

The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence: A Study of Heterosexual Male Victims.

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Abstract.

The notion of male victims of domestic violence is an implausible suggestion for the majority of society. Although research in the area of domestic violence has grown considerably since its recognition some twenty years ago, both researchers and society have largely ignored male victims. This study therefore, will explore the concept of heterosexual male victims of domestic violence with reference to previous work in the area of domestic violence. Preceding research has acknowledged male victims but has doubted the extent of the problem, which has led to a lack of research and a massive public ignorance of the problem. With the use of seventeen personal statements written by male victims of domestic violence for the study, I will analyse and discuss the premise of male victims and the ways in which they are the 'hidden' side of domestic violence. My argument is that there are a number of different ways that male victims of domestic violence are hidden from the knowledge of society, which needs to be challenged if the problem of domestic violence is to be overcome.

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Chapter One.

Introduction

This dissertation explores the area of domestic violence from a feminist perspective. Traditionally women have been thought of by society as the sole victims of domestic violence, but growing research now suggests the existence of male victims of domestic violence (Cook, 1997; Steinmetz, 1977-1978). As a contextual background for my study of male victims, chapter one will begin with the recognition of domestic violence in its traditionally thought of form, with the consideration of female victims, it will then move onto to contemplate in chapter two, the concept of male victims of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships. The study aims to look at the ways in which the male victim has remained the hidden side of domestic violence. The ways that the research has been obtained in order to address the aim of the study will be explored in chapter three. In the study, seventeen accounts from male victims, which will be obtained in the form of personal statements, will be analysed within the fourth chapter. These will be used to compare with previous research, for example the work of Cook (1997) that has been carried out in the area of male victims of domestic violence, and the problems that the male victims themselves feel that they have to compete against in order to gain recognition, for example the reasons for staying in the abusive relationship. It will be argued that there a number of ways that force the majority of male victims of domestic violence to remain hidden from the knowledge of society, and these ways need to be contested if the problem of male victims and domestic violence as a whole is to gain a greater understanding and acknowledgement from society.

Women's Experiences.

This chapter reviews previous literature that has been researched and carried out into the area of female victims domestic violence. It will focus on women who are thought of as the traditional victims of domestic violence. Although the study is not about female victims of domestic violence, I feel that it is necessary to acknowledge female victims has work in this area has lead to the recognition of

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male victims of domestic violence. The different forms that domestic violence against female victims that has found to take will be examined alongside number of explanations that have been put forward by different schools of thought, for example, the feminist perspective.

Domestic violence is occurring all around us. It is suggested that one woman in nine is severely beaten by her partner ever year (Refuge, 2000). So why as a society, are we not aware of the full extent of the problem? There are many reasons why domestic violence is one of the most concealed crimes in society today, these include shame from the victim concerning being abused, to society not feeling that there is a real dilemma to be solved (Hague and Malos, 1993). These problems have developed given that domestic violence is carried out mainly in the home and between 'adults who are in an intimate or family relationship with each other, most often a sexual relationship between a woman and a man' (Hague and Malos, 1993). The victims of domestic violence are traditionally viewed as women with the perpetrators of the violence being male, but more recent research has gone into looking at these roles being reversed, for example research carried out by Cook, (1997). This will be discussed in detail in chapter two. Before that it is necessary to examine the work carried out in the area of female victims of domestic violence.

The term 'domestic violence' is widely used within the United Kingdom mainly because it is the term that the government use in their reports, for example the British crime survey (1996) and the majority of organisations have used to promote awareness of the crime. In contrast, in America the term 'battered women' is more commonly used (Hague & Malos, 1993). This term has been criticised by female victims of domestic violence mainly because it is felt that it labels women as having done some thing wrong or makes women feel pathetic because they have been 'battered', (Hague and Malos, 1993). Terms to categorise this problem have also been grouped together under the heading 'family violence' but again there have been criticisms made of this term. Although there is a problem with the term 'domestic violence', it is the most widely understood and recognised term in this field. It also allows for the inclusion of male victims of domestic violence and so will be the term used within this dissertation.

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Violence against women first became a recognised problem in the 1970s mainly due to awareness being aroused by the development of women's the second wave movement. ' It emerged in a rather unexpected manner, beginning with a campaign to protest against the elimination of free school milk and ending with a refuge for battered women' (Dobash and Dobash, 1992, p.25). Women's Aid was the first and now one of most well known organisations that have been developed to campaign for battered women. Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust, Victim Support, Refuge, are just a few of the many organisations that have been created to help protect women from the problem of domestic violence. Since the creation of these women's organisations there has been an upsurge of research, for example, Dobash and Dobash (1992) looking into domestic violence against women, but still no one knows the full extent of the problem.' The extent of domestic violence is unknown and whatever conclusions are reached from the studies which have been undertaken must remain tentative and must be treated with caution' (Smith, 1989,p6). Despite the attempts of many crime surveys, such as the British crime survey, the extent of the problem can only truly be viewed as an estimate. Edwards (1986) describes domestic violence as the biggest blind spot in official statistics. By its intrinsic nature, domestic violence is an elusive research topic: it takes place behind closed doors; is concealed from the public eye; and is often unknown to anyone outside the immediate family. Even though crime surveys can never be completely correct, because of the hidden nature of the crime, they still can act as a good indication of the extent of the problem of domestic violence and also an insight to the problem.

Findings of various crime surveys have shown that almost half of all incidents reported by women to the British Crime Survey (1996) were domestic violence. Since 1981, the largest increase in violent crimes has been in incidents of domestic violence (British Crime Survey 1996). Women have been found to make up 70% victims of domestic incidents (Mirlees-Black *et al*, *British Crime Survey* 1998). Domestic violence is the least likely violent crime to be reported to the police. Only one out of three crimes resulting in injury are reported (*British Crime Survey*, 1996). Repeat victimisation is common. Half of all victims of domestic violence are involved in incidents more than once (*British Crime Survey* 1996 Home office).

Surveys have shown an increase in domestic violence in recent years (Women's Aid Federation, 2000). This could be due to the fact that more women overall are being subjected to domestic violence by their partners, but the increase in numbers could also be partly explained by an increase in public awareness of the problem and the different ways to confront the problem. The increase could also be due to the fact that police officers and other professionals are increasingly pro-active in their response to domestic violence (Women's Aid, Northern Ireland, 2000). When considering statistics it is important to consider them in the context that they were obtained. For example, police action is restricted by the law i.e. the powers of arrest available to the officer, the existence of sufficient evidence and in particular the willingness of the victim to take action against the offender who in most cases is the person that the victim loves. Often action is only taken when the injuries that the victim sustains are visible to the police. Visible injuries can act as proof that a domestic violence act has occurred and are often thought of as being the only form that domestic violence takes, (Dobash and Dobash, 2000) but by looking at domestic violence in this way the full extent of the problem will remain hidden. It is important therefore, to look at all the forms that domestic violence can take. Increasing amounts of research looking into domestic violence has given researchers an insight into the nature and form that domestic violence can take. Three main types of domestic violence have been identified. Physical abuse, Emotional/psychological abuse, and sexual abuse.

‘Violence can mean, among other things: threats, intimidation, manipulation, isolation, keeping a women without money, locked in, deprived of food, or using (and abusing) her children in various ways to frighten her or enforce compliance. It can also include systematic criticism and belittling comments’ (Home Affairs committee, 1992, p.2). The different types of domestic violence that have been recognised will now be examined, starting with what is thought to be the most common form of domestic violence, physical violence.

Physical violence.

This form of domestic violence ranges over a large field, from pushing through to homicide. There is no particular pattern to the physical violence that victims of domestic violence may be subjected to. Incidents may be as frequent as daily abuse, or as infrequent as once a year, but evidence shows that the problem is widespread (Dobash and Dobash, 2000, Pp2). Physical violence usually contains a number of different physical acts, such as slapping, kicking, being thrown against the wall or hit repeatedly with a weapon which usually takes the form of a household item, e.g. an ornament. In America, guns are more commonly used in domestic incidents, mainly because of the availability of guns in America compared with the situation in Great Britain (Dobash and Dobash, 2000). In Britain the rate of domestic homicide is less when compared to the rate in America. Domestic homicide in Britain is more likely to occur from a physical attack with a household implement rather than a gun (Dobash and Dobash, 2000). Most physical attacks result in injury, such as broken bones and cuts, but other physical attacks can also result in internal injuries (Campbell *et al*, 1992; McFarlane, Parker, Soeken and Bullock, 1992). Being able to see the injuries is important. If an incident is reported to the police, it may be deemed that no injury has occurred unless the injury is visible (Dobash and Dobash, 2000). Visibility of the injuries may be hidden by the perpetrator by forcing the woman to remain silent or hiding the victim away from their friends.

Emotional/Psychological abuse.

Being involved in a physically abusive relationship invariably means that the victim will suffer some emotional or psychological abuse as well. Although this type of domestic violence is not visible, the effects can be argued to be more damaging in the long term to the individual than physical acts. No one victim of domestic violence will respond in exactly the same way, mainly because not every victim is subjected to exactly the same pattern of abuse. Emotional or psychological abuse can range from degradation to being constantly belittled with verbal abuse. Although in the majority of relationships, couples shout and scream at each other both sides of the argument know that a threat, if ever any, that is made is not serious or will be carried out. This changes when in a violent relationship. The victim within a relationship that contains domestic violence knows that when a threat is made more than likely it will be carried out (Hague

and Malos, 1993). Victims can suffer psychological abuse by being disallowed to gain employment or experiencing extreme possessiveness by their partners. Domestic violence leads to the victim to feeling a sense of loss of himself or herself, of the person that they use to be. Feelings of shame, humiliation and guilt for not being able to maintain a 'normal' relationship are also frequently reported (Kennedy, 1992, p 86-87; Stanko, 1985, p57).

Sexual Abuse.

Many victims of domestic violence who are experiencing physical violence also report being subjected to sexual abuse or violence. Kelly (1988) discusses the idea of a continuum of sexual violence, which includes everyday examples of dominating sexual behaviour, to sexual assault to rape. She identifies murder and sexual mutilation of girls or women to be the most severe form of sexual violence (Kelly, 1988). It is argued that it is not correct to think of the continuum of sexual abuse/violence in terms of severity, as different experiences will have different effects on each victim. Sexual abuse is probably the hardest form of violence to confront, because society is overall reluctant to hear about individuals sexual abuse experiences (Hague and Malos, 1993). A study carried out by Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) found that out of the population sample 18% of women had experienced being raped in their lifetime. Their survey also found that one out of six U.S women and interestingly one out of thirty-three men had experienced an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. Sexual abuse affects people in many different ways. Some victims may feel that they need to confront the problem by talking about their experience and taking legal action, whilst others may wish to keep the experience to themselves and try and block it out of their minds. Sexual violence is often intertwined with a physical act.

These three main areas of domestic violence need to be examined in order to gain a more complete picture of the problem, and will be again considered when looking at the problem of male victims of domestic violence, but why does the problem of domestic violence occur in the first place? There area number of different explanations has been developed in an attempt to explain this problem,

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but since I am writing from a feminist perspective, I will only explore this school of thought.

Feminism.

This explanation stems from the assumption that the society that we live in is patriarchal, and it is the domination and the need for men to control and maintain power over women that is the main cause of domestic violence. This patriarchal society is sustained by both ideological and structural factors (Millet, 1969, p25). ‘Confining women in the home, banning them from meaningful positions outside the family and excluding them from the bench and the pulpit is to deny them the means of bringing about the change in their status’ (Dobash and Dobash, 1980. p43). Domestic violence in the eyes of feminists is seen as a way of controlling women and continuing the domination of men and the subordination of women (Dobash and Dobash, 1980; 1992). Feminists have always been keen on bringing domestic violence into a political view point from which the public can gain a greater awareness and understanding of the problem of domestic violence. By firmly placing domestic violence in a political context, feminist writers reject the individual pathology explanation; they do believe that individual therapy has its place within this field, but point out that the problem of domestic violence can only be solved when the power relation between men and women becomes equal, in other words, when the subordination of women by men is no more.

Since the recognition of the problem of domestic violence in the 1970s, there has been extensive research looking into the problem of domestic violence. This research though has mainly looked at the domestic violence in the sense that women are the sole victims and men are the sole perpetrators of domestic violence. In more recent years, research has shown this to be incorrect and there has been a slight recognition of the fact that these roles could be reversed with the man being the victim which can be seen in the research by Cook (1997). This chapter has look at the fundamental areas of the research that has gone into female victims of domestic violence. Women have been shown to be effected by a number of different types of violence all of which can be seen to have a detrimental effect on the victim. The areas that have been considered within this

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chapter have been necessarily considered in order for the study to move onto the concept of male victims of domestic violence.

Structure of chapter two.

The second chapter will explore the research that has demonstrated that male victims of domestic violence do exist, whilst considering the different factors that may have contributed to the omission of male victims, for example the influence of the stereotypical roles of men and women. For many people in society this is an inconceivable idea. Men are traditionally dominant within relationships and have been allowed to control both women and children, in most areas of, what has been argued by many feminists, to be the patriarchal society that we live in today (Steinmetz and Lucca, 1988). The second chapter will move forward from the concept of female victims of domestic violence and with reference to the work that has been carried out in this area, the central topic of the study will be examined in detail. The themes that will be considered will coincide with the aims and the findings of the study in order for final comparisons to be made.

Chapter Two.

This chapter will move away from the concept of female victims of domestic violence and move onto consider male victims of domestic violence. Male victims have been claimed to be the 'hidden side of domestic violence' (Cook, 1997), with this in mind, this chapter will firstly consider that argument that have been put forward for the concept of a male victim and consider the ways in which male victims of domestic violence are the hidden side of domestic violence. The areas within this chapter will be used as a guideline for the primary research used within this study that can be seen in chapter four.

Men as the victims.

Throughout history men have been thought of as the dominant sex, so how could they be subjected to domestic violence in the same way that women have been for so many years and still remain unnoticed? Acknowledging that men can also be the victims of domestic violence and the concept of mutual combat are a complete contrast to the majority of the ideas developed by feminism. Although the feminist explanation is slowly coming to recognise that men can also be the victims of not only domestic violence but also other forms of violence that have been traditionally associated with female victims, such as rape (Lees, 1997). I will argue that the realisation of male victims means that domestic violence cannot be considered to be all about men trying to regain the control over women that they feel they have lost. Even though the idea of male victims has been ignored for many years, recent research has found the existence of male victims; the argument is now turning to look at the extent of the problem of male abuse in domestic situations.

Mutual combat.

The concept of 'mutual combat' poses a threat to the feminist ideas of domestic violence, when women are only seen as being the primary victims of domestic violence, the notion of male victims has never really been disregarded, but neither has it been of central importance. Due to the recognition of male victims of domestic violence there is now questions over how the problem should be defined. Should it be thought of as wife abuse, husband abuse or mutual

combat? (Saunders, 1988). Suggestions of 'mutual combat' being a large part of the domestic violence problem faced strong challenges mainly from feminists who argued that mutual combat could only be seen as a 'myth', since the majority of research figures revealed that women were overwhelmingly the victims of this kind of violence and were also the ones who were more likely to seek professional help, (Berk, Berk, Loseke and Rauma, 1981).

The idea of mutual combat has been supported with empirical evidence, but as with all empirical evidence, it must be read with the acknowledgement that variations within the sample may exist (Cook, 1997). This poses a stronger argument against the suggested idea by feminists that mutual combat can only be seen as a 'myth'. The most common reason for why mutual abuse figures have been ignored is because women who are violent are only viewed as acting in self-defence (Cook, 1997), but I believe that violent women cannot be said to be acting in self-defence on ever occasion that a man is injured and this view has also been supported by previous research. 'Regardless of whether the analysis is based on all assaults or is focused on dangerous assaults, about as many women as men attacked spouses who had not hit them. This is inconsistent with the self-defence explanation for the high rate of domestic assaults by women' (Straus, cited in Cook, 1997;Pp13).

Straus *et al*, (1980) point out the findings in a national study of family violence which revealed that 49% of relationships in the study that contained what would be classified as domestic violence, could be classed as 'Mutual combat'. In the same study Straus *et al* (1980) found that when both people within the relationship were violent, 44% of husbands used a higher level of violence, compared with 23% of wives who used a higher level of violence. They additionally found that their partners connected wives' increases in minor violence with a dramatic increase in the amount of brutal assaults. These findings not only support the idea of 'mutual combat' but they are additionally recognition of the notion of violent women, a concept that will be examined later in this chapter. It is thought that due to men on average, being physically stronger and larger than their female partners, they are the ones who are more likely to cause injuries but, McLeod's (1984) analysis of the National Crime

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Survey revealed that women in violent relationships were more likely to use weapons than their male partners, and for that reason, men were found to be more likely to sustain injuries. This suggestion could be a one of the main reasons why male victims have remained hidden in former research and female victims of domestic violence have remained to be of central importance. Another area that can be seen to not only link into the notion of mutual combat and be seen as a way of hiding male victims of domestic violence from the acknowledgement of society is the idea of self-defence which will now be considered.

Self- defence.

One of the ways that male victims of domestic violence can be argued to have been hidden is through the argument of self-defence. It has been proposed that the violence that is inflicted on a husband or partner by their wife or girlfriend is only carried out in self-defence (Fontes, 1999). For the majority of people in society it is an implausible idea that a woman would hit a man for any other reason than in self-defence. McNeely and Robinson-Simpson (1987) concluded from research conducted in the National family violence survey that “ Although the data do not indicate what proportion of the violent acts were in response to violent acts by men, the fact that women had higher mean and median rates for severe violence suggests that female aggression is not merely a response to male aggression”. When faced with a violent domestic situation, men are placed in a difficult situation. They have to make the decision whether or not to stand up for themselves and confront the situation like a ‘real man’ in their traditional, stereotypical role or reject that role and allow themselves to become a victim of domestic violence and be rendered powerless (Sniechowski and Sherven, 1995).

A study conducted in England found that men who had been victims of female abuse in their study were ‘the sort of men who don’t want to hit a man, let alone a women. So when the violence starts they know they are just going to have to stand there and take it, and that tension produces its own kind of terror’ (Wolff, 1992 cited in Peloché, 1999, p.6). Being perceived as being the physically weaker sex, women have been allowed by society to use the argument of self-defence as a plausible excuse for abusing their male partner (Pagelow, 1984).

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Using severe violence or even weapons, can be justified with the argument that they have no other way of defending themselves from their male attacker. Previous studies of domestic violence (Gelles, 1974; Steinmetz, 1977; Straus, 1980; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980), argued that because of this women should remain the principal focus of intervention because men were found to use violence more often, were likely to do more damage due to size differences. It is also argued that women are economically trapped in a marriage and many women only use violence to defend themselves. Despite these claims, reports of a 'battered husband syndrome' allowed the principle focus of female victims domestic violence to be challenged. The development of the area of male victims of domestic violence and the idea of mutual combat originally developed from the an article written by Steinmetz (1978) which proposed the idea of a battered husband syndrome.

The battered Husband syndrome.

Steinmetz's (1978) work was the first real acknowledgement that they were other victims apart from female victims of domestic violence. Battered husbands were argued to be the "most under reported" victims of domestic violence (Pagelow *et al*, 1984). In the article titled 'The battered husband syndrome', Steinmetz (1977-78) examines the possible reasons for why male victims of domestic violence go unreported. These reasons included the humorous reaction that male victims of domestic violence receive from society, the fact that few men report the abuse that they have suffered and the socially constructed values that men hold concerning their role in society. It is suggested that family violence should no longer be treated as an isolated problem but as another section of what is today, a very violent society (Steinmetz, 1977-78). The article notes the data that has been found revealing the problem of male victims of domestic violence, for example, the work of Gelles (1974). Steinmetz claimed that wives batter 250,000 American husbands each year (Steinmetz, 1978). Although this new idea was of great interest to mainly the American media at the time, the idea that domestic violence was a serious social problem was a newly emerging crisis and 'husband battering' was seen to confuse the situation further, as many people in society already found the notion of domestic violence difficult to deal with and understand (Pagelow, 1984). Steinmetz's new notion

came up against strong criticism 'Steinmetz's essay on violence against husbands is filled with baseless conjecture which gives substance to what had been a latent backlash against the movement to aid battered wives'. The press has made much of her inaccurate conclusion that wives are 'slightly higher in almost all categories' of violence than husbands (Fields and Kirchner, 1978, p216). Many other researchers were also in doubt about clarity of the proposal mainly because the problem of male victims did not seem to occur to the same extent as female victims had been discovered to occur. It was argued that the 'battered husband syndrome' was "much ado about nothing" (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Including male victims to the proposal of domestic violence was seen by some researchers to minimize the needs of the thousands of women who are abused by their husbands each year (Tierney, 1982). Although this could be the case as female victims are no longer of sole interest, I believe that in order to confront the problem of domestic violence, as a whole the acknowledgement of male victims is totally necessary.

It is now known that male victims exist, but to the same extent as female victims and in the same context of female victims? The problem that male victims face is not getting researchers to believe that they do in fact exist, recent research has proved this to be true (Amen, 1997), but the problem of domestic violence towards men is significant enough to warrant further research (Pagelow, 1984). There is no doubt that some women are violent towards their male partner and create an atmosphere of fear and danger within the home, but the study by Steinmetz has been argued not to provide enough scientific evidence for the problem to be labelled a 'syndrome' (Pagelow, 1984). The article 'The battered husband syndrome' did not aim to 'De-emphasise the importance of providing services to beaten wives, but to increase awareness of the pervasiveness of all forms of family violence' (Steinmetz, 1977-78). The battered husband syndrome was not followed up with massive amounts of research in the same way that the recognition of female victims of domestic violence started. Pizzey (2000) argues that this is because men are not willing to help themselves in the same way that women do and have. Pizzey (2000) points out the problems that she experienced when trying to open a centre for abused men and remarks that men find it hard to organise personal problems that occur in their social life when compared to

women. There are a number of reasons why men have remained in abusive relationships and a number of reasons why male victims of domestic violence have remained hidden. These reasons have since been studied and will now be discussed.

Reasons for staying.

Society finds the concept of a male victim hard to believe mainly because men are neither economically or physically restrained in the same way that woman are when in an abusive relationship. Normally, men are larger, stronger and more powerful and so in theory should be able to do more damage to a woman than a woman would be able to do to a man. The larger build of men should also mean that it is easier for them to leave an abusive relationship when compared to female victims, so why do male victims exist? Why do men stay in an abusive relationship? These are not simple questions to answer, as there are many reasons why men and also women stay in an abusive relationship.

Gelles (1975) argues that there are three major factors that influence both male and female victims of domestic violence to stay in the abusive relationship. Firstly, the less brutal and the prevalence of the violence secondly, Gelles (1975) recognises the importance of looking at the victims past to see how much violence that they have experienced as a child and finally, the fewer the resources and power that the victim has is seen to influence whether or not the victim stays in the abusive relationship. It is always assumed that men should find leaving an abusive situation easier than a female victim of domestic violence would because they have greater economic resources. In contemporary society, this is a very sexist assumption. When a husband leaves his family he is still economically responsible for them, which will rapidly increase his personal cost of living (Steinmetz, 1977-78). As stated in chapter one, domestic violence is not solely about physical abuse, it is a collection of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. It is the combination of all of these that the perpetrator uses against their victim to slowly grind them down. A man that has been beaten by his wife or partner is most likely to be a psychologically broken man; 'The male being sexually abused by a female is usually a very vulnerable personality who feels absolute shame and worthlessness' (Thomas 1993 p.138). They may also love their wife and

children and as has been similarly found with female victims, the man may not want the relationship to end but just want the violence to stop (Pearson, 1997).

It is sometimes the case that the man has become a victim of domestic violence due to trying to protect their children; this is a key finding within this study and will be discussed in detail later. It has also been suggested that many men believe that they should keep the family together for the sake of the children even if this means facing violence from their wife (Steinmetz, 1977-78). Men are socialised to believe that they hold responsibility to provide for their family, so by leaving the relationship men may feel that they have 'failed' their wife and children and their role of being a man (Overberg, 1994). Men traditionally have been seen to hold a dominant position within relationships but with an increasing number of women who are entering the work place they may also feel the need to take a dominant role within a relationship. In order to take this dominant role, some women may have started to use violence, 'I know I was stronger than him, when he was drunk that is, so I gave him a good shove and kick, whatever I could kick, I didn't aim. And then he'd end up on the floor and I'd beat the living daylight out of him' (Gelles, 1974: 78-79). Although this may seem a far-fetched argument, the findings of this study can be seen to support this concept and will be explored in greater detail in chapter four of the study. One of the main concerns for both male and female victims of domestic violence is their child or children; neither sex would want to leave their child behind with an abusive partner. For male victims of domestic violence a main fear is that if they leave their partner they will not be simply be able to see their children. A study conducted by Amen (1997) found that 60% of male victims of domestic violence were prevented from leaving a violent relationship sooner because they feared losing contact with their children. In the same study, it was also found that 70% of the abused men surveyed had serious concerns for their children's safety. This finding coincides with the information found within this study and again will be an aspect that is discussed in greater detail in the fourth chapter. Cook (1997) points out that male victims of domestic violence strongly believe that the legal system strongly favours the mother and that attempting to gain custody of their children would be very hard even impossible. If the abused man leaves the family home they are also less likely to gain custody of their children because

that would mean moving the children from their home as it is assumed that the wife has more ties with the home than the husband (Steinmetz, 1977-1978).

If men are considered to be physically stronger and of a larger build when compared to their female partner then why do they not fight back and protect themselves from the violence? Research conducted by Amen (1997) looked the main reasons why male victims of domestic violence stayed in an abusive relationship. It was found that 27% of the abused men did not realise that they were experiencing domestic violence. This statistic shows how necessary it is to increase all round awareness of the problem of male victims of domestic violence. Most men are also aware of the damage that they could do to a woman if they used violence against them and so are reluctant to use violence against a woman who they are more than likely to still be in love with. A husband reported in Steinmetz's findings noted that he hit his wife once "in retaliation with hands and fists, and smacked her in the mouth. She went flying across the room into the chest" (Steinmetz, 1977-78, Pp500). Throughout their lives men are socialized to believe that it is very wrong to use violence against a women let alone their own female partner even in the form of self protection, in accordance with the concept of masculinity it is important to recognise the influence that this concept can pose for male victims of domestic violence, as I will argue that it is an area of difficulty within domestic violence that can only affect male victims of domestic violence.

Masculinity.

Men also face a problem that cannot be experienced by female victims, which is one of effects on masculinity. In childhood, both sexes are socialized into certain roles, which contain characteristics that society on the whole, expects to see. Boys are supposed to take the leading role in all areas of society and become the dominant sex, whereas girls are supposed to allow men to support them and in doing so become the inferior sex. Masculinity and femininity are constructed in different ways. For boys and men, they have to constantly prove their masculinity with the use of hostility (Stanko, 1990). Whereas women 'Suffer from a conspicuous lack of access to training in, and means of developing, those skills necessary to effectively repel a male assailant without resorting to the use

of a deadly weapon...’ (State of Washington v. Wanrow, p559). Many men reinforce the use of physical violence because violence is seen as a way of showing that you are a ‘real’ man, any man that avoids violence is labelled as homosexual and faces further humiliation with name calling and ‘feminising’ (Stanko, 1990). With violence being inbred into boys as a main part of their masculinity from a young age, accepting and dealing with being beaten by a women in their own home can be a very difficult concept and problem to deal with. Accepting that they are part of a problem and being able to walk away from the situation and admit that their female partner has abused them, means rejecting the socially constructed notion of masculinity. Cook (1997) found in his study of male victims of domestic violence that one of the main reasons for not reporting the violence and remaining ‘hidden’ could be known as “ Internal excuses”, for example, ‘I can fix it and make it better’, ‘I don’t want to be weak and admit I can’t handle her’, ‘People will think I’m not much of a man if I tell them the real reason we’re having problems’, ‘I don’t want to laughed at; no one would believe me’ (Cook, 1997;pp93).

Although female victims may face similar fear of humiliation and fear of being ignored and laughed at by society, it can be argued that for male victims of domestic violence the problem here is far worse, mainly due to the notion of masculinity. Male victims of domestic violence have often been found to face another problem that is associated with the concept of masculinity, which is denial (Cook, 1997). Men may believe that the situation will, with time change back to a non-abusive relationship and if he ‘takes it like a man’ in the way that society believes that men should respond to violence, he will ultimately be able to regain an equal power relationship and not face further humiliation because of the views of society, which will now be discussed.

The Role of Society.

For years the problem of domestic violence has been ignored by society, for a number of different reasons explored in chapter one, for example it has been suggested that introducing the concept of male victims of domestic violence to the knowledge of society will confuse the situation of domestic violence further and lead to the idea as a whole to seem even more implausible (Hague & Malos,

1996) Academic researchers have worked on the area of male victims of domestic violence, for example, Cook, (1997); Pearson, (1999), but recognition of the problem of male victims of domestic violence has yet to appear from society as a whole. Personal problems that male victims may have with admitting that a female partner is beating them have already been discussed but male victims also face the problem of a negative reaction from society and the systems within it. While female victims of domestic violence are increasingly treated by society with sympathy and support because their problem is gaining greater recognition, male victims are treated with disbelief and contempt (Amen, 1997). Woodstra (1994) found a man who had been attacked by his violent wife was being treated in hospital, in this particular case, the wife had admitted beating her husband. Despite the wife admitting she had been abusing her husband the police did charge the wife and when the man took the case to court, the courtroom including the judge, burst into laughter causing the victim to drop the charges. When abused men attempt to seek help they are seen as laughable and unbelievable by the majority of society, this causes the victim embarrassment and can cause a feeling of guilt for something that is not their fault (Cose, 1995, p.208).

Despite the acknowledgment of male victims of domestic violence the media have also continued to remain mainly ignorant to the problem that some men do face. The media have become set upon framing the issues of domestic violence with female victims and male abusers (Gross, 1992). Campaigns created by women's organisations for the plight of female victims are more commonly mentioned in the press but men are still only talked about in the context of being the perpetrator of domestic violence. The media can be held partly responsible for the attitudes that are held by the majority of society towards domestic violence, because of the role that the media have continued to place men in within domestic violence, it is hard for society to perceive men in the framework of being a victim. On the same note I think it is also important to recognise that the media also reflect the views that are held by the majority and so can not be held totally responsible for the views of society concerning domestic violence.

In order to combat the problem of domestic violence and in particular male victims of domestic violence, society need to recognise and understand that women can be violent can are very capable of inflicting violence on their male partners. The socialised roles and the characteristics that accompany these roles, play a large part in hiding the problem of male victims of domestic violence, but attempting to changes theses socially constructed roles will be a very long and very complicated, if not impossible task for activists to carry out. Due to this, other ways of combating the problem need to be looked at.

Organisations.

One of the major shortcomings of attempting to solve the problem of male victims of domestic violence is the lack of resources, organisations and shelters developed especially to cater for male victims. Male victims are aware of the lack of resources and organisations that are available to helping them solve their problem and this may act as a deterrent for many men coming out and revealing the abuse that they have been subjected to. There is an organisation that has been developed in Ireland that especially caters for abused males of domestic violence. Amen was started in December 1997 and provides a confidential help line, support group and helpful information for men who are or who have experienced domestic violence. In the first year of opening, Amen received in excess of 11,000 calls from male experiencing domestic violence (Amen, 1997). The development of Amen is an excellence start to increasing public awareness of the this problem, but more similar organisations need to be developed in order to begin to combat the problem of male victims of domestic violence. Local organisations, for example PODA in Derby are slowly starting to incorporate male victims into their projects that are primarily developed for female victims of domestic violence.

Women as perpetrators.

By acknowledging the existence of male victims of domestic violence it is also important that women being perpetrators of domestic violence is also considered. Women are traditionally thought to be not only be the weaker sex but also less likely to be capable of using violence. Violence is universally thought of as being a masculine act (Pearson, 1997), as previously noted, men

are socialised into developing violence into their role as a 'real' man within society. It is important to recognize that violence is not innately masculine, but as long as researchers and especially feminist maintain the idea that there is only a very small minority of violent women, the notion of violent women and abused men will remain hidden (Pearson, 1997). The idea that women could be capable of not only violence towards husband is very hard to understand but for many the idea that women could be capable of killing is inconceivable. The concept of women using female violence is fairly inconceivable in our society but is more prominent in other societies. Anthropologist Burbank (Cited in Pearson, 1997) discovered that women in eighty contemporary societies around the world openly use aggression towards other women who are viewed as their rivals, as a way of maintaining dominance.

Sociologists have not totally ignored the possibility of female aggression. It has been argued that the aggression that women use should be thought of in terms of 'expressive aggression'. This aggression that women use is not physical and calculating as the aggression of men is but rather an attempt to voice the bottled-up feelings that they have been maintaining. 'Indirect aggression', a concept developed by Bjorkquist (Cited in Pearson, 1997), suggests that the violence that women use does not involve physical violence, rather emotional violence "The more able the aggressor is at staying out of reach of the opponent, and at assessing the opponent's retaliation resources, the better she will be at avoiding counter-attack, and minimizing risks" (Bjorkquist, cited in Pearson, 1997). This suggestion of 'indirect aggression' coincides with the idea that male victims of domestic violence are more deeply affected by the emotional/psychological abuse suffered in an abusive relationship, rather than the physical abuse that is thought to cause greater damage. Research has found that the mental abuse that men suffered whilst in a violent relationship was the most damaging and long lasting form of violence. This is an aspect that is considered within the findings of the study. It has also been found that mental and psychological abuse can take a number of different forms (Amen, 1997). A study carried out by Amen (1997) discovered that abused men experienced lies being told by their violent partner about them, they were often (72.5 %) cut off from family and friends and 80% of victims said that they were regularly taunted to use violence against their

partner. The same study also looked at the effects of abuse on the male victim. These ranged from insomnia, loss of appetite and depression though to the main effect (82%), which was low self-esteem.

Male victims of domestic violence often only become recognised by society and the media after experiencing a near fatal attack or actually being killed by their female partners. Brown, (1987) suggests that women who kill are more than likely to have experienced traumas in their childhood which has led them to be more prone to use violence and kill in later life. Browne (1987) also points out the importance of looking at all sides of a violent relationship, as it is often the behaviour of the male partner that has slowly driven the women to the point of killing, for example women are more likely to kill a male partner who has been violent towards her rather than a partner who has never once used violence in the relationship. In a domestic violence situation it is imperative to look at the role of both the victim and the perpetrator in order to fully understand the problem. A relationship is developed from interaction of two people within it, so for this reason it is necessary to look at the role that the victim plays. Researchers have often avoided this mainly because people do not want to place any blame on the victim and cause even more victims to remain unreported. The point where the victim becomes the perpetrator of the violence can be viewed as a moment of rebellion, a point where the polarisation of the roles in the abusive relationship is reversed. Just as the perpetrator has denied themselves any feelings of vulnerability with the use of violence, the victim has denied themselves any murderous feelings that have been suppressed and have been previously acted out by the violent partner. At the same time of acknowledging that abused women can go on to kill it is furthermore important to recognise that not all women who are beaten by their husbands go on to kill their violent husband (Strauss and Gelles, 1986). Browne (1987) points out that there are some factors that may make some women more prone to kill their abusive partner. These include the severity of the victim's injuries, the perpetrators use of alcohol or drugs, the frequency with which violence had previously occurred in the relationship and the man's threats to kill the victim. Female killers are viewed by society in an alternative way to male killers. Women who have murdered an abusive partner are often argued to be unaware of what they are

doing because they are in a psychologically depressed state of mind, which means that they cannot be held responsible for their decisions. Attacks on men when they are asleep are a commonality within male victims research. George (1992) found that on interviewing a number of abused men that attacks on men when they were asleep were very common, 'One time, I got woken up to her pounding real hard with her fists on my head. She said she had a dream that I was cheating on her!' (George, 1992, cited in Cook, 1992;Pp 39). This problem has led to the development of the battered women's syndrome which is now commonly use to defend women who kill their male partners (Ewing, 1987). This concept will now be discussed in greater detail.

The battered woman's syndrome.

The idea of 'psychological self-defence' is a concept that has been developed by Ewing (1987), which suggests that battered women who go onto kill have been so systematically eroded by their abusive partner that they kill in order to try and regain psychic survival. Ewing (1987) bases his suggestion on the concept of 'Battered women syndrome'. This is often used in courts to reduce the charges that female killers face. Walker (1984) in support of the battered women's syndrome states 'battered women who kill have invariably been both physically and emotionally abused by the men they killed. Many if not all of them have also been raped and/or sexually abused by their batterers' (Ewing, 1987: 583). The battered women syndrome aims to explain why abused women kill after they have reached a certain limit of the abuse that they can no longer sustain, but this argument cannot be used in all cases. It cannot be used when the previously violent partner is killed in his sleep, as the act cannot be considered to be in self-defence (Ewing, 1987).

As a society we do not want to accept that women can be the perpetrators of violence what ever the form that violence make take, as it goes against the deeply integrated roles of masculinity and femininity. Even though it is known that not all men are killers, the potential for a man to kill is always there. A husband who beats his wife is also quite capable of going on to kill her (Pearson, 1997), whereas, a wife is not considered to be capable of beating her husband let alone killing him. This perception of the roles men and women in the area of

aggression needs to be considered in order to begin to tackle the problem of male victims of domestic violence and family violence as a whole.

This chapter has explored what I feel to be the central concepts to the way in which male victims of domestic violence have been hidden by society. From the evidence found in this study, it is clear to see that male victims of domestic violence do very much exist and should be research in greater detail in the future in order to increase societal awareness and in doing so hopefully being to reduce the problem. The majority of these explored aspects will be used in chapter four in order to compare the findings of this study with those that have been previously discovered. It has been necessary to consider a wide range of themes within male victims of domestic violence in orders to gain better findings for this study.

Chapter Three.

This research explores men's experiences of domestic violence and the different ways in that they have remained hidden from the perceptions of the general public. This chapter will analyse that different ways that the finding and research was obtained for use in this study of male victims of domestic violence.

Rationale.

A number of different primary sources were used for this dissertation, for example, E-mail contact with a number of different authors working in the area of male victims of domestic violence. In the early stages of the dissertation I decided to focus my research on the area of domestic violence as it is considered to be one of the most hidden crimes within society (Hague & Malos, 1996). In order to find a gap within the present research a number of domestic violence organisations, for example Women's Aid, were contacted through the use of phone calls, written letters and use of their web pages. This was an ideal starting point for the study, as existing research on the area of domestic violence was quickly and easily found. Contact with the domestic violence organisations revealed that female victims were mainly seen to be the sole victims of domestic abuse. Most of the organisations that have been developed have been done so based upon feminist ideas. This is suggestive of the idea that domestic violence is a way of domineering women and progressing the supremacy of men and the subordination of women (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; 1992). This left an obvious gap in the research and an ideal topic of research for the study, that of male victims of domestic violence.

Participant sample.

Once the area of research was decided, it was necessary to attempt to gain a sample of participants. The sensitivity of the subject area forced this to be a challenging task. It was originally considered to advertise for male victim participants in the local newspapers. This was to be carried out by writing an article about the problem of male victims of domestic violence in an attempt to get victims to come forward with accounts of their experiences. Furthermore it

was initially thought that semi-structured or qualitative (Mason, 1984) interviews with as many participants that came forward would be used. There are a number of advantages of using semi-structured interviews that could have been advantageous for this study. Qualitative interviews would have allowed myself to direct the conversation towards a desired direction and attempt to obtain the required results and more detailed accounts of the victim's experiences (Lindlof, 1995). Even though semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to direct the conversation towards a certain event, they cannot make the participant disclose that event, especially when in the case of this study a very sensitive subject area is being dealt with (Lindlof, 1995). Although there are advantages of using semi-structured interviews, there was also the issue of personal safety to consider. There would have been an element of my personal safety when carrying one-on-one interviews and this was an influencing factor for obtaining written personal statements for the male victims additionally the use of semi-structured interviews was not necessary for this particular study, as through use of the Internet, contact with the organisation Amen was made. Amen is the only organisation in the United Kingdom that is solely devoted to helping male victims of domestic violence, but the organisation is based in Ireland.

In order to overcome the problem of availability of participants, a number of E-mails and phone calls were made to the organisation Amen. This enabled written contact with male victims of domestic violence to be made. All the participants were members or previous members of the organisation. The participants were sent via E-mail a set of questions, which were intended to act, as a guideline of what area of the domestic violence was needed for the study, rather than to be specifically answered in the same way as a questionnaire would have been. The guideline questions were designed in accordance to the background research that had already been obtained from the study. The guidelines aimed to look at the ways that the participants felt that they had been 'hidden' from society, the fears that they had about coming forward about their abuse, the reasons for staying in the abusive relationship and the ways that they believed the problem of male victims of domestic violence could begin to be solved. They were a necessary part of the primary research because direct face-

to-face contact was not being made with the participants. It was important for the participants to know what areas of domestic violence the study was focusing on. Although the participants did give detailed answers to the guideline questions, most participants also provided a personal statement, which described the pattern of events that the domestic violence had occurred in. The statements went into greater detail than the guideline answers by describing specific violent events that had occurred and in some cases forced them to leave.

Personal statements.

The primary research for the study was sent over from the organisation in the form of personal statements and written answers from the male victims to the guideline questions. There were seventeen participants in the study. All the participants were married to their abusive partners, and all but one participant had children. A larger sample of fifty or sixty participants was offered, but could not be accepted due to the word constraints of the dissertation. The offered number of participants was an immediate indication of the true prevalence of existing male victims of domestic violence that has been previously suggested in past research but ignored in the majority of research (Steinmetz, 1978). This is also an obvious opening for further research to be carried in the area of male victims of domestic violence. I also wanted to carry out an in-dept study of the experiences of male victims of domestic violence and this would not have been possible if a larger number of participants had have been used, as there would not have been enough time to analysis detailed account and the option of semi-structured interviews would have been none existent.

Consideration of the participants.

Although semi-structured or qualitative (Mason, 1984) interviews may have provided more detailed accounts of the experiences of male victims, the sensitivity of the subject area could have caused problems for the participants, for example, feelings of embarrassment. Previous research conducted by Cook (1997) pointed out that humiliation and embarrassment were some of the main reasons why male victims of domestic violence remain hidden from the knowledge of society. 'I don't want to be laughed at' (Cook, 1997). Even though the accounts that have been obtained from male victims did not go into

extensive detail compared to the information that may have been gathered from qualitative interviews there was no guarantee that any participants would have come forward for the study and even if they did, they may not have felt comfortable with disclosing such personal information. The research obtained did address the guideline questions and provided the study with the relevant and necessary information.

Written statements from the victims provided the study with a greater number of participants than would have been possible with semi-structured interviews, mainly because of the time restraints of the study. The amount of participants that were finally used in the study provided a wide range of accounts and an overall more competent assessment of the experiences of male victims of domestic violence and the problems that they face.

E-Mail contact.

The most useful primary source has been E-mails. The use of the E-mails provided many different links to not only specifically relevant web pages, but also to relevant authors who have written about male victims of domestic violence. Through out researching for the study, constant E-mail contact has been made with a number of relevant authors from around the world who work in the field of male victims of domestic violence. Many authors provided information that included previous studies and links to other authors and researchers and organisations. The majority of authors that were contacted via E-mail were based in America, which shows that there is greater recognition of the problem of male victims. These provided exceptional advice on the subject area and the most efficient ways to go about obtaining the information. A list of used E-mail addresses can be found at the end of the study.

Although E-mail contact has provided a very useful source of primary research, there are criticisms that can be made against this method of research. The use of E-mail contact as a way of acquiring accounts of the experiences of male victims of domestic violence meant that only limited information could be obtained. By only sending a set of guideline questions, the participants were not able to know when the study needed them to expand upon certain areas of information. This is

where semi-structured interviews may have been more advantageous to the study, but the guidelines were carefully and precisely constructed in an attempt to overcome this problem. E-mail contact with the participants may have reduced the reliability and validity of the study in that the participants of the study were never actually met, but the hand written answers and personal statements that were sent through the post revealed that the participants did exist. With any form of qualitative data collection, there is no guarantee that the participants are telling the truth, but this is left to the discretion of the interviewer and is very hard to prove either way (Silverman, 1997). This is not just a problem for this study as any researcher working in the area of male or female victims of domestic violence may face similar problems.

E-mail contact was advantageous. The use of E-mails meant that the primary research was collected quickly and efficiently, it allowed the research to be collected without causing much disruption to either the organisation Amen, or the participants that were involved in the study. All the participants were able to remain anonymous to the study, which in turn avoided any problems of embarrassment on behalf of the participants. The use of personal statements in the study also reduced any personal safety risk to myself that may have occurred if I had used personal statements. There are possible criticisms with the methods of research that have been used in this study all of which I have identified in this chapter, but it is also important to note that the information that has been gathered from male victims of domestic violence has been considered to be very useful. As it has helped to give an insight into the problems and the different themes that the study itself is concerned with. The following chapter will move on to discuss the finding of the primary research with detailed reference to previous research explored in the first two chapters of the study.

Chapter Four.

This chapter explores the accounts of battered men contacted through the organisation Amen. There are a number of different areas of the findings that will be discussed in detail with reference to previous research that has been found in the area of male victims and also female victims of domestic violence. This chapter will examine the variations that have been found in the study by comparing the result that I have found with the results that have been found from similar research, for example, Cook (1997). The differences that have also been found in the research when compared to previous research will also be explored. The findings will be especially examined in accordance to the aim of the study, which is to explore the ways in which male victims of domestic violence are 'hidden' from the eyes of the majority of the public and the suggested ways by the participants that the problem can be begin to be improved will be explored.

Types of domestic violence.

Each of the participants were asked to describe the type of domestic violence that their female partner has subjected them to, whether that is emotional, physical, or sexual violence. Previous research had suggested that male victims of domestic violence might suffer more from the emotional effects of the violence rather than the physical effects (Thomas, 1993). This could be because women are thought to not be able to do as much physical damage to their male partners because of their slighter build (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980). It was found that in all the participants involved in this study had experienced emotional violence. This involved from mismanagement of money on the wife's behalf. This was an interesting finding as I had not thought that the wife overspending and wasting the money and drink and drugs, which was the case for one participant, to be considered a form of domestic violence 'My wife started drinking and became involved in drugs trading' Another participant who also stated 'mismanagement of money' to be a form of domestic violence that they have faced, described how he has be pressured and abused by his wife so much that he has been forced to sell his business that he has owned for twenty

five years. Another form of emotional abuse that the participant had experienced was being degraded and constantly humiliated in front of friends and family, ‘She constantly tried to demean and demoralise me in front of them and they found this very embarrassing’. It should be noted that within this quote, it was the friends who witnessed the abuse who found the situation embarrassing. This can be seen to reveal how rare male victims of domestic violence are, as the friends who witnessed the abuse did not know how to handle the situation so they just got embarrassed.

A common outcome from the participants was that because of the emotional abuse that they had suffered a number of health problems had arisen. This aspect was not asked for in the guidelines, but the majority of participants did state the health problems that they had developed. Some of the participants stated that they had experienced sleep deprivation. This finding has been previously noted by Cook, (1997) and can be seen as a way to confuse and disorientate the victim. George (cited in Cook, 1997) argues that sleep deprivation can be seen as the women attempting to use different methods to overcome her lack of physical stature when attacking. Many of the participants now experience severe anxiety and depression, have lost a lot of weight and have to take sleeping pills due to the abuse. One participant produced a list of the entire health problems and general emotional problems he now is experiencing. These included: sleeplessness, reliving the attacks, neglecting myself, poor concentration, panic attacks, pains in the chest ‘fear of heart attack’, hopelessness, lack of self-esteem, powerlessness, poor appetite or fasting, humiliation, mental anguish, emotional distress, physical distress, pain and sometimes wishing he had died. This area of the finding revealed a definite divide between the participants. Some participants wanted to show how much the domestic violence had affected them, which I took to be an attempt on the behalf of the participants to show how badly domestic violence has affected their lives and that it is not something that should be either taken lightly or ignored. In contrast to this finding, some of the participants seem to minimize the violence that their wives had inflicted on them. One participant claimed that ‘I was only slightly hurt’ and this was after his wife had beaten him with a garden rake and then reversed a car onto him. Emotional abuse was a commonality in the findings, but as shown with this

accounts, emotional abuse was often combined with physical abuse. Another form of emotional abuse that many of the participants encountered was the female perpetrator telling lies and making false allegations about the victim, mainly to his place of work, 'My wife and her family had gone out of their way to sabotage my career by calling prospective clients and saying things about me which were untrue'. The victims were often made to account for their time and were constantly accused of having affairs when in the majority of these cases it was the wife herself who was having the affair. This can be seen as a way of the wife to deflect the attention away from her behaviour by placing all of the blame on her victim. This finding is also very common within research

As well as experiencing emotional abuse, all the participants had been physically abused by their wives. In some cases the physical abuse was horrific. One man was stabbed by his wife, lost half of his lung and spent a week on a life support machine. Not only did this man's wife cause him immense physical damage, the emotional effects that this victim suffers from can be seen to be equally as traumatising. The victim often relives the stabbing and faced humiliation from having to go through court proceedings because of the attack, 'the trial was a joke! Had I stabbed my wife in the back and had she suffered the loss of half her lung! I would have been sentenced to 7-10 years in prison'. The wife got a nine month suspended sentence for actual bodily harm. It has often been found that violent women do not face as harsh sentences and men who have inflicted violence on women. The justice department in America (1991) found that when carrying out a survey into male and female sentencing there was a different standard of women. 'For each category of offence, women received shorter average maximum sentences than men' (cited in Cook, 1997; Pp22). It is not just within domestic violence that sentencing differences between male and female perpetrators occur. In the area of child murders, it has been found to be quite common for mothers to kill their children, especially when the child is under the age of one (Birch, 1993; Pp202). These women often have their sentences lessened from the charge of murder down to manslaughter on the grounds of 'diminished responsibility', whereas fathers who have killed have been found to have their sentences increased to life imprisonment. The

differences in sentences could be because of the stereotypical roles that society holds concerning men and women, which were discussed in chapter two.

Many of the participants went through a number of physical attacks before they eventually left their wives, 'once she hit me in the eye with the telephone when she became very angry after my mother called. I told my colleagues that I hit the kitchen cupboard door'. This same participant was also severely burnt with an iron by his wife. When at casualty, he lied about how he obtained the burn by saying that he did it when he was drunk, but this participant never drank. This is a familiar finding thought out the area of domestic violence. Both male and female victims have both been shown to hide evident injuries from friends and colleagues (Cook, 1997; pp49) Participants often recalled being slapped, punched, kicked and hit with household items. It is not uncommon for female perpetrators of domestic violence to use weapons, McLeod (1984) found similar finding to this, with male victims sustaining more extensive injuries due to a greater use of weapons. Emotional and physical violence was most common, with all participants experiencing both types of violence. Sexual violence was not very common with the male victims, but is a common form of domestic violence for female victims (Kelly, 1988). A few of the participants experienced sexual deprivation. This finding could be because either the male participants really did not experience much sexual abuse or that they did not want to reveal the sexual abuse that they had experienced through shame.

Some of the participants reported facing regular condemnation about their sexual performance, ' She constantly criticises my sexual performance and compares me to previous boyfriends'. This finding coincides with what Cook, (1997) found when interviewing participants, ' did she say you were sexually inadequate? Yes, usually to a third party. She would allude to that, and I would find out about her remarks later. She was a real tease to other men. She would even do that in front of men' (Cook, 1997; Pp57). Criticisms made against a man's sexual performance have also been found in other areas of female violence, Lee (2000) found that men who were being sexually harassed in the workplace often faced criticism about their sexual performance, 'Jane began harassing Alex in front of the members of the public, by referring to what she perceived as his poor sexual performance in comparison with her current

boyfriend' (Lee, 2000; Pp?) It can be seen that when can be violent in number of different situations but in these cases can the man be seen to be responsible for the violence in any way? In chapter two, the concept of 'Mutual combat' was explored and will now be considered from the findings of the study.

Mutual combat?

A common argument that has been previously put to the suggestion of male victims of domestic violence is that of mutual combat (Saunders, 1986). Past evidence has shown that it can be common for both people in a relationship to be violent towards each other (Straus et al, 1980). Although this may have been the case with previous research it was not the case in this study. None of the participants in this study said that they ever used physical violence towards their wife. Only four participants out of seventeen admitted that they might have verbally or mentally hurt their wives. But the emotional violence was not always directly aimed hurting the wife. One man states that he did emotionally abuse his wife, but not in the same way that she had done to him. The emotional abuse that he says that he used against his wife was 'shutting her out' and not letting her know what he was feeling. Two of the participants stated that whilst having an argument they 'may have said hurtful things'.

In the cases where the male victims said that they did use emotional violence towards their wives in that same incident the argument had turned physically violent with the wife again using violence. The majority of the findings of this study were consistent with previous research that has been carried out in the area of male victims of domestic violence. Although it has been previously found that men and women use equal amounts of violence in a relationship (Straus *et al*, 1980), this was not the case in this study. One of the participants even faced further verbal abuse from his wife because he would not retaliate with violence towards her, 'she calls me a wimp when I won't hit back'.

Reasons for leaving.

The differing forms of domestic violence that were experienced by the male victims of domestic violence were mainly a constant problem with severe

domestic assaults occurring or at least being reported to the organisation, only a number of times. The main reason for the participants leaving the abusive relationship was due to a physically violent attack. As already mentioned in this chapter, one participant lost half of his lung and was on a life support machine for a week after a brutal physical attack by his wife. In another case, the male victim was severely beaten with a sweeping brush which left him with 'cuts and bruises, bleeding and in pain', and on the final occasion, this man was beaten with a garden rake and then his wife reversed a car back onto him, trapping him between the car and a van, 'luckily I was only slightly hurt'. This attack caused the victim to leave his wife and move into his parents' house. This participant explained how his wife found him again and abused him in front of his parents'; she then turned on his mother by verbally abusing her, which caused her to have a stroke in front of them all. The account of this victim coincides with the argument previously noted in this chapter, that some male victims may wish to hide the violence that they have been subjected to, by minimizing the effects that the violence had on them. In some of the physical attacks the wife had use an object as a weapon. This is a familiar finding for female perpetrators of domestic violence (McLeod, 1984), I would personally argue that this demonstrates that women although violence may feel physically intimidated by their male victims, who more than likely will be of physically larger build and strength.

Other participants were forced out of their own homes either through their wives telling them to leave or being forced to leave through barring orders. It is not known where the victims went to after they left, as this was not stated in the findings. One victim has been forced to leave the abusive relationship temporarily because physical and mental violence that he has suffered has caused him to have a nervous breakdown that has meant him being hospitalised. Another common finding from the victims was that when the abuse was reported to the police, the wife often turned the situation around and claimed she was the one being abused, once realising that her husband had reported the abuse. An interesting finding of the study was that very few of the participants who had left the relationship returned to the abusive relationship. Most of the victims had suffered the abuse for a number of years, and most seemed to reach a certain point, which meant that they could no longer be in the violent relationship. But

if most of the participants had experienced violent attacks for a number of years, then why did they not leave the relationship earlier? .

Reasons for staying.

All the participants in the study were asked to describe the reasons for staying in the abusive relationships and putting up with what was in most cases brutal violence. All but one of the participants had children, and this was the main reasons for the male victims to remain in the violent relationship ‘ I have to put up with this behaviour because of the children. At all times I did my best to protect the children. I took the brunt of the anger. I was worried that if I left she would turn her anger on the children’. This was actually found in one case, where the children of the male victim reported to the psychologist working on the case that they had been abused by their mother, ‘The children told the psychologist details of the abuse they had suffered when their mother lived with them and they don’t want to see or live with her’. In the guideline questions that were set for the participants, I did not ask about the effects that the domestic violence had had on the children, but the effects were mentioned on a number of occasions. Again, I think that this can be seen as an attempt on the behalf of the male victim to emphasise the significant impact that the violence has had, so that the issue is not taken lightly. Many of the participants were still very much in love with their abusers and felt that by staying in the relationship they would be able to help their wives overcome the problem. One man who is still in the violent relationship remains there in hope that the violence will stop and ‘it will work out’. This parallels with the concept of ‘internal excuses’ suggested by Cook (1997), which can be said to be one of the main reasons for male victims to remain hidden. It is frequent for both male and female victims to want the just the violence to stop and not the relationship as well (Pearson, 1997).

Many of the participants feared that if they left the relationship the children would forget all about their father. The fear of losing their children and the fear that the children may be the ones to be hurt if the male victim leaves the relationship is a common finding through out male domestic violence research. Men often feel that it is their responsibility to keep the family together for the sake of the children, even if this means putting up with constant verbal and physical abuse (Steinmetz, 1977-1978). Most men and women realise that it is

the mother who is more likely to obtain custody of the children, 'She is also abusive to the children, recently she sort legal aid, now she tells me she will have no difficulty in having me excluded from the house'. The importance of the effects of the violence also highlights the need for greater awareness of the problem of male victims of domestic violence, as necessary resources need to be developed for the protection of both the male victims and their children.

Many of the participants also expressed fears of loneliness and feelings of uncertainty of where they could go. This one of the main problems that male victims of domestic violence face is that there are such limited resources available to them. One participant stated what he most feared about leaving the relationship was having nowhere to go and live and he also stated that he wondered who would believe him that his wife was abusing him. Many of the participants stated their wives often used all their money and destroyed the businesses that they owned. This had a direct effect on them being able to leave the aggressive relationship, 'Initially, I stayed in B&B's for a few weeks and this depleted my limited budget'. One of the participants who has left his violent partner is experiencing financial difficulties, he still gives his wife £100 per week, this is because of an agreement made with her solicitor on the day she left, despite having to give up his business due to pressure from his wife. He also has sole custody of his three children as it was discovered that their mother was also abusing the children.

It should be noted that although nearly all the participants involved in this study had left the brutal relationship they were also all members of the organisation Amen. I think this should be seen as a very strong influencing factor for the male victims being able to leave the domestic violence situation. Although this was not stated, I would argue that without the help of the organisation, the participants might not have been able to leave the relationship.

Ways of solving the problem.

The guidelines that were set out for the participants aimed to look at the problems that male victims of domestic violence may face, both inside and outside of the violent relationship, and the ways and reasons for why male

victims of domestic violence have remained hidden and ignored for so many years. The participants in the study were also asked about the different ways that they believe the problem of male victims of domestic violence could start to be solved. Nearly all the participants believed that greater awareness of the problem needed to be developed. ‘ The issue to be taken seriously by ALL of the agencies and police and judges and society generally’. Increased awareness needed to come from not only the public as a whole but also from the government. Many of the victims studied pointed out the need for greater government funding for the problem. This would help increase the number of organisations and sheltered housing that are available solely for male victims and as previously suggested for the sake of the victims children, which was another concern of many of the participants. All the participants in this study had the help and support of the organisation Amen, which was obviously an influencing factor in them leaving the violent relationship. The majority of the participants also stated that they just wanted to be believed. This shows that there is a great need to increase public awareness of the problem of male victims of domestic violence so that they no longer feel trapped or forced to stay in an abusive relationship. This can also be said for the problem of female victims of domestic violence who, even though are recognised as a problem by society do not get the recognition by the whole of society. I would argue that this could show that the problem of domestic violence may never be solved because of the ingrained perceptions held by society.

Another sentiment that was also mentioned by participants was that they felt and had experienced a lack of understanding of the problem they were facing from the police and the social services. One participant who has now left his abusive partner because of a ruthless attack had previously reported the violence to the local social services but was simply told to go home and pack his bags. Her response to the violence that he told her he was being put through was “what is keeping you there anyway?”

In some cases the violent wife had turned the situation around and said that it was herself who was being abused and the husband who was in fact the real was arrested. Many of the participants wanted the same support from organisations,

the government and society that female victims of domestic violence themselves receive. If male victims of domestic violence do not have the belief that their experiences will be believed and have the same sort of support from both society and the relevant organisations then there is no wonder that they have remained hidden for so many years. The participants of this study may not have had to suffer the emotional and physical violence that they have done if there was greater support from the outside community.

The majority of the findings can be seen to correspond with previous research that has been carried out in the area of male victims of domestic violence, but the findings also highlighted that criticisms can be made towards previous arguments that have maintained male victims hidden position in domestic violence. The concept of mutual combat has previously been reinforced with empirical evidence (Straus *et al*, 1980), but I found in this study that none of the male victims stated that they had been violent towards their wives. Although it was expected that the main reason for staying in the abusive relationship would be the children or love for the female partner as has also been found in previous studies (Cook, 1997), I did think that more of the participants would have returned to the relationship after leaving their abusive partner. There are many different aspects of male victims of domestic violence that the study has drawn upon. The conclusions of all the study will be now explored in greater detail.

Conclusion.

Aims and objectives of the study.

The study has explored, analysed and discussed the different ways in which male victims of domestic violence have been ignored and therefore hidden from the knowledge of society. Extensive research has been carried out in the area of female victims of domestic violence, which has led to the ignorance of the male victim. Although research into female victims has overshadowed the plight of male victims, it has also led to the acknowledgment of the male victim, and so it was necessary for the study to consider the area of female victims. Previous research carried out in the area of male victims of domestic violence has revealed the existence of male victims (Steinmetz, 1977-1978), but the extent of the problem has often been disputed, with the argument that there are not enough male victims of domestic violence to warrant the same attention that female victims of domestic violence have received (Tierney, 1982). From the findings in this study, I would dispute this claim and argue that male victims are a significant problem within domestic violence. Each of the ways that male victims of domestic violence have been and are 'hidden' from public knowledge needs to be individually considered in order for male victims to feel secure enough to leave the abusive relationship.

Hidden victims.

Although there is substantially less information available on male victims of domestic violence, this should not be taken as an indication that male victims are less significant problem when compared to female victims. This study has looked at the different ways that male victims of domestic violence are 'hidden' from society. The notion of masculinity and the socially constructed roles that are held in high regard within our society make it a very hard task for men to come forward and admit that their wives have abused them. It is this notion of masculinity that causes an additional problem of humiliation for male victims that cannot be experienced by female victims. It was found in the study that men do feel responsible for keeping their family together for the sake of the children

regardless of the abuse they themselves may have to sustain. The main reason that participants within this study remained in the abusive relationship was because of their children. I would argue that the influence of these socially constructed roles is one of the main reasons why male victims have remained and still today remain hidden. The role of society has also been found to play an influencing role towards the ignorance of female victims, but I believe that not to the same extent as male victims of domestic violence. The majority of society finds the concept of a man being beaten nothing but amusing (Cose, 1995), but findings in this study revealed that male victims suffered from both emotional and the physical abuse which is a prime example that domestic violence can affect men in severely negative ways as well as women and should be taken more seriously. By denying the true existence of male victims of domestic violence is to ignore the full problem.

For most people the concept of a violent women and an abused man is inconceivable. In order to begin to overcome this problem, greater awareness needs to be created so that society can begin to understand the plight of male victims of domestic violence and attempt to change both their views and the stereotypical roles that they hold for both men and women. Women need to be acknowledged as being capable of being perpetrators of violence and not just seen as victims of violence especially by the legal system (Pearson, 1997). Women are more likely to get away with abusing their husbands because of the lack of awareness of the problem on the behalf of the official services. Encouraging female violence leads to a moral excuse for male violence, ‘The moral justification of assault implicit when a woman slaps or throws something at a partner for doing something outrageous reinforces his moral justification for slapping when she is doing something outrageous’ (Straus, 1992, cited in Cook, 1997;Pp25).

Improving the situation.

This study has shown that male victims of domestic violence should not be ignored nor should remain hidden from the knowledge of society, as the situation will only deteriorate further. Increasing awareness of male victims of domestic violence is not intended by anyone researching in this area to decrease the

importance of female victims, but by recognising that women are not the only ones who are victims of domestic violence, the problem as a whole can start to be solved. A growing recognition of the problem, which I found in the community of E-mailed authors used in this study can only be seen as a positive move as greater societal awareness should lead to a better understanding and more resources being available to men who are abused by their wives. Although I have highlighted the problem of ignorance and sympathy towards male victims of domestic violence in this study, there is still a lack of recognition of the problem of domestic violence overall. Neither sex are given the sympathy and support from society that they should receive which I believe will only hold back improvement of the problem of domestic violence.

Future research.

From the findings in this study and the amount of participants that was initially offered for the study, I would dispute the claim that there are not enough male victims to warrant extensive and further research and support. The findings in this study showed that the main reason for male victims to remain in the abusive relationship was their children. All but one of the participants had children, and I think it would be interesting to use the same aims of this study, but use participants who did not have children and explore the reasons for them remaining in the relationship. Future research could also focus on the effects that having an abused father can have on the children. I myself, the most interesting finding of the study was the contrast between some participants wanting to emphasise their abuse whilst others wanted to minimise the abuse, and again this could be an aspect of male victims of domestic violence that has potential for future research.

Twenty to thirty years ago female victims were the hidden side of domestic violence, but with increased awareness of the problem means society now acknowledges female victims and the problem of domestic violence too, with the same about of time and effort surely that same can be managed for the male victims for domestic violence. There is no need for either a man or a women to suffer within an abusive relationship, domestic violence should not be accepted

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whatever sex the victims is, with greater recognition of the problem there should be no need for there to be a 'hidden side of domestic violence'.

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www.domesticviolence.org/who.html

Useful Organisations.

Women's aid federation of England.

Victim support.

Refuge.

Zero tolerance charitable trust.

M.A.L.E

P.O.D.A

Derby women's centre.

Domestic violence data source.

Home office. Market & Communication group.

Northern Ireland Women's aid federation.

Domestic violence: Enough is enough.

Amen.