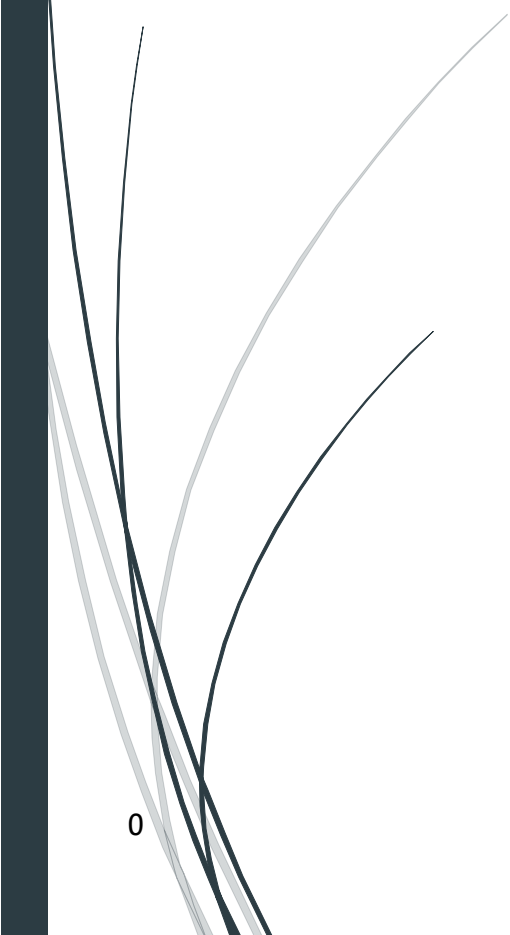


A Critical Exploration of Why Men Are Failing to Report  
Domestic Abuse



## Abstract

Domestic abuse is perceived as a gendered crime, with male perpetrators and female victims. There is a dearth of research which has rendered male victims indiscernible. Resources are predominately aimed at females, which leaves half the population without any support. This is a critical exploration into the gendered bias which surrounds female perpetrated domestic abuse and the reasons behind why males fail to report any abuse suffered

*To My Mr H.*

*Thank you for your unconditional love, support and belief.*

## Contents Page

Title Page .....	1
Abstract .....	2
Acknowledgements .....	3
Contents Page .....	4 - 5
Introduction .....	6 - 9
Literature Review .....	10 - 19
➤ A Gendered Crime .....	10
➤ Male Perpetrated Abuse .....	11
➤ Dearth of Research .....	11 - 12
➤ Female Perpetrated Abuse .....	12 - 13
➤ Self Defence .....	13 - 14
➤ Reasons for Non-Disclosure .....	14
➤ Child Contact and Custody .....	15
➤ Counter-Allegations .....	15
➤ Professional Responses .....	16
➤ Secondary Victimization .....	17
➤ Gender Stereotypes .....	17 - 18
➤ Masculinity .....	18 - 19
Methodology .....	20 - 25
➤ Design .....	20
➤ Procedure .....	20 - 21
➤ Participants .....	22
➤ Analysis .....	23
➤ Limitations .....	23 - 24
➤ Ethical Considerations .....	24 - 25
Findings and Discussion .....	26 - 39
➤ The Perception of Domestic Abuse Being A Gendered Crime ....	27 - 29
➤ Lack of Awareness and Resources Available for Male Victims ....	30 - 31
➤ <b>Professional Agency Responses</b> .....	31 - 34
○ The lack of recognition and disbelief .....	31 - 32
○ Secondary re-victimisation .....	33
○ Counter-allegations .....	33 - 34
○ Child contact and custody .....	34

- Gender Stereotypes - Ideology of Masculinity and shame/stigma ... 35 - 36
- Physical size difference between males and females ..... 36 - 37
- Context of Female Violence is it Self-Defence? ..... 37 - 39

**Conclusion** ..... 40 - 43

**References** ..... 44 - 47

**Appendices**

- **Appendix A**
  - Combined Information and Consent Form ..... 48 - 55
- **Appendix B**
  - Research Ethics Approval Form ..... 56 - 59
- **Appendix C**
  - Emails received from Mark Brooks, Mankind Initiative ... 60 - 61
- **Appendix D**
  - Transcripts from interview with AMIS ..... 62 - 65

## Introduction

The primary aim of this research is to establish the reasons why males do not report domestic abuse, whilst further identifying any barriers that prevent males from divulging abuse and seeking informal and formal support. It aims to ascertain whether domestic abuse is identified as a 'gendered crime' and whether males were overlooked and disbelieved when reporting domestic abuse to professionals, and the effects this has on the decision for a male to report the abuse or not.

Prior to conducting the research, I examined and researched previous findings within this subject and identified that there are significant gaps in this specific academic research, with the focus of literature concentrating on male perpetrated abuse, this is corroborated by Allen-Collinson (2009: 3). "There is a relative dearth of qualitative research into physical abuse perpetrated by women upon their intimate partners". At the same time, I looked for conflicting ideologies to critique any evidence found and accessed feminist theory literature to obtain a different perspective as to why, if at all, women perpetrate domestic abuse. With this in mind, I decided that it would be a worthwhile and interesting project to take forward for my dissertation.

I became interested in domestic abuse as a topic after taking an undergraduate year one, 'Crime and Society' module and covering the topic within the seminars. This led me to volunteer for my local Women's Aid charity, where I have been volunteering for two years now, dealing with the administration surrounding the

high-risk cases, which includes conversing with the women involved, relaying their fears and their desired outcomes to external agencies. This is a field I wish to pursue a career in and I fully support and believe in their ethos. Nevertheless, there is an inequality in research regarding female perpetrated domestic violence.

On a personal level, I have experienced first-hand how scarce support- services are for males in this position, how difficult it is for men to report domestic abuse to professionals and family members and to be believed.

Domestic Abuse occurs throughout society regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, class, education, race and religion, affecting children, men and women. In 2018, the UK Government defined domestic abuse as: - *“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional”* (Great Britain, Violence Against Women and Girls, 2018:3).

This type of crime is reported overwhelmingly as a gendered crime with female victims and male perpetrators (Terrance, 2011:208; Women’s Aid, 2018:1). There is no denying that the majority of domestic abuse victims are female, and the extent of the problem is pandemic with the most horrific consequences. Domestic abuse is a recognisable crime and more recently with the addition of coercive control also becoming a punishable identified offence (CPS, 2017:1). However, it is only quite recent developments that have seen change around the domestic abuse laws and guidelines, for example, NICE - National Institute for Health and Care Excellence have released current guidelines, addressing domestic violence and abuse in adults

and young people which is now gender inclusive (NICE, 2016). The new and updated Home Office Domestic Violence and Abuse Law, 2018, includes and recognises male victims of domestic abuse and has secured further funding to help organisations to support men who are victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Mankind Initiative, the first male only domestic violence charity, have published data regarding domestic abuse. *‘There has been an increase in reported cases of male domestic abuse. During 2015 in England and Wales - 128,767 men reported that they had been victims of domestic abuse. Between January 2012 and December 2014, the number of reported crimes were 115,818’* (Mankind Initiative, 2016).

PASK - Partner Abuse State of Knowledge, conducted a large-scale research project encompassing, a total of 42 scholars and 70 research assistants at 20 universities and research institutions within Canada, America and the UK and spent two years or more researching domestic abuse from both female and male perpetrator perspectives. This research reported very different findings, conveying that men represent 45.6% of victims of domestic abuse (Pask, 2016).

This dissertation has four main chapters, A literature review, where key themes within academic literature are presented and paradigms are starting to emerge through the research undertaken. A methodology chapter, which explains how the design and research was undertaken and justification of the methods chosen to complete this dissertation. The ethical considerations surrounding participants, and any limitations of the research. A findings and results chapter combined, which includes verbatim quotes from two participants and this combines and collates with results obtained from academic literature. Finally, the conclusion where I give my opinion on the findings and results, alongside any recommendations for further



research. The word count allowed is not enough to cover all the themes which have become apparent through research and interviews. Therefore, key themes have been explored and will be discussed and critically analysed within the chapters of this dissertation.

## **Literature Review**

## **A Gendered Crime**

Historically, domestic abuse research has concentrated solely on females as victims and males as the perpetrators, with domestic abuse overwhelmingly defined in a heterosexual context, current research acknowledges that this influences public and professional perceptions. “Gender bias have been found to affect people’s perceptions of domestic abuse” (McCarrick, 2016: 204). Consequently, in many cases, males are automatically perceived as the aggressor and the female as the victim. In defining domestic abuse purely as male against female, not only further influences the gender bias surrounding the crime but also seeks to diminish the reality of male victims. Most of the available literature encompassing the domestic abuse topic, focusses on male perpetrated domestic abuse and there is an absence of literature and lack of research regarding female perpetrated abuse in comparison. Therefore, the literature currently available, overwhelmingly demonstrates that it is males who perpetrate violence against females (Women’s Aid, 2018:2; ONS, 2018; Dobash et al, 2004: 325; Terrance et al, 2011:208). Contemporary research is progressively addressing this inequality within the spheres of academic literature. Nevertheless, “The vast majority of published studies have portrayed the assailant as male and the victim as female” (Worthen et al, 2005:305).

## **Male Perpetrated Abuse**

- Dobash et al (2004: 324), describes this male perpetrated violence as '*symmetry*' and female perpetrated violence as '*asymmetry*'. Further explaining, "the answers rest on the context, on the type of violence displayed and in what setting... What counts as violence?". Further comparing male and female violence, the study determines that, 'domestic abuse is primarily an asymmetrical problem of men's violence to women, and women's violence does not equate to men's in terms of frequency, severity and consequences' (Dobash et al, 2004:324; Archer, 2002:314; McHugh et al, 2006: 130). There are significant reported disparities between male and female perpetrated violence, this is in relation to the repetition and the frequency of abuse that is experienced over a lifetime, "Women experience higher rates of repeated victimisation and are much more likely to be seriously hurt" (Walby et al, 2017:15) or, murdered in comparison to male victims of domestic abuse (Women's Aid, 2018; ONS, 2017). "Female victims of violence are more likely to experience serious injury than their male counterparts" (Terrance et al, 2011: 210). Walby (2017: 28) however critiques this theory and efficacy of data collection surrounding male victims, explaining it is impossible to obtain accurate results for comparison with so little research available.

### **Dearth of Research**

- However, this is not refuting that men are not experiencing long-term, physical, and psychological abuse, essentially research (or lack of) determines that men evade reporting domestic abuse, rendering them indiscernible as victims. The lack of academic literature and research historically, demonstrates this through the absence of literature in comparison to male

perpetrated abuse (Allen-Collinson, 2009: 4; Dobash et al, 2004: 326; Migliaccio, 2002: 27; Worthen et al, 2005:305). “Most studies have focused almost exclusively on female victims of domestic abuse...abuse has been defined as a woman’s issue” (Loseke, 1987: 232). Literature dealing with domestic abuse, “focuses mainly on women as victims...The view of men as victims of domestic abuse is not studied as much as it is for women” (Drijber et al, 2013: 173). “One reason that male victims have been ignored...is that they have rarely, if ever, been studied” (Hines et al, 2007: 64). This overwhelmingly reported gendered crime has, “rendered the domestic victimization of men invisible, and by default, minimized the violence perpetrated by women” (Terrance et al, 2011:215). These findings validate ideologies surrounding the perception of domestic abuse being a gendered crime and male perpetrated and the idea of males, who are victims of domestic abuse are not recognised, due to the lack of awareness and research available to demonstrate otherwise.

### **Female Perpetrated Abuse**

- There is available, contradictory and controversial academic exploration concerning female perpetrated violence, with ideologies that females are equally as violent as males within the framework of an intimate partner relationship. “One of the most controversial subjects is intimate partner violence by women” (Hines et al, 2007: 63). The complex case study, ‘Behind Closed Doors, Violence in American Families’, is a large-scale study of over two thousand families relating to family violence. The authors Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz are open and honest in divulging, that the findings of their own

research surprised them, this reinforces the suggestion that domestic abuse, globally is thought of as a gendered crime.

- *“The findings that women physically assaulted their partners at about the same percentage that men assault, came as a surprise to us, because like everyone else at the time, we believed that domestic violence was almost exclusively a crime committed by men”* (Straus et al, 2009: ix).
- In addition, a recent study was undertaken to characterize profiles of male victims of abuse in Brazil, correlates with Straus’s findings and further highlights. “Men can be victims of intimate partner violence by an intimate partner and represent a *significant* proportion of the victims treated in the Brazilian medicolegal service” (Bernardino et al, 2016: 622). This research was undertaken within a medical establishment, contextually differing from Straus et al’s research. This suggests, that perhaps men are disclosing being victims of abuse but only after receiving injuries which necessitate medical intervention. Research further establishes that females are more likely to use a weapon than a male in an intimate relationship” (Drijber et al, 2013:173; Walby et al, 2017:12; Dutton, 2007:2; McHugh et al, 2006:131).

### **Self-Defence**

- However, although the literature may be specifying that women are as aggressive as their male counterparts and more likely to use a weapon, this is somewhat explained within the context and framework of self-defence. “Within a feminist framework, when women do perpetrate violence against

their male partners, it is either in self-defence or identifying with the male aggressor” (Hines et al, 2007: 64). To understand male victims of domestic abuse, the context of female perpetrated violence becomes paramount, do females only use violence in acts of self-defence or in retaliation to male violence? (Straus et al, 1980; McHugh et al, 2006:131; Terrance et al, 2011: 210; Dutton, 2007:17; Hines et al, 2007:63). Or, as other research has demonstrated are females as capable as males of perpetrating domestic abuse. For example, in the Bernadino (2016), study where data was collected from males presenting with maxillofacial injuries following a domestic abuse incident, findings would suggest that females are as equally as violent as males. Yet, Hamberger (2015:699) states, females physical violence appears to be more in response to violence initiated against them.

### **Reasons for Non-Disclosure**

- Male and female victims of domestic abuse, both report comparable justifications for not divulging abuse they have suffered, common themes disclosed are: - housing issues and economic difficulties, the distress and upheaval for children involved, together with isolation from family and friends (Women’s Aid, 2015: 3). Males, alongside these comparable reasons are also disclosing fears surrounding, shame, masculinity, professional responses and attitudes, fear, threats of violence and coercion especially regarding access and custody of any children.

### **Child Contact and Custody**

- The unparalleled inequity surrounding custody and contact with children, from a male victim's perspective is unprecedented, with the majority of studies reporting similar findings. The emergence of a gender bias with reference to legal professions and other agencies involvement around child custody and contact decisions is a recurring paradigm. This frequently culminates with male victims of abuse not afforded the same parental rights or protection as female victims (Basile,2005:178; Dobash et al, 2004:326; Worthen et al, 2005:306; McCarrick et al, 2016:212; Hines et al, 2007:67). This leads onto: -

### **Counter-Allegations**

- Counter allegations are a repeated paradigm throughout the literature especially in respect of child contact and custody. "Prejudice against male victims is extreme and has led to under reporting by the police, with more men being put into the Criminal Justice System (CJS) if counter charges are made" (McCarrick, 2016:214). Many men fear losing contact with their children and research validates this concern. "Male victims, who are parents...fear they may lose contact with their children if their female abuser files a counterclaim against them" (Basile, 2005:178). With counter-allegations identified to influence child contact orders to rule in favour of the female in the relationship, and many males, "falsely arrested... from females manipulating a system designed to help females" (Hines, 2007: 67). This gives further understanding and explanations as to why men are reluctant in disclosing any abuse suffered.

### **Professional Responses**

- Drijber et al (2012: 176), states, “The most important reason that men do not report abuse is the belief the police would not take any action”. This is further validated by the widely held view of the men in the Drijber study who had reported domestic abuse to the police and were not taken seriously and as discussed previously, the study found the consequences of reporting abuse can have a detrimental penalty, with men frequently finding themselves counter-accused. To put it more simply, men are then suspected of being the perpetrator of the abuse within the relationship. Another emerging theme was the fear of not being taken seriously by professionals in conjunction with being ridiculed and ultimately not being believed. “Men however have the problem of credibility, very few men are believed and treated with ‘selective inattention’ (Steinmetz, 1978:499). These fears are substantiated within the literature available, with studies and findings corroborating that males experiencing female-perpetrated abuse are sometimes considered *unbelievable* (Allen-Collinson, 2009:13; Hines et al, 2007: 69). Hines (2007:69), further reports that scepticism arrives from, “we cannot believe what the men report, because it is these very men who are probably the real abusers in the relationship”. Further validating the emerging themes presenting within this research, males are deemed unable to be victims of female perpetrated domestic abuse. “This form of violence is insignificant when compared to a woman or wife battering and does therefore not deserve ‘conceptual recognition’ within the violence context” (Barkhuezin et al, 2012:1).

## Secondary Re-Victimisation



- Subsequently, further reported dealings with professional agencies validate that men are re-victimised by a system that is primarily there to help female victims, Professional agencies that do not recognise that men can also be victims are attributing blame, due to gender and perceptions surrounding domestic abuse. Secondary victimisation then becomes commonplace, “through dealings with domestic violence advocates” (Hines et al. 2007:68). Further corroborating with literature affirming male victims of domestic abuse are ‘overlooked’, ‘invisible’ and ‘insignificant’. Academics are reporting findings that, men who have disclosed ongoing abuse to professionals have been the subject of ridicule and their claims of victimization are frequently dismissed by legal and social agencies (Terrance et al, 2011: 210; Migliaccio, 2001: 217; Hines et al, 2007: 69).

### **Gender Stereotypes**

- This leads onto another recurring theme, presenting the physical size of a male in relation to a female and the advantages this power dynamic represents. “The male’s situation is viewed as less serious than that of a female...The male victim should be in a position to defend/remove himself” (Terrance et al, 2011: 215). The preconceived ideology that the physical size eradicates victimisation for males and prevents serious injuries is heavily debated in literature, this suggests that, the male’s physical strength prevents from serious physical harm. Likewise, because of greater size and strength, men do not need assistance during physical encounters with female partners (Pagelow, 1985:186; Harway et al, 1997: 29). However, in the

academic article, '*A Measure of Court Response to Requests for Protection*' it is explicitly demonstrated that, "Physical strength of the victim is inconsequential". This article further reports, "the fact that men are usually bigger and stronger than their partners, may make them less susceptible to injury but does not make them less likely to be domestic violence victims" (Basile, 2005: 171). Corroborating with Basile, McCarrick et al (2016:203), refers to the disbelief that men can be victims of domestic abuse because, "men are, on average, bigger, stronger and more skilled at fighting than women". However, as previously discussed, research suggests that women tend to use weapons and forms of assault that do not need physical strength like psychological abuse (Drijber et al, 2013: 173; Bernardino, 2016:620). Migliaccio (2001:212), further corroborates with, "physical differences nevertheless, do not account for psychological abuse incurred, which can be more damaging than physical abuse".

## **Masculinity**

- Equally important, although there is no denying that generally, the physical size and strength of a male in comparison to a female is greater. This size difference affects the, *identity* of an abused male, it affects with the ideology of masculinity, "victimisation may be so deeply female... that a man who is victimised is literally feminised" (Howard et al, 1996:113). Therefore, in an, "attempt to refrain from being emasculated, a man who has been abused may refrain from expressing his fears" (Migliaccio,2002:31). Moreover, research further reveals that, men do not class themselves as victims, they do not use

the word '*victim*' in describing the abuse they have suffered. This can be explained further by self-image and masculinity, in admitting they are victims of female perpetrated abuse is equivalent to admitting they are less manly. "Stereotypes associated with men can deter them from coming forward as victims of female perpetrated abuse" Cook, 2009, cited in (McCarrick et al, 2016:204).

To conclude, significant themes and sub-themes are presenting within the literature, which has focused on and explored female perpetrated violence. The lack of research, the perception of domestic abuse being a gendered crime, the response from professional agencies alongside gender stereotypes and masculinity are all contributing factors in males failing to disclose domestic abuse. These themes and sub-themes will be explored fully within the results and discussion chapters of this dissertation.

## **Methodology**

## **Design**

The aim of the research was to explore the reasons why men were failing to report being victims of domestic abuse. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, a qualitative methodology was undertaken, based on an interpretivist approach. Simply put, explaining ‘how’ and ‘why’ a specific behaviour is present in a particular context. Qualitative research by nature, explores underlying reasons, motives and opinions and looks at the person as a whole. “Concerned with understanding human behaviour from the informant’s perspective” (Minichiello, 1990:9). I chose qualitative methods over quantitative methods as I believe my research would develop more understanding with qualitative methods, as opposed to quantitative data through numerical measurements and statistical analyses. The data collection originated from two in-depth interviews with participants who work with male victims of domestic abuse.

Although I have been influenced by my own experiences, which is the reason this topic was chosen, I have engaged reflexively with the qualitative research to ensure this did not adversely impact on the data.

## **Procedure**

I initially approached via an email, two charitable organisations who work and support male victims of domestic abuse. I included within the email an information and consent form and a little bit about myself and why I was interested in this topic for my dissertation.

Recorded telephone interviews were the most practical way to conduct the interviews, as one charity was based in Somerset and another in Scotland. “It is much cheaper to conduct a qualitative interview by telephone” (Bryman, 2012: 488). My preference was to have a telephone conversation with the individuals rather than just an email questionnaire, as I felt it would be easier to explore topics as they arose. “Face-to face and telephone interviewers are better able than online interviewers to maintain rapport with respondents” (Bryman, 2012: 668). For my interview guide, I decided on a semi-structured approach. “Unlike the interview schedule, the guide is not fixed and predetermined” (Robert-Holmes, 2014: 133). This would allow for more flexibility during discussions should an interesting topic arise. “Questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees” (Bryman, 2012: 471).

Prior to the interviews, I had downloaded an app called ‘irec’ to my iPhone, which claimed to record and transcribed conversations via a three-way phone call, set up via the app. The app came with a monthly subscription fee, but this allowed the facility to email and save the recordings, which other similar apps did not allow. I practiced recording with the app thoroughly before calling the participants to ensure the app worked correctly. The recording part of the app worked well, and the conversation is clear, and this has aided thoroughly in exploring the dialogue. “It permits repeated examinations of the interviewees answers” (Bryman, 2012: 482).

## Participants

I received two responses, one from Mankind Initiative who are the largest organisation in England dealing with only male victims. Mark Brooks, Chairman of Mankind replied to my email including his telephone number, and we arranged to have a conversation later-on that evening. Likewise, a female helpline operator from AMIS (Abused Men in Scotland) which is a charity in Scotland providing a helpline for male victims of abuse, replied to my email and offered a telephone interview at a mutually convenient time. I was pleased that there was a response from both genders although this was by chance. This triangulation reduced the potential for a gendered bias.

Both professionals were happy to talk at length about their views and experiences. An approximate ten-minute phone conversation with Mark Brooks took place as arranged. Mark contributed with some of his views and experiences surrounding the under-reporting of male domestic violence. However, the quality of the phone line was quite temperamental and eventually the call disconnected. Mark kindly followed up with an email detailing all the reasons he felt men did not disclose abuse which allowed me to have primary qualitative data to analyse.

The conversation with the helpline operator for AMIS lasted approximately fifteen minutes and was recorded. The helpline worker wished to remain anonymous within this dissertation but was happy to divulge the reasons she felt why men did not disclose being victims. The conversation was informative and flowed well and this was due to the fact that I was able to probe further as topics arose naturally.

## **Analysis**

I studied my qualitative data by way of thematic analysis, after transcribing and coding both telephone conversations along with the email received. The transcribed interviews were annotated, and colour coded for easy reference. I assigned codes to particular quotes and then grouped the quotes to form themes within the data. Many themes became apparent, these all highlight and provide answers to my research question, correlating alongside results obtained from analysing journal articles surrounding the male domestic abuse topic.

To supplement the two phone calls, I also sourced twenty academic journals. The journals were located via google scholar, I narrowed the fields further by adding parameters to the database to specifically locate journals whose content was relevant to male victims. I thematically analysed the journals to identify any themes or patterns running throughout. This was combined with further reading of relevant policies, books and case studies to corroborate these emerging patterns. After fully immersing myself into the data, many themes became apparent. These all highlight and provide answers to my research question, correlating alongside results obtained from analysing journal articles surrounding the male domestic abuse topic.

## **Limitations**

Due to the sensitive nature of the domestic abuse topic it has not been possible to obtain primary data from men who have experienced abuse first hand. Although this is understandable, my research would benefit from talking to male victims on a face-to-face basis and further validate the professional's opinions on why they believe these men do not report domestic abuse.

The transcribing part of the recording app failed to recognise the Scottish accent correctly and the transcribed interview is different to what was discussed. This could be because, “software needs to be trained to recognize a voice” (Bryman, 2012: 483). I was fortunate to have the original recording to transcribe manually, and that I had not just relied on the automatic transcription.

### **Ethical Considerations**

I applied for ethical clearance from the University of Warwick in the early stages of the research, in the instance that if the questions I wanted to ask posed any problems they could be adjusted within the time frame required and my proposal was ethically approved prior to contacting the charities. Previously, I had already examined and researched findings within this subject and found there are significant gaps in this particular research. I discussed the idea with my supervisor due to the sensitivity of the subject and carefully considered the questions that I would include to enable me to obtain the answers and data I was hoping to receive.

On initial contact, I enquired if I could possibly record the interviews and both participants agreed to this. I enquired if they would sign the emailed consent form and return it to myself and they agreed. I further explained that any information given would remain confidential and would only be shared between myself and my research tutor, who would also have access to the recordings and emails. There were no questions raised from the participants asking whether their data was able to be withdrawn after they had submitted their replies. This would have been possible though and I would have altered the results accordingly. I did have a follow -up email



from the participant at AMIS who wanted to clarify that I had understood her request that she remained anonymous.

Mark Brooks, Chairman of Mankind was happy to be quoted personally and requested once my dissertation had been graded that he would like to see a copy and if possible post this onto his website along with the other research projects he already has in place.

## Findings and Discussion

After analysis of the interviews and academic journals. Several themes and sub-themes were identified: -

- The perception of domestic abuse being a gendered crime.
- Lack of awareness and resources available for male victims.
- Professional agency responses: -
  - The lack of recognition and disbelief
  - Secondary re-victimisation
  - Counter-allegations
  - Child contact and custody
- Gender stereotypes: -
  - Masculinity and shame/stigma
  - Physical size difference between males and females

These themes and sub-themes will be presented initially, by using verbatim quotes from the two participants: -

**AMIS** - A Female Helpline Operator for Abused Men in Scotland

**MB** - Mark Brooks, Chairman of Mankind Initiative

## The perception of domestic abuse being a gendered crime.

**AMIS** - *“Domestic abuse has become gendered because generally especially media and posters and leaflets, all the things we see in the public eye are very much focused on women. I mean the posters are pink, you know the colour schemes they are all for women*

*There is the feminist perspective who generally state men are the perpetrators and women are the victims. I think feminists - generally, look at the patriarchy and how the masculine society contributes to the gender base violence”.*

**MB** - *“Those who hold an ideological view of domestic abuse and believe that domestic abuse is an expression of differentials in the power or male and female gender. In effect, that domestic abuse is a gendered crime. This is wrong domestic abuse is a crime that is influenced by gender but not driven by it. Such an ideological view that is strongly held minimises the existence of male victims and drives society’s lack of recognition”.*

*“Society’s view of domestic abuse remains old fashioned and exclusionary, so the current belief system remains that only women can be victims of domestic abuse and only men can commit it. This minimises male victims (in same sex and heterosexual relationships) Women in same sex relationships and those who are trans or non-binary”.*

This is corroborated further with findings from Terrance et al, (2011:209) substantiating that ‘a domestic abuse victim has emerged within a gendered framework...and domestic abuse has been defined within a heterosexual context’. With a perceived ideology that males are the aggressors and females the victims, this gender paradigm has been recognised to influence society as a whole. This gendered perception has also been discussed in the context of advertising, whereby posters are pink, advertisements show only women bruised and in need of help. Women only charities are the monopoly in the domestic abuse arena, this gives a further perception that domestic abuse effects only women.

There is much debate over the terminology and the awareness surrounding the domestic abuse topic, the traditional feminist standpoint is not gender inclusive and Machado et al (2016:521), states there is a need for “change in victim’s services...with gender inclusive campaigns and responses...along with a movement away from traditional feminist perspectives”. This perception of a gendered crime from a feminist perspective whereby males are overwhelmingly the perpetrators has some contradictions - patriarchy and power and male socialisation into male entitlement are, from a feminist approach, the reasons behind domestic abuse in an intimate relationship. This is inconsistent with rates of domestic abuse within same-sex relationships, which are significantly higher than heterosexual relationships (Barrett et al, 2013: 7; Dutton, 2007: 4). This contradiction is further critiqued by Worthen et al (2005: 306). As explained, gender has been found to influence the attribution of responsibility, with the male held responsible. Results however were obtained from an experiment in which same-sex couples and a male vs female couple depicted an abusive interaction and attribution of blame was recorded. The results from the same-sex couple were inconclusive yet, results from male vs female interaction were conclusive in apportion of blame. This is further validated by Migliaccio (2002: 30) “patriarchy fails to explain violence in same-sex relationships”. However, studies show that abusive patterns contain substantial comparisons within heterosexual and same-sex relationships. This would infer that gender is not a factor in all domestic abuse incidents. There are several areas for concern with this train of thought, not only is the assumption then made in all heterosexual relationships that the male can be the only violent partner, this also seeks to minimise domestic abuse in same-sex relationships. By perceiving that heterosexual males are more violent than homosexual males, excludes and isolates that community. Likewise, to assume

that females are non-violent eliminates lesbian couples from domestic abuse. “The feminist community are resistant to discussing lesbian domestic abuse... Gender and power were the main factors in this theory; therefore, lesbian victimisation was considered both impossible because of the inconsistency due to the absence of a man in the equation” (Ristock et al, 2005:3). This ideology could influence and undermine all the important work done by feminists historically, by ensuring male perpetrated violence is recognised whilst the risk of minimising and ignoring domestic abuse in LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) relationships and communities is heightened. Research has demonstrated this is not the case and therefore further validates domestic abuse should be gender-inclusive and not gender bias.

As previously discussed, there is a gender pattern within the literature, signifying domestic abuse is viewed unanimously as male perpetrated towards females. Walby et al (2017:28) addresses the inequality within the research and literature available and determines the difficulty in obtaining accurate comparisons of male or female violence when there is very little evidence of female perpetrated violence available to evaluate. There are a few insightful qualitative research interviews, notably Allen-Collinson (2009), Migliaccio (2002) and McCarrick et al (2005). This qualitative research is essential to marginalized groups in society such as male victims, as they give a perspective of the scale of abuse suffered and also encourage further research.

## **Lack of awareness and resources.**

**AMIS** - *“There is a lack of awareness - So a lot of our callers on the helpline will phone and say, this is happening to me and will go on and explain their story and will then go on and say, Is this abuse? Or am I just very sensitive?”*

*There are some refuges although there are very very few. So, we have one here in Scotland, where we can have one man and up to two children, we actually had one man recently who had three children, but one of the children was really small so she was actually staying in the same room as him. You know, and I would say if all the men that were experiencing incidents of domestic abuse were coming forward and wanted to leave that relationship and take the children with them, I think there would never be enough spaces to accommodate that need”.*

**MB** - *“By minimising the existence of male victims, drives society’s lack of recognition. This leads men not having confidence in coming forward, not seeing few awareness campaigns and also not having local services.”*

This theme can also be linked with the gendered perception somewhat, where support services are predominantly aimed at females and the availability for male victims are scarce. This overwhelming lack of resources is a factor in under-reporting. For example, if a male wanted to leave an abusive relationship and take the children with him as a safeguarding issue, there are very few refuges available in Scotland and England which would be able to accommodate the male. Furthermore, domestic abuse support services are not equipped to help male victims and, in some cases have blatantly refused or laughed when a male has called asking for help (Migliaccio, 2001:217; Machado, 2015:521; Hines,2007: 71).

The majority of support services are primarily set up for women and children and training for domestic abuse awareness is focused solely on this basis. Bernadino et al (2016:621) recommends professionals should be trained to recognise male victims

and further states, educational campaigns should be implemented in developing awareness for society as a whole. Hines (2007:71) further adds, results show a system that has been set up to help female victims of domestic abuse is unavailable to half the population. This links with Dutton (2007: 14), whose findings revealed not only were professionals lacking empathy conversely, “emergency clinics ask females not males about potential domestic abuse origins for injuries” when they are presented with a patient. Much of the available research corroborates the lack of awareness and support available and the impact this has on male victims, leaving them isolated and without support. Almost all pragmatic interventions are primarily designed to deal with male violence against a female partner. Further highlighted in the ‘interview responses’, “males, due to this lack of awareness even question themselves as to whether they are suffering from domestic abuse or are they just being *sensitive*” (AMIS).

#### **Professional agency responses: -**

##### **A lack of recognition and disbelief**

*AMIS - “I think a lot of our clients have had negative experiences, telling other services that they have been a victim and looking for help from police or from various other kind of public services and I think that negative experience kinds of impacts that, as I think it takes a lot for a man to go out and search help in the first place. But then if that first experience and this has got to be the same for women - you know, if you have an issue and your kind of working up the courage to approach somebody and that person just brushes you off that’s obviously going to have an impact. You might not want to reach out for help again because that first experience has been so negative” “I think that there is the perception that men are the real perpetrators so there is like a , I wouldn’t even say not being believed, I think there is a general scepticism and I think that general scepticism has a huge impact when a man presents”*

**MB** - *“This is made worse by a fear that they will be ridiculed, laughed at and not be taken seriously if they do come forward - a situation that still happens albeit less than it was. This used to be a real problem where men were not believed and in fact often mocked when they reported. This still happens in pocket’s but not as endemic as it used to be. The police are so much better these days”.*

Stereotypical gender perceptions may lead to scepticism, tactlessness and ridicule as demonstrated in the available literature, it would seem common practice to ‘laugh’ at a male who presents as a victim of domestic abuse. Historically this practice was customary, a husband, in 18<sup>th</sup> Century France, who permitted his wife to hit him was made to ride around his village, in a ridiculous outfit, facing backwards on a donkey whilst holding the donkey’s tail (Thomas, 2001:176). A similar fate held to Parisian males, who had to kiss a large set of ribboned horns (Shorter, 1975: 97). In England, men who were victims of domestic abuse at the hands of their wives were ‘strapped to a cart and paraded through the booing crowds’ (Sussman et al, 1988:727). This validates that male victims are perceived by society in general ‘not as serious’ as female victims (Worthen et al, 2005: 306; Terrance et al, 2011: 208; McHugh et al, 2006: 130) and a male who ‘allows’ a female to abuse him is ridiculed, the lack of disbelief and recognition from all professional agencies can be seen throughout history and this is heavily acknowledged within the literature and still current and perhaps an indicator of the lack of research into male victims of abuse. This professional bias is not exclusive to heterosexual relationships, it also includes same-sex relationships for example, the police are less likely to arrest perpetrators who do not conform to the male/female stereotype (Sellau et al, 2005:364).



## **Secondary Re-Victimisation**

The response from professional organisations such as, social services, children's services and the police historically has been one of disbelief and unapproachability. Drijber (2012: 176), reported, male victims found the police unhelpful and refused to co-operate when they wanted to report abuse. Other similar findings are transparent when males have reported abuse to professional agencies, in addition to ridicule many males are then accused of being the 'real perpetrator' and conversely have been referred to a 'male perpetrator programme' (Machado, 2016: 14). Likewise, male victims were more likely to be arrested when police were called to a domestic violence disturbance (Worthen et al, 2005: 306; Migliaccio, 2002: 35; McCarrick et al, 2016: 204). This has led to under-reporting of abuse suffered as many males are secondary victimised when faced with ridicule or disbelief. An awareness that the male, could be the victim is a slow working progress and many assume the male is the perpetrator and to blame for violence within the relationship.

### **Counter-allegations.**

*AMIS - "We have had quite a few instances where men, well either one of them phoned the police and as soon as the police came to the house and then the man was arrested and I always try to understand it from the police perspective as well, because it is a difficult job as a police officer trying to pick the person who could pose the most risk"*

*MB - "This is a continuing but diminishing problem especially when gender stereotypes can come into play from the police - where some will automatically believe that a woman cannot be a perpetrator. It is diminishing because the police have got a whole lot better at looking at the evidence in front of them rather than falling back onto any cognitive bias. So, the police are doing better than they used to but some way to go still".*

Counter allegations were a recurring topic throughout the research with many males not only fearing false allegations and culpability, which ultimately could lead to an

arrest, but the complications further faced surrounding child contact and custody when allegations are made. The implications could mean many innocent males would be unable to have access to their children if they were deemed violent, with professionals making that snap judgement due to gender. Children are in fact then left in the care of the real perpetrator and are at risk. There is a suggestion that females are manipulating a system which predominately aims to keep a mother and child together (Hines, 2007: 67). This response again, appears to be declining with professionals, especially the police and courts who are looking at the wider picture, yet it is still a factor in the failures to report. This leads on to: -

### **Child Contact and Custody Inequality**

Basile (2005: 178) has researched at length surrounding the inequality in child contact and custody, with none of the males in his study (who had made allegations of domestic abuse) being able to secure custody of their children. This is then addressed further with the statement of “false claims of domestic abuse are sometimes warged to secure custody of children” (Basile,2005: 178). This typical gender bias emerges throughout the available literature and further validates male’s fears when deciding to report domestic abuse. Drijber (2012:175) states, “children were often used as means of power...victims felt powerless out of fear of losing contact”. The quantitative statistics in Drijbers study demonstrates, 42% of male victims claimed, the fear of losing contact with children stopped them reporting abuse to the police (Drijber, 2012: 175).

### **Gender stereotypes - Ideology of masculinity and the shame/stigma which prevents disclosure**

**AMIS** - *“Men - when asked if they are a victim of domestic abuse - many men do not associate with the term victim, so I think men don’t necessarily think that it’s a man’s issue. It’s something that men can’t experience. So, I think that it’s the stigma, but I also think there is a lack of awareness that it can happen to men”.*

**MB** - *“One of the reasons men do not report being victims of domestic abuse is around masculinity and the sense of shame, damaged pride and humiliation that they feel as being a victim undermines their understanding of what it means to be a man - strong, a protector and independent”.*

Social norms historically have determined how male and females behave, and “gender stereotyping is a dominant force within male socialization’ (McCarrick, 2015:204). The upbringings people have influences ideas and behaviours, for example, males do not cry, males are strong and the protector, contrasting with females are submissive, feminine and the caregiver. These stereotypes impact on how domestic abuse victims are perceived, these are consistent with social norms and female victims are seemingly classed as more vulnerable. Although these stereotypes are changing throughout time, they are still very much underlying in many households globally, and this patriarchal male image is ingrained through society. Males who have been subjected to domestic abuse by a female, once they are branded victims would struggle to display any masculine traits, as their masculinity is called into question, this leads them to ‘feel less of a man’, alongside the hegemonic masculinity characteristic of “asking for help is seen as a weakness” (Magliaccio, 2001: 213). this in turn is a reason why men do not report abuse. Barkhuezin et.al (2001: 1) further concludes that, *“This dilemma of acceptable behaviour is exacerbated by society’s view of the male as the stronger sex. It is difficult for society to see the male in the context of a victim, especially if the female is the perpetrator”* This relates with the next sub-theme: -

**A male cannot be a victim due to his physical size and strength in comparison to a female.**

*AMIS - "We have quite a lot of clients who/they say, if I would try and defend myself I would probably be stronger than her, but I would never lay a hand on a woman because I have been raised and told that as a man, you never lay a hand on a woman. So, there is a lot of men out there who might be stronger than a woman in theory, but they just stand there and let it happen".*

*"There is this perception that men pose more risk because they are physically stronger, and it is quite interesting because we had cases where, the woman who was the abusive partner, was a police officer or had been trained in martial arts or something and these are not things that you would see from the outside looking at the couple... Looking in from the outside, it is easy to say that a man would be stronger".*

There is a vast amount of research exploring this theory with many opinions and contradictory responses, the gender stereotypes of males being physically larger and stronger is generally undeniable and this casts doubt when abuse is disclosed. Questions are asked, how, can a woman physically cause that damage? Pagelow (1985:186) approaches from a feminist perspective and states, given the greater size and weight of a male on average to a female, it is assumed sufficient to protect themselves from serious harm. This is validated by Dobash et al (2004: 329), who asks how you can equate a 'slap' delivered by a slight female with the 'slap' of a heavily built male. McCarrick et al (2015: 203) explores this point further, with males believed to be more skilled at fighting than women, this makes them less vulnerable to violence perpetrated by a female. As mentioned before Dobash et al, refers to the 'asymmetry' in domestic abuse between the sexes, and the nature of the act must be taken into context for abuse to be defined. This suggests that a small female is not capable of causing pain to a large male.

However, this is refuted by Basile (2005:171) Physical strength of the victim is inconsequential...this does not make them less susceptible to injury. Research has

proven that males do not report abuse unless there is a serious physical injury which requires medical attention as discussed previously, further validating Bernadino (2016:621) and Drijber (2012:176) who claim females frequently use weapons to attack. Allen-Collins (2009:16) agrees, potentially lethal weapons are used as 'equalizers.'

### **The context of the female violence, was the female acting in self-defence?**

**AMIS** - *“A lot of women attack partners in their sleep or we had a client recently who wasn't allowed, so she basically took off the lock on the door, so when he went to the bathroom, he couldn't actually lock the door, so she could just attack him whilst he was on the toilet, while he was in the shower, so in all the situations so where it would be more difficult to defend himself because he was being surprised at a vulnerable time”*

**MB** - *“This is a nonsense with no evidential research and is an ideological view held by those who deliberately do not wish to acknowledge that women can be violent towards their male partners. It is a very dangerous view to hold and propagate as it will minimise the professional, statutory and societal responses to male victims placing them all under suspicion of not telling the truth. It places them and their children at greater risk too, and of course, it does not explain how some women in same sex relationships are victims from their partners.*

*Given that c400,000 men state they are victims of partner abuse, many of whom will be victims of violence from a female partner (or ex), are the proponents of that view really saying all these men are the instigators?”*

The context of the violence is a frequent paradigm in this research and needs careful consideration, there is no doubt that females are capable of violence but in what context, is a female using abuse or a weapon in self-defence? Certainly, (Hamberger et al 2015: 715; Pagelow, 1985: 187, Dobash 2004: 345), would agree. As Dobash, points out, a lifetime of abuse suffered is considered the same as one push, in self-reporting scales which equates equal responsibility to both male and females. One

familiar critique from all respective sides are the usage of the Conflict Tactic Scales, which are the widely used domestic abuse self-reported scales. These are considered to be unreliable and inadequate in measurements (McHugh, 2006: 130). Yet, are a source of data for many domestic abuse studies, resulting in findings which equate domestic abuse equally perpetrated between the sexes.

Nevertheless, this provokes a strong reaction when female perpetrated violence is justified through self-defence. Not only does this minimise male victims and their experiences, it is also seen to influence the police and courts. Sarantakos, (2004: 278) argues, this is a justification and rationale for violent females who are inflicting abuse, and the police are more likely to believe an explanation of self-defence from a female. Yet, Dutton (2007:17) points out “If a man uses self-defence in an argument they are disbelieved by the police”. Although the research appears to reveal a gender bias towards male’s, there is one study which refutes this claim. Seelau et al (2005) conducted research to obtain perceptions surrounding gender-role stereotypes within the framework of heterosexual, gay and lesbian domestic abuse. Their findings suggested that although society appear to class male against female violence as ‘the worst’ type of abuse, the legal statistics did not corroborate. “Male perpetrators were not, however, more likely to receive a guilty verdict or a harsher sentence” (Seelau et al, 2005: 369). They further establish that; female perpetrators are treated in an equal manner in respect of outcomes. However, this is unique in its findings, with most literature stating conflicting outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

The research undertaken has highlighted different aspects of domestic abuse that needs careful consideration. Without a shadow of doubt there is a gender bias towards male perpetrated violence and rightly so, and this study does not attempt in any way to minimise the horrific abuse females suffer at the hands of male

perpetrators on a daily basis. However, domestic abuse is at a pandemic scale globally and this is recognised more so than ever before. This study attempts to shed light on male victims who are the overlooked and invisible victims of domestic abuse, whether that is within a heterosexual or a same-sex relationship.

The perception that domestic abuse is a gendered crime, I believe is conclusive from the research analysed so far, everything encompassing the topic is aimed towards females, from advertising, to the colour pink used for signs and posters, to the lack of support services available. The lack of available literature and research for male victims in comparison to female victims further demonstrates this is not a topic that has a high awareness associated with it. This further acknowledges that this is an invisible crime, which needs addressing not only in academia but in society as a whole.

There is confusion surrounding the statistics with male and female perpetrated abuse, with much of the literature claiming that the abuse is male perpetrated and the only reason females would be abusive is in the sphere of self-defence. This is refuted by others as discussed previously, who state the abuse is equally perpetrated and females are as violent as men, this is then proven by the high rates of domestic violence reported within lesbian relationships. This confusion in statistics however, is indicative of the complexities surrounding domestic abuse.

Nevertheless, I agree with Dobash et al (2004) and Walby et al (2017) whereby, the context of the abuse needs clarifying, to ensure reported statistics are accurate for all sexes, the outdated and confusing, widely used conflict tactics scale (CTS), are not an accurate representative of abuse and are failing both male and females in their usage. Walby et al (2017: 12), have published an article in respect of male and



female violence which fully explores the CTS, and the difficulty in measuring abuse by recording the 'act' alone rather than the 'act and harm' which distorts the figures, making comparing male and female abuse within a relationship impossible. Furthermore, a reliance on the CTS which only focuses on violent acts within a relationship and omits psychological, emotional abuse and coercive control omits a significant portion of harmful abuse suffered within relationships.

There is substantial evidence that a gender-inclusive framework is crucial, combined with resources and advertising aimed not just at females, but also males and members of the LGBT communities who are marginalized and overlooked in the domestic abuse arena. The abuse suffered should not be defined as gendered, abuse is a human problem and not one of gender as discussed previously, this just seeks to minimise marginalised groups within society. Feminist proponents who have focused solely on domestic abuse being male perpetrated are jeopardising the safety of females who are in same-sex relationships and omitting them from the domestic abuse arena. A gender-based framework could counteract this, whilst at the same time being inclusive of, females, females in same-sex relationships, heterosexual males and males who are in same-sex relationships.

As previously discussed by many academics, a fully inclusive awareness training programme should be mandatory, specifically within medical services professions, to enable a consciousness that anyone presenting with an injury irrespective of gender, could be a victim of domestic abuse and should be treated equal to a female presenting with a suspected domestic abuse injury. Likewise, all legal professions to ensure impartiality when domestic abuse is reported as a crime, and not to assume automatically that the female is the victim and the male is the perpetrator.

Furthermore, gender-inclusive awareness training will ensure, attitudes towards male victims can be more professional and empathetic and if counter-allegations or justifications of self-defence are proposed, these can be perceived unbiasedly. The idea that every male victim has been attacked in only a self-defence context is a dangerous approach to take, this leaves little options for males in an abusive relationship to report abuse or to receive help and potentially dire consequences for any children within these relationships, as research has clearly demonstrated that, only in the most severe of circumstances, are males treated equally in child custody proceedings.

With the results demonstrating quite clearly that the physical size of a male compared to a female is a significant factor in whether professionals believe abuse has happened, this is quite a difficult problem to overcome. Generally, a male's physical construction is larger than a female's, but the explanations that have critiqued this train of thought for example, women are more prone to using a weapon to equalise the size difference, and the association towards 'social norms' and an upbringing in where, males have been 'socialised' that to hit a female is deeply against their values, is plausible. Notwithstanding, no matter what your physical stature it is not acceptable to physically assault anyone.

Recommendations in moving forward would be an awareness campaign to include all genders, from all walks of life, to enable everyone to feel confident and secure in reporting domestic abuse to professionals, which perhaps may help with the stigma and shame, males have verbalised when reporting abuse. The secondary victimisation and disbelief that transpires when males disclose abuse to friends, family and professionals appears to be one of the main reasons why males do not

divulge abuse. To be ridiculed for being a victim of abuse is appalling and only heightens to isolate victims further.

Advertisements and posters need to be displayed in male/female/gender-inclusive environments, and males should have their own specialised resources and support services equivalent to female support services. Education and training around gender-inclusive practices should be mandatory and although there are currently some changes within laws, and some current policies are stating they are now gender-inclusive for example, (NICE) this needs promoting on a global scale and throughout all arenas. For example, education establishments, workplaces, medical and legal professions. With more recognition and acknowledgement that domestic abuse affects both males and females, hopefully this could lead to the victim in the relationship feeling confident that in reporting any abuse suffered, they will be believed and obtaining the help and support needed.

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## **Appendix A**

**Project title: Understanding the reasons why men do not report being victims of domestic abuse.**

**Combined Information Sheet and Consent Form**

Thank you for having the interest and taking the time to read this information sheet.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research focusing on 'The reasons why men do not report domestic abuse'. This research will contribute to a dissertation as part of a BA (hons) in Health and Social Policy, at the University of Warwick.

Firstly, it is important that you know why the research is being carried out, and what the study will involve for you should you decide to take part.

## **Background**

The study will explore:

- The reasons why men do not report domestic abuse.
- The lack of resources available for male victims of abuse.
- Whether there is a gender bias from society regarding the attribution of domestic abuse.
- Response from legal professions and other agencies when men disclose being victims of domestic abuse.

The research will raise awareness surrounding male victims of domestic violence and why men do not report being victims. How society and legal agencies perceive, and attribute blame accordingly.

## **What is involved in taking part?**

You will be asked to give your professional opinions via either a questionnaire or telephone conversation. The questions be open and will be in relation to the study.

You may be asked to complete a face-to-face interview with me if convenient. The interview will probably take about 30 minutes depending on how much you want to say. If you agree, I will record the discussion, but there will be no information on the tape that will identify you. You can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time, or for the interview to stop without giving a reason.



I will take responsibility to safeguard your mental and physical well-being and personal privacy whilst participating in the survey.

### **How were you selected?**

My dissertation focuses on male victims of domestic abuse. I have contacted professionals who work with the victims to obtain their opinions on the key themes my research has revealed.

### **What happens to the information you give?**

All the information will be treated confidentially. At the end of the study, the data and consent forms will be stored for 6 years in the Centre for Lifelong Learning. A copy of the dissertation/research project will be sent to the University of Warwick for examination and storage purposes. It will be destroyed after 10 years. I may also make a further copy available to the University for public use.

A copy of my dissertation/research project can be made available for you to view. Please contact me if you would like to do this. Some of the data you supply may later appear in additional publications such as academic articles. If this is the case, all such results will be strictly anonymous.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in the study. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

You may contact me, Toni Louise Holt on: 07739677610 or at [T.Holt.3@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:T.Holt.3@warwick.ac.uk)

This project has been subject to ethical review, according to the procedures specified by the University, and allowed to proceed.

I confirm that I will keep the research under review, and report to the University on any ethical problems or risks arising which were not at first apparent.

### **Academic contact at the University of Warwick**

In the event of any queries (except complaints) please contact:

Emma Craddock (e.craddock@warwick.ac.uk)  
Centre for Lifelong Learning  
Westwood Campus  
University of Warwick  
Coventry  
CV4 7AL

### **Complaints**

Should anyone have any complaints relating to a study conducted at the University or by University's employees or students, please contact:

Director of Delivery Assurance  
Registrar's Office

University House

University of Warwick

Coventry

CV4 8UW

More information:

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance\\_ethics/complaints\\_procedure/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/complaints_procedure/)

[Consent Form](#)

1. I have read and received from **Toni Louise Holt** the above Information Sheet relating to the following project: **Understanding the reasons why men do not report being victims of domestic abuse.**
2. I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me and been given the opportunity to ask any questions which have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.
3. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time, and that this will be without detriment to any services I may be receiving or may receive in the future.
4. This project has been subject to ethical review, according to the procedures specified by the University and has been allowed to proceed.
5. I have received a copy of this combined Consent Form and Information Sheet.
6. I confirm that my participation shall not cause me abnormal anxiety, stress or harm or reveal issues directly relating to the harm of others.
7. I confirm that I do not occupy any of the following categories (child under 16 years of age; someone with learning difficulties; someone whose capacity to consent may be impaired).

Name:

Signed:

Date:

**Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL)**  
**Ethical Approval Policy for Student Research**

## **1. Background**

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Sub-committee (HSSREC) is responsible for overseeing departmental ethical review policies and procedures (see link below). All research undertaken by students and staff within CLL must align with the University policies (see links below) and the CLL policy. This revised CLL policy replaces the previous one agreed with HSSREC in 2009 and is effective from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014 onwards.

## **2. Scope**

There are separate procedures for staff and students and this policy focuses on the latter group. The process described below relates solely to all *designated* CLL students i.e. students enrolled on PhD/MPhil/MRes or any PGT/UG module specifying research activity in the module title and aims (e.g. Dissertation; Research Methods; Research Project or Research Placement). It is recognised, however, that a wide range of student coursework for other taught modules can entail ethical considerations (e.g. contact with people; implications for others) and consequently all students within CLL are required to consider ethical implications and the principles contained within the University Code of Practice (see link below) and reflect this in their work.

## **3. Research Ethics Approval Form (REAF)**

All designated CLL students (Section 2) are required to obtain ethical approval using the Research Ethics Approval Form (REAF) and the process described below (Section 11). This must be done in *all* cases before moving to the active research phase (e.g. before any participant recruitment or fieldwork commences).

## **4. Research not involving direct participants (e.g. literature review; documentary analysis)**

The REAF can be approved by the Supervisor only.

## **5. Research involving direct participants (e.g. surveys; interviews)**

The REAF must be approved by a member of staff in addition to the Supervisor. This person must be a member of the CLL Research Ethics Committee (CLLREC).

## **6. UG/PGT students**

Ethical approval should be formally considered when the student's completed research proposal is submitted. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students are usually expected to undertake research projects that are characterised by common and straightforward ethical issues. Course Directors should give guidance on the scope and range of research strategies that may be pursued by students within individual courses.

## **7. PGR students**

Ethical approval should be formally considered during the upgrade process.

## **8. Referral to CLL Research Director/HSSREC**

Students whose research entails non-straightforward ethical issues must have their proposal considered by the CLL Research Director. Any research which is deemed to require HSSREC approval should then be sent to HSSREC in accordance with the procedures for staff research.

## **9. Timescales for staff**

CLL staff are expected to make an initial decision on research proposals within 20 University working days of receipt in straightforward cases.

## **10. Staff training and membership of the CLL Research Ethics Committee (CLLREC)**

Staff should receive training from the CLL Research Director before engaging in the ethical review of student proposals. All such staff should be familiar with the CLL policy and University policies (see links below). CLLREC membership should include at least one representative from programme/curriculum areas involving designated students (as set out in Section 2).

Membership is also desirable from additional members of staff involved in research supervision. A current list of members is provided on the CLL intranet.

## **11. Process**

The completion of the REAF is intended as an opportunity to discuss ethical issues with the Supervisor and a learning exercise to develop an ethical stance as well as an administrative process to ensure alignment with University and CLL policies. Once submitted in full to the Supervisor, the REAF can be: approved; approved subject to minor amendments; declined; referred to CLLREC; or referred to the CLL Research Director. If any changes are required these should be undertaken by the student in consultation with the Supervisor and the form resubmitted as before. Once a decision has been reached, the REAF should be sent to

Programme Coordinators. Copies of all REAFs must be retained and the outcome recorded in the CLL Ethical Approval Log spreadsheet. A copy of the approved REAF should be sent to the student concerned. The CLL Ethical Approval Log spreadsheet should be submitted to HSSREC annually. The CLL Academic Administrator should liaise with Programme Coordinators and HSSREC to accomplish these steps.

## 12. Complaints

In the event of any complaints relating to research conducted within CLL, the complainant should contact the Deputy Registrar (see link below). All Participant Information Sheets used in research should state the contact details for the Deputy Registrar. The Chief Investigator, research team member, Head of Department or anyone else involved in the study, should *not* be named as the person to contact for complaints. The Participant Information Sheet must also explain to the participant what will happen to any documents and data connected with the research.

## 13. University policies

HSSREC guidelines for student research

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ris/research\\_integrity/researchethicscommittees/hssrec/student](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ris/research_integrity/researchethicscommittees/hssrec/student)

Research involving human participants, material and data: University statement on the ethical conduct of research

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance\\_ethics/research\\_code\\_of\\_practice/humanparticipants\\_material\\_data/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/research_code_of_practice/humanparticipants_material_data/)

Research code of practice

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance\\_ethics/research\\_code\\_of\\_practice/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/research_code_of_practice/)

Research governance and ethics

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance\\_ethics/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/)

Complaints process

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance\\_ethics/complaints\\_procedure](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/complaints_procedure)

## 14. Further guidance

British Educational Research Association (BERA) Guidelines for Educational Research  
<http://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educationalresearch-2011>

British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice

<http://www.britsoc.co.uk/about/equality/statement-of-ethical-practice.aspx>

University of Birmingham/Higher Education Academy guide to dissertations in the social sciences: research ethics

<http://www.socscidiss.bham.ac.uk/ethics.html>

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework

[http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical\\_framework/](http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/)

## **Appendix B**

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**Centre for Lifelong Learning**

## Research Ethics Approval Form (REAF)

The Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL) is committed to ensuring that research follows the highest possible ethical standards. To ensure this, all proposals for research are subject to a process of ethical approval using the Research Ethics Approval Form (REAF).

The REAF should be completed by the student and sent to the Supervisor in the first instance.

Students must not commence active research (e.g. participant recruitment or any fieldwork) until ethical approval has been clearly agreed.

A final copy of the REAF will be sent to the student once ethical review has taken place. This should be submitted along with the final work (e.g. as an appendix).

**STUDENT NUMBER** 1636665

**STUDENT NAME:** Toni Louise Holt

**NAME OF SUPERVISOR:** Dr Anil Awesti

**TITLE OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL:** The reasons why men do not report being victims of domestic abuse.

**1. I confirm my research is consistent with the University Policy and Code of Practice:**

University Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Research

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ris/research\\_integrity/code\\_of\\_practice\\_and\\_policies/statement\\_ethical\\_conduct\\_research/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ris/research_integrity/code_of_practice_and_policies/statement_ethical_conduct_research/)

University Code of Practice for Research

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance\\_ethics/research\\_code\\_of\\_practice](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/research_code_of_practice)

**2. I confirm I have answered the following questions to help me refine consideration of research ethics:**

Does the research involve participants who may be particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? (e.g.: children; people with learning disabilities)

No

55



Will it be necessary for participants to take part without their knowledge/consent at the time? (e.g.:

covert observation of people in non-public places)

No

Will the research involve discussion of sensitive topics with participants? (e.g. drug misuse)

YES - but this won't be with the people who have had direct experience - my aim is to speak to someone who works at an advocacy/information service, who have had experience in dealing with male victims of domestic abuse and their opinions on why men are reluctant in disclosing being victims.

Is it likely that the research would induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in everyday life, either to the researcher or the research participants?

No

I intend to approach

- Mankind UK
- Respect
- Paul Lavelle Foundation
- Victim Support
- Trident
- Men's Advice Line.

With the hope of finding a professional to answer questions regarding the reasons why men disclose they are reluctant to report domestic abuse.

Is it likely that the research will reveal issues directly relating to the harm of others?

No - as above, the men whose experiences I will be examining will have been victims of domestic abuse, but there will be no direct contact and my focus is on the reasons why they do not report/ are reluctant to report being victims.

**If you have answered yes to any of these questions, please discuss the implications with your supervisor.**

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**SECTION A: FOR COMPLETION BY STUDENT**

I confirm that I have fully considered the ethical implications of the proposed research.

Signature of student T. L Holt Date: 5/12/2018

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**SECTION B: FOR COMPLETION BY SUPERVISOR**

Approve

Amendments required

Decline

Refer to CLL Ethics Committee/CLL Research Director

Detail (as required):.....

Supervisor signature: Dr Anil Awesti..... Date: 6/12/18.....

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**SECTION C: FOR COMPLETION BY CLL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE / CLL RESEARCH DIRECTOR (as required)**

Approve

Amendments required

Decline

Refer to HSSREC

Detail (as required):.....

CLL Research Ethics Committee Member name: .....Emma Craddock.....

CLL Research Ethics Committee Member signature: ..... Emma Craddock .....Date:

.....06/12/2018.....

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**SECTION D: FOR COMPLETION BY PROGRAMME COORDINATOR**

Decision logged on spreadsheet X

Copy of form sent to student X

Programme Coordinator name: Tara Cosgrove

Programme Coordinator signature: *T.Cosgrove*      Date: 11/02/2019

**Appendix C**

Emails from Mark Brooks, Chairman of Mankind Initiative

RE: Professional quotes needed for my dissertation, please. - Message (HTML)

File Message Help Tell me what you want to do

Ignore Delete Archive Reply Reply All Forward More Meeting research project To Manager Done OneNote Move Actions Assign Mark Categorize Follow Up Policy Unread Tags Translate Select Read Aloud Zoom

Mon 10/12/2018 20:16  
 Chairman (ManKind Initiative) <chairman@mankind.org.uk>  
 RE: Professional quotes needed for my dissertation, please.

To: Holt, Toni  
 You replied to this message on 10/12/2018 20:28.

Hi Toni

No problem at all

"There are many reasons why men do not report being victims of domestic abuse. One reason is around masculinity and the sense of shame, damaged pride and humiliation that they feel as being a victim undermines their understanding of what it means to be a man – strong, a protector and independent. This is made worse by a fear that they will be ridiculed, laughed at and not be taken serious if they do come forward – a situation that still happens albeit is less than it was. Society's view of domestic abuse remains old fashioned and exclusionary so the currently belief system remains that only women can be victims of domestic abuse and only men can commit it. This minimises male victims (in heterosexual and same-sex relationships), women in same sex relationships and those who are trans or non-binary.

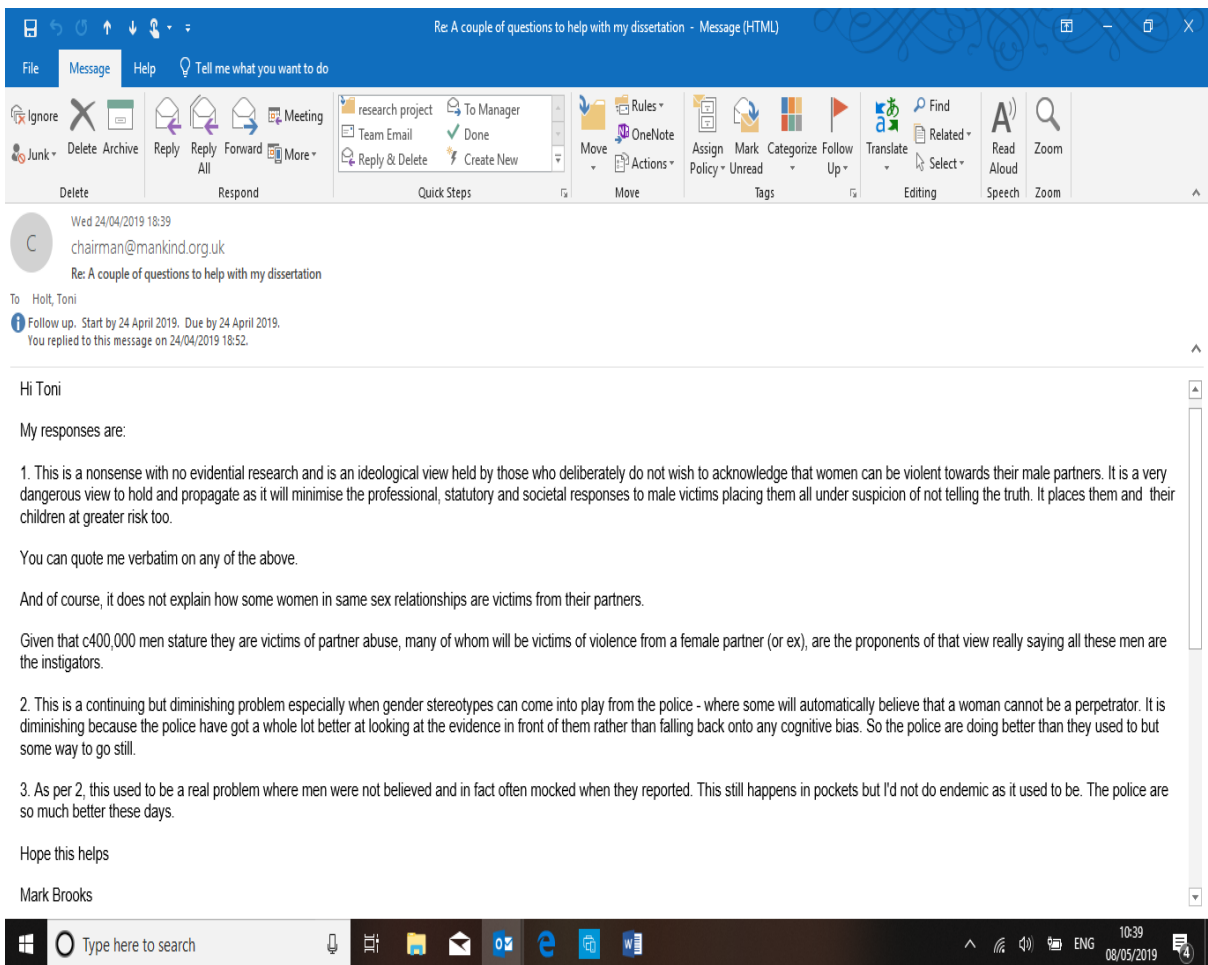
"This has been exacerbated by those who hold an ideological view of domestic abuse and believe that domestic abuse is an expression of differentials in the power of the male and female gender. In effect, that domestic abuse is a gendered crime. This is wrong. Domestic abuse is a crime that influenced by gender but not driven by it. Such an ideological view that is strongly held minimises the existence of male victims and drives society's lack of recognition. This leads men not having confidence in coming forward, not seeing few awareness campaigns and also not having local services."

Hope this helps

Many thanks

Mark  
 Mark Brooks  
 Chairman: The ManKind Initiative  
[www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk)  
 @mankindinit  
 07834 452357  
 Donations can be made [here](#)

Type here to search | ENG 10:41 08/05/2019



## **Appendix D**

Telephone Interview with - Helpline operator for AMIS Abused Men in Scotland on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at 1pm.

TH Hello,

Hello,

TH Is \*\* Available please?

Yes, I am \*\* Hi.

TH Hi \*\* I'm Toni.

Hi, nice to meet you - can you hear me ok?

TH Yes, I can hear you, can you hear me?

TH Ok then, so my dissertation is around why men don't report domestic abuse.

TH So, what are your opinions on this please \*\*?

So, I think there are quite a lot of reasons, but I think one of the biggest ones, is that there is a stigma, around, you know, men being/coming out and saying that they are a victim of domestic abuse -generally especially media and posters and leaflets, all the things we see in the public eye are very much focused on women. I mean the posters are pink, you know the colour schemes they are all for women, so I think men err don't necessarily think that it's a man's issue. It's something that men can't experience. So, I think that it's the stigma, but I also think there is a lack of awareness that it can happen to men.

TH Yes.

So a lot of our callers on the helpline will phone and say, this is happening to me and will go on and explain their story and will then go on and say, Is this abuse? Or am I just very sensitive? So I think there are those two things. The other thing is as well, I think a lot of our clients have had negative experiences, telling other services that they have been a victim and looking for help from police or from various other kind of public services and I think that negative experience kinds of impacts that, as I think it takes a lot for a man to go out and search help in the first place. But then if that first experience and this has got to be the same for women - you know, if you have an issue and your kind of working up the courage to approach somebody and that person just brushes you off that's obviously going to have an impact. You might not want to reach out for help again because that first experience has been so negative.

So, there are some refuges although there are very very few. So we have one here in Scotland, where we can have one man and up to two children, we actually had one man recently who had three children, but one of the children was really small so she was actually staying in the same room as him. There are some refuges that will take children as well. But they are certainly very very few. You know, and I would say if all the men that were experiencing incidents of domestic abuse were coming forward and wanted to

leave that relationship and take the children with them, I think there would never be enough spaces to accommodate that need.

TH The other thing I have found is, that a lot of women do a counter-claim - so if the man does actually say yes, I am being abused, the woman then says actually no, I'm the victim, he is abusing me and completely turns the tables and that man in a lot of instances has then been arrested. Have you had experience of that?

Yes, we have had quite a few instances where men, well either one of them phoned the police and as soon as the police came to the house and then the woman, sorry man was arrested and I think, and I always try to understand it from the police perspective as well, because it is a difficult job as a police officer trying to pick the person who could pose the most risk, there is this perception that men pose more risk because they are physically stronger, and it is quite interesting because we had cases where, the woman who was the abusive partner, was a police officer or had been trained in martial arts or something and these are not things that you would see from the outside looking at the couple. But certainly, if someone is a trained police officer, then they have training in restraining and all sorts of things and she is probably going to be/have more power err or at least have the tactics to overpower a man. Looking in from the outside, it is easy to say that a man would be stronger err but then also - a lot of women attack partners in their sleep or we had a client recently who wasn't allowed, so she basically took off the lock on the door, so when he went to the bathroom, he couldn't actually lock the door, so she could just attack him whilst he was on the toilet, while he was in the shower, so in all the situations so where it would be more difficult to defend himself because he was being surprised at a vulnerable time

TH the research has very much come up with physical size as well and say, actually there are a few journals that I have read that actually say that men cannot be possible victims because they are physically stronger than a woman and would be able to fight a woman off.

Yes and I think the interesting thing about that as well is, we have quite a lot of clients who/they say, if I would try and defend myself I would probably be stronger than her but I would never lay a hand on a woman because I have been raised and told that as a man, you never lay a hand on a woman. So, there is a lot of men out there who might be stronger than a woman in theory, but they just stand there and let it happen.

TH So you have pretty much answered everything I was going to ask you Julia, if I'm being honest. Apart from, the only other thing that I have found again - a lot of the research I have done, you know - all of the themes are the same everything is quite strong with the reasons why and the lack of resources and the gender bias, but the other thing is, not being believed by, especially the police or ridiculed have you come across that at all?

So that men feel that they are not being believed?

TH Yes

I think that it does happen quite a lot, I think that there is the perception that men are the real perpetrators so there is like a , I wouldn't even say not being believed, I think

there is a general scepticism and I think that general scepticism has a huge impact when a man presents, because people just have that scepticism of, Oh well he probably is just a perpetrator, so basically they are going from that viewpoint, there then going to look for evidence to support the thought that they are a perpetrator and I think that if you are starting from that viewpoint oh he is a perpetrator the you are going to find evidence in support of that. You're probably going to find something - I mean it could just be the way he talks or the way he dresses or the way he looks at you, you know I mean I think there is lots of ways you could read all sorts of evidence into something.

TH Yes, I understand that - So really my last thing is then, do you think domestic abuse is equally perpetrated? Or do you think there are more female or male victims?

Well police statistics and also self-report statistics. The numbers show that there are more female victims I think however there are a lot of reasons, especially police statistics, there is a dark number. Most of the callers to our helpline I would say 8 out of 10, have never spoken to the police. That is a huge number of men who have never approached the police - so police statistics are very unreliable in that regard. Self-report statistics are a bit clearer, but the issue with them in the past is that men - when asked if they are a victim of domestic abuse - many men do not associate with the term victim - So, in terms of the behaviours that happen within relationships - there are lots of research from researchers in America - Strauss and Hines have shown that it is probably equal.

One of the things that we say in Scotland is - (and our figures last year were roughly 80% Female and 20% Male victims). We used to say to people - even if men suffer less domestic abuse in terms of numbers than women - those who experience and suffer domestic abuse - they experience it 100% just like any woman does.

So, I think it's about the impact it has on men and it's time to focus on that and also the impact on the children of men who are in this situation. The children of these men do not get support. It is not a numbers game - it's not about trying to say. 'Oh, we deserve it more' or you deserve it less' It's about offering equal support.

TH - I am surprised how some researchers now think it's equally perpetrated - especially as it appears so much goes unreported for the reasons you have just said - they do not think themselves as victims

There are two different camps of research - there is the feminist perspective who generally state men are the perpetrators and women are the victims and then there is the family violence research, which looks much more at adverse childhood experiences and growing up in abusive relationships as children, a lot of our clients had an experience of abuse or growing up with their parents being in abusive relationships. So, the modelling of relationships. I think feminists - generally, look at the patriarchy and how the masculine society contributes to the gender base violence.

There is a lot of explanations and each explanation offers an insight -but no one explanation is going to fix everything in the situation. I think it is important that researchers are looking into this as that is the only way that views will change.



