Identifying motivators and risk factors for Intimate Partner Violence that continues from custody

By

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ABSTRACT

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a public health problem across the globe. Policy and practice vary, but there is a general consensus that IPV significantly and negatively impacts the criminal justice, health and welfare systems. Policy and practice inform how we manage risk, rehabilitate offenders and protect victims; it is therefore important that policy and practice are appropriate and evidence based. This thesis aims to identify motivators and risk factors for ongoing abuse from custody, a previously under researched area, to inform policy and practice in England and Wales.

To achieve this aim, the thesis begins by exploring the function of denial, justifying, minimising and blaming in IPV, via a systematic review using narrative synthesis. The findings indicate that while denial etc. can have a self-protective function, it can also represent faulty internal mechanisms that fuel abusive behaviour and a tool that men use instrumentally to achieve goals. A novel empirical study then explores abuse from custody from the perspective of the perpetrator, using semi-structured interviews and phenomenologically informed thematic analysis. Three key themes with 10 sub themes were identified, including disrupted connections, external influences, and internal processes. A third novel piece of work makes use of proxy indicators readily available in custodial data to predict who will be abusive from custody. Using binomial regression, two proxy indicators showed promise as predictors: Risk of Serious Harm to a Known Adult in custody and anti-social conduct in custody. The model explained 23.3% of the variance in abuse from custody, correctly classifying 85.4% of cases, however only 45.45% of abusers were correctly identified. The findings from this body of work expand the knowledge base regarding IPV and abusive behaviour from custody. Together they highlight how policy and practice can be developed to ensure they are evidence based and serving the general public most effectively. Risk management, rehabilitation efforts and victim protection can be enhanced by implementing the findings of this work. Recommendations for further research are also proposed.

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Table of Contents

List of tables

List of figures

List of appendices

Chapter 1: Introduction to thesis

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) incorporates a wide variety of behaviours, including Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), child to parent abuse, sexual offences, female genital mutilation and so called 'honour-based' violence. Domestic abuse, as defined by Home Office[1], can have a wide variety of socio-economic costs, including physical and emotional harm, lost output, costs for services responding to domestic abuse (e.g. the police, health services, victim and survivor services), and the need for staff training. The social and economic cost for victims of domestic abuse in England and Wales for the year ending March 2017 is estimated to be approximately £66 billion (Oliver et al., 2019).

In 2010 the UK government set out a plan for eliminating violence against women and girls[2] and set about developing a number of initiatives aimed at protecting victims and preventing further offending. These included disclosure systems for individuals in a relationship with an IPV perpetrator and legal variants on restraining orders. When the Istanbul Convention came into force in 2014, it required countries who ratified the convention to engage in actions supporting four pillars to address violence against women and domestic violence: prevention, protection, prosecution and co-ordinated policies (Council of Europe, 2014). It requires comprehensive legislation and policy that aims to reduce all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, and that the safety and needs of victims and witnesses are central to protective measures adopted by the country. Although the UK signed up to the Istanbul convention in 2012, it has yet to ratify it, meaning the requirements of the convention are not yet legally binding in the UK[3]. The Home Office produce annual reports on their progress toward meeting the requirements for ratification, most recently in 2019 (Home Office, 2019) demonstrating an ongoing motivation to meet these 'gold-standard' requirements.

In Wales, many aspects of government policy are devolved, however justice continues to fall under the legal remit of the UK government. Due to the devolved nature of many statutory considerations in Wales, while criminal justice is relevant to England and Wales, many other aspects of legislation relevant to VAWDASV only apply in England *or* Wales. This has resulted in different approaches to addressing VAWDASV in the two countries. Wales introduced the Violence against Women,

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[1] *"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional."* Home Office (2012). News story. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-definition-of-domestic-violence

[2] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97905/vawg-paper.pdf

[3] https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk/news/2020/6/8/call-out-for-the-uk-to-ratify-the-istanbul-convention

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, which aimed to improve the public sector response to VAWDASV in Wales. A national strategy was developed for implementing the Act through 2016-21, which included an objective related to perpetrators: *"Increased focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety"* (p. 19, Welsh Government, 2016). The UK government's strategy for addressing Violence Against Women focuses on perpetrators by aiming to change behaviour in order to prevent abuse and reoffending, under the heading 'pursuing perpetrators' (HM Government, 2016). The strategy was 'refreshed' in 2019 (HM Government, 2019) establishing an ambition to make VAWG 'everyone's business'. Despite the efforts of the Government, the number of women killed by partners has remained constant (Long et al., 2020).

The focus of the above policies and strategies is generally on protecting and supporting victims and survivors to minimise harm and assist them in reporting abuse. Similarly, the focus of research about IPV has often been the perspective and experiences of victims and survivors (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dutton, 1996). Whilst this has brought about important changes to policy and practice and added significantly to the knowledge base, it places responsibility for navigating abusive experiences on the victim. More recently there has been a drive to focus on perpetrators as a way to prevent further offending, evident in the recent 'Call to Action' from UK VAWDASV charities (Drive, 2020), asking the government to shift its focus from 'why doesn't she leave' to 'why doesn't he stop'. The last two decades have also seen a significant increase in research exploring the perspective of perpetrators (e.g. Smith, 2007; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). This increased focus on perpetrators is helping us move towards stopping VAWDASV at the source and preventing further victims, rather than simply focussing on keeping victims and survivors away from perpetrators. Understanding and addressing the needs of perpetrators provides an opportunity to support them in moving away from abusive behaviour and towards healthy relationships, thus reducing the risk of new or previous partners being victimised.

The relevance of the question 'why doesn't he stop?' is apparent in the literature relating to the end of abusive relationships. Women who have left an abusive relationship can be subject to greater levels and a wider variety of post-relationship stalking (Ferreira & Matos, 2013) and restraining orders tend to be less effective for higher risk perpetrators (Strand, 2012). Studies have found that arrest and court ordered sanctions (including custody) have a minimal impact on IPV recidivism (e.g. Gross et al., 2000; Woolridge & Thistlethwaite, 2005). In addition, ex-partners have been found to account for nearly half of stalking cases (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). These post relationship risks are readily accepted and incorporated into policy and practice in the community; details of refuges and safe houses are closely guarded, information sharing is restricted, intermediaries are used to

facilitate contact with children, and funding is provided for protective measures such as panic alarms and home security systems. There is, however, an assumption that victims are safe once the perpetrator is in custody, for example Spitzberg (2002) commented *"The stalker, short of dying or being in prison, could forever be the voice on the next phone call or the person around the next corner"* (p. 273, emphasis added). As a result, existing policies and strategies include protecting the victim throughout the judicial process, and interventions are primarily focussed on support through criminal proceedings, support in the practicalities involved in leaving a relationship and enhancing restrictions on contact in the community. None of them refer to the ongoing need to protect victims once the perpetrator is in custody.

Post relationship IPV, stalking and unwanted pursuit in the community have been studied in terms of their drivers and risk factors (e.g. regaining power and control, Brownridge, 2006; desire for reconciliation, Crane et al., 2013; jealousy, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2000; retribution for the breakup, Mullen et al., 1999). Abuse from custody requires the individual to overcome practical barriers that are not present in the community, for example circumventing prison security procedures, gaining access to illegal mobile phones and paying others to make contact for you. It may be that IPV perpetrators sentenced to custody are less concerned about social conformity and are therefore less likely to adhere to restrictions and orders placed upon them (e.g. Carlson et al., 1999, Cattaneo & Goodman, 2005). Given the high incidence of blaming seen in IPV perpetrators (e.g. Dutton, 1986; Eckhardt & Dye, 2000) it is possible that men who have been sent to prison for IPV have increased levels of grievance and anger towards the victim for what they perceive to be her part in their incarceration. High risk perpetrators are less likely to adhere to restraining orders in the community (Strand, 2012) and perpetrators are given custodial sentences for more serious offences, indicating a higher level of risk. However, a single serious incident may result in a custodial sentence, but not represent high risk of IPV recidivism, as chronicity of relationship violence is a risk enhancing factor (Kropp & Hart, 2015). This variation in risk may partly explain why some men are abusive from custody while others are not.

The abuse from custody is harmful in itself and must be prevented, and the persistence and determination required to engage in abuse from custody may indicate a level of preoccupation with the victim that is relevant for risk management on release. The limited research in existence that has investigated contact with victims from perpetrators in custody has been based on transcripts of phone calls between the couple in US correctional institutions, where the perpetrators had yet to be convicted (Bonomi et al., 2011; Carotta et al., 2018). While this literature does provide some information about the potential motives of perpetrators who are abusive from custody, there is no research exploring the views and experiences of the perpetrator themselves. Given the need to

protect victims, this is an area that requires more attention; it is something we must try to measure, understand and prevent. In order to prevent abuse from custody, it needs to be possible to predict who is likely to do it. To ensure the method of prediction is employed by the authorities, it needs to be one that is easily achievable and/or measurable by the criminal justice system, ideally using data that is readily available. By expanding the knowledge base about motivators and risk factors for abuse from custody, policy and practice can be shaped to achieve its goal of tackling domestic abuse.

Cognitive distortions and distorted accounts are relevant to both unwanted pursuit behaviours (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004) and persistence in ex-intimate stalkers (MacKenzie et al., 2013). Current national policy relating to domestic abuse in the UK states that *"perpetrators are held responsible for their actions and are brought to justice in a way that properly recognises the devastating consequences of their behaviour"* (p.3, HM Government, 2018) and, as demonstrated above, holding perpetrators to account is a common phrase used when describing how work with VAWDASV perpetrators should be approached. Policy maintains a push towards accountability and responsibility taking, in recognition of the fact that historically violence against women and girls has been supported by unequal power structures in society and the 'socially sanctioned dominance of women by men' (p. 481, Devaney, 2014). Given that distorted accounts are common in offenders (Maruna & Copes, 2005) and can have a protective function (e.g. Tangney & Dearing, 2002), is it appropriate for policy to be so focussed on accountability and responsibility taking?

Denying, minimising, justifying and blaming is something that is commonly seen in IPV perpetrators (eg. Dutton, 1986; Eckhardt & Dye, 2000; Heckert & Gondolf, 2000b) and there is a mixed picture regarding its relationship to risk; in some cases it has been found to be related to risk (e.g. Henning & Holdford, 2006) and in others has been found not to be (e.g. Loinaz, 2014). For men convicted of sexual offences (MCOSOs) however, the relationship between denial, minimisation etc. and risk is weak (e.g. Nunes et al., 2007) and the use of such tactics often serves a self-protective function (e.g. Blagden et al., 2014). Forensic psychological practice in the UK, which is generally focussed on working with perpetrators to change behaviour and manage risk, has moved away from addressing denial and minimisation in treatment and considering it a barrier to risk reduction, focusing on a more strengths based approach such as the Good Lives Model (Ward & Gannon, 2006), primarily as a result of the general academic consensus on MCOSOs. However, there are differences between IPV offenders and MCOSOs that make their situations less comparable, for example the stigma associated with sexual offending (e.g. Tewksbury, 2012) is more consistent than that for IPV, which has broader cultural acceptance (e.g. Gracia & Lila, 2015). It may therefore not be appropriate to automatically apply the same treatment approaches to all VAWDASV perpetrator groups without first exploring the evidence base. To ensure our policy and practice is appropriately focussed and

evidence-based, this is an area that requires further analysis. Understanding the relevance of denying, minimising, justifying and blaming for IPV perpetrators will help to understand its relevance to abuse that continues from custody.

Aims of thesis

The overall aim of this thesis is to identify the motives and risk factors for abuse continuing from custody. To address this question, the following research aims were developed:

1. To determine what is known about the function of denial, minimisation, justification and blaming plays in IPV
2. To explore ongoing abuse from custody from the perspective of male IPV perpetrators
3. To identify proxy indicators that could be used to predict ongoing abuse from custody

Thesis structure

This thesis aims to identify motivators and risk factors for ongoing abuse from custody. It explores two facets of IPV in depth, via three original empirical chapters, to fill the aforementioned gaps in knowledge and inform policy and practice in the UK. This chapter has presented background information about IPV and current policy in England and Wales, and the rationale for the thesis. Chapter two explores what is currently known about the function of denial, minimisation, justification and blaming in IPV through a systematic review. The review aims to evaluate the current literature and bring together its findings to determine whether current policy and practice are appropriate. Understanding the function of denial, minimising, justifying and blaming will assist in understanding the relevance of the skewed perceptions and distorted accounts of men who continue to be abusive from custody.

Chapter three explores the phenomenon of ongoing abuse from custody from the perspective of male IPV perpetrators. Using a qualitative methodology their experiences are explored to uncover motivators of the behaviour, therefore expanding the knowledge base and allowing conclusions to be drawn about potential risk factors for the behaviour. It highlights the potential for adaptations and alterations to existing policy and practice in order to better meet the needs of both perpetrators and victims.

Chapter four is a quantitative study that identifies potential proxy indicators for abuse from custody, which can be operationalised through existing prison data. These proxy indicators are then tested to determine whether they can predict who will be abusive from custody. In doing so, this chapter enhances the ability of the authorities to prevent and address this problematic behaviour.

Chapter five then concludes the thesis by bringing the findings together and highlighting implications for policy, practice and further research. Although there is a common thread of IPV throughout the chapters, they are designed to stand alone and chapters two, three and four will be submitted for publication.

Chapter 2: The function of denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming for Intimate Partner Violence perpetrators: A systematic review of the literature

Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is widespread, and denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming are common among perpetrators. Research into the function of distorted accounts in individuals convicted of sexual offences suggests they are often constructed post-hoc and serve a self-protective function due to the significant stigma associated with sexual offences, and meta-analysis indicates denial is not related to risk. These findings have influenced both policy and practice with this client group. Views on the function of denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming in IPV are mixed, often based on the theoretical standpoint of the authors, but the research has yet to be brought together in the way it has for individuals convicted of sexual offences. This review therefore aims to fill this gap in the literature by bringing together the knowledge of the function of distorted accounts in IPV offenders. A systematic review of primary research related to denial, minimising, justifying and blaming in male, heterosexual IPV perpetrators was conducted. 30 papers were found to meet the inclusion criteria and were quality appraised. Data were extracted and analysed using narrative synthesis. The findings indicate the function of denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming in this group is complex. It can represent faulty internal mechanisms that fuel abusive behaviour, serve as a way to protect the individual's identity and self-esteem, and be a tool men use instrumentally to achieve goals. The limitations of the study are discussed and implications and recommendations for policy, practice and future research are proposed.

Introduction

Current national policy relating to domestic abuse in the UK states that *"perpetrators are held responsible for their actions and are brought to justice in a way that properly recognises the devastating consequences of their behaviour"* (p. 3; HM Government, 2018). Holding perpetrators to account is a common phrase used when describing how work with perpetrators should be approached (e.g. Drive, 2020). In addition, the currently drafted Domestic Abuse Bill (Home Office, 2020) proposed making use of polygraphs while perpetrators are on licence to assist risk management. Policy's focus on accountability and responsibility taking is in recognition of the fact

that historically violence against women and girls has been supported by unequal power structures in society and the 'socially sanctioned dominance of women by men' (p. 481, Devaney, 2014). Research into IPV, both with perpetrators and victims, tells us that denial, minimisation, justification and blaming are a common occurrence (e.g. Dutton, 1986; Eckhardt & Dye, 2000, Heckert & Gondolf, 2000b). With a clear push from policy to focus on accountability and responsibility, it is important to understand the function of avoiding responsibility for IPV perpetrators to ensure that policy reflects the most appropriate course of action. First the complexities of definitions in this area are discussed followed by consideration of the relevance of denial, minimising, justifying and blaming for IPV offenders and their relation to risk, before outlining the aims of this review.

Definitions

There has been much debate within the literature regarding the definitions attributed to various forms of avoiding responsibility (see Mullaney, 2007, for a review). Distinctions have been made between excuses (where the person says the behaviour is not their fault, e.g. I was drunk, she fell etc.) and justifications (where the person acknowledges they did it, but believes they were justified in doing so, e.g. she hit me first) as proposed by Scott and Lyman (1968). Blaming appears to straddle excuses and justifications, depending on whether the person is blaming some*thing* (e.g. alcohol or being out of control) or some*one* (e.g. the victim). Minimisation can take various forms; minimising the frequency, severity or consequences of abuse (e.g. Scott & Strauss, 2007). Definitions of denial range from the denial of an event occurring or that you were involved with it to denying harm or intent, as seen in Hearn's (1998) category 'repudiations'. The debate around definitions is borne from a logical desire to categorise and understand the accounts of perpetrators, but the disparity is unhelpful for understanding the phenomenon on a broader scale. For the purpose of this review, the definitions are collapsed and any accounts that avoid responsibility, in whatever form, are considered.

Denial, minimisation, justification and blaming, and IPV

There are different theoretical viewpoints on the meaning and purpose of denial, minimisation, justification and blaming; the feminist perspective views denial, minimisation and blaming as a way for abusive men to avoid the consequences of their behaviour (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1979), psychoanalytic theory considers it to perform a self-defensive function to protect the inner sense of self (e.g. Papps & O'Carroll, 1998) and systems theory considers blaming to be a function of the relationship between the couple (e.g. Hansen & Harway, 1993), which contributes to relationship dissatisfaction (see Scott & Strauss, 2007, for a review).

One of the difficulties with understanding denial, minimising, blaming and justifying is that they can be used by perpetrators as abusive tactics to control the response of the victim, for example making them think the abuse is their fault so they alter their behaviour and/or do not report the abuse (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Not understanding the function of providing a distorted account impacts on the manageability of risk and the usefulness of rehabilitation attempts. But are these accounts constructed consciously and deliberately or a result of subconscious processes? As described in the following section, the range of potential underlying processes involved indicates the answer is dependent upon the individual concerned and the situation they are in.

Feminist theory proposes that violence against women is the product of a patriarchal society that allows men to be aggressive and dominate women (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1981). Indeed, early theories of abuse studied the behaviour of women to determine how their deficiencies precipitated abuse (Gayford, 1975). In a multinational study that included 17 countries (both developed and undeveloped), Asay et al. (2016) found that there were *"deep and long-held cultural beliefs, including the notion that patriarchy makes a family strong"* (p. 352). Across countries, traditional beliefs supporting male dominant structures were present that supported the use of power and control tactics to enforce the structure. The social acceptance of abusive behaviour is seen in the complexities of coercive control; many of the behaviours that constitute coercive control in an abusive relationship may be seen as both acceptable and desirable in an otherwise healthy relationship, which can make it difficult for juries and the judiciary to recognise (and thus give sanctions for) abusive behaviour (Bishop & Bettingson, 2018). In a similar way, from an evolutionary perspective, sexual conflict is relatively common and pervasive (Buss & Duntley, 2011), which may serve to justify such behaviour. The gendered nature of justifications for IPV may be related to it being considered more acceptable for a man to disclose abuse where he was simply protecting his male power and authority from a woman who challenged it (Dungee-Anderson & Cox, 2000). This cultural support of IPV may serve to justify abusive behaviours for both the perpetrator and the victim. Conversely, there is evidence of social stigma attached to IPV (e.g. LeJeune & Follette, 1994; Panuzio et al., 2006; Stamp & Sabourin, 1995), which may provide a motive for men to deny, minimise, blame and justify.

Due to the social stigma associated with IPV, it may be that perpetrators deny, minimise, justify and blame in order to manage how they are viewed, however evidence on this front is mixed. In their meta-analysis of social desirability and IPV, Sugarman and Hotaling (1997) found a weak to moderate effect size for social desirability and reporting IPV, which they felt may have been overestimated due to problems with the data. Henning and Holdford (2006) found that social

desirability was negatively correlated with recidivism, but hypothesised that this could be due to the different types of distortion proposed by Paulus (1984); impression management and self-deception. Self-deception may be relevant for some perpetrators. Studies have found that perpetrators often present their abuse as an exceptional event and one that was out of character (e.g. Lau & Stevens, 2012; Mullaney, 2007). Hashimoto et al. (2018) found that IPV perpetrators who did not seek help were concerned about being embarrassed, ashamed, not being believed or considering their abusive behaviour was normal. Smith, 2007 proposed that men emotionally defended themselves through self-deception as they were unable to cope with strong negative feelings. Vecina et al. (2016) proposed both self-deception as a form of self-protection and deceiving those who judge them were relevant as motives for distorted accounts in IPV offenders.

Research has identified a clear link between attitudes that support or justify the use of violence in relationships and IPV (e.g. Capaldi et al., 2012; Eckhardt & Dye, 2000; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000). It may be that men are not purely justifying and blaming to avoid sanctions but believe their distorted views due to their underlying attitudes. In line with this, studies have found that men who self-report perpetrating IPV overestimate the prevalence of IPV by others (Neighbors et al., 2010; Senkans et al., 2020). A self-determination model put forward by Neighbors et al. (2013) found that childhood exposure to IPV was related to having a controlled orientation, which in turn was associated with higher levels of justification for IPV and overestimations of the prevalence of IPV generally. Higher justification of IPV was also associated with higher levels of physical (but not psychological) abuse. Both men and women with a history of IPV were found to perceive hypothetical situations as less controlling than those without an IPV history (Ehrensaft & Vivian, 1999), suggesting a distorted view of what constitutes abuse.

In a similar vein, there is evidence that IPV men perceive others to be hostile (e.g. Bernard & Bernard, 1984), which may mean their account of the offence is an accurate description of their perception of what happened rather than a deliberate attempt to avoid consequences. In their Aggressive Relational Schema model, Senkans et al. (2020) propose that aggressive relational schemas present in IPV men result in them distorting social cues and events in ways that result in aggression and violence. They posit that perpetrators have an aggressive script based on ‘if x, then y’, where distorted thinking about relationships provides the ‘if’ and beliefs supportive of aggression provide the ‘then’ (e.g. if she is acting suspiciously then it’s OK for me to use aggression/violence/control to find out what’s going on).

There are then, different perspectives, theoretical standpoints and findings regarding the purpose denying, minimising, justifying and blaming serves for perpetrators. Is the truth all of these, none of

them or an amalgam of them all? And does it matter? The following section considers how distorted accounts relate to risk to help us consider this second question.

Denial, minimisation, justification and blaming, and risk

The evidence of a potential link between denial, minimisation, justification and blaming and IPV recidivism is mixed, perhaps due to the various forms the constructs can take, the differing potential motivations (as described above) and the difficulty in measuring them. In a study of American probationers, men who denied the abuse negatively affected their family and those who severely minimised their abuse history were more likely to recidivate, however the effect size was very small meaning the relationship between denial and minimisation and recidivism was relatively weak (Henning & Holdford, 2006). In addition, the study made use of measures of denial, minimisation and blaming that were designed for the study and were not validated, so the results may not be generalisable beyond the sample used. In a longitudinal Spanish study Loinaz (2014) found that acceptance of violence but not blaming female victims or minimisation of violence against women significantly contributed to prediction of reoffending. Dutton and Starzomski (1997), on the other hand, found that blaming was strongly associated with various non-physical forms of abuse.

Although neutralisations are common in the accounts of offenders (Maruna & Copes, 2005), the idea that neutralisation facilitates offending as well as protects against self-blame (Sykes & Matza, 1957) is embedded in the Criminal Justice System (Bullock & Condry, 2013), as can be seen by the influence of admitting guilt on sentencing and parole. Conversely, Maruna and Mann (2006) propose that it is imprudent to assume that post-hoc justifications are always criminogenic. If justifications occur after the offence rather than being a factor that facilitates it occurring, the necessity to target them in treatment reduces, and a guilty plea does not necessarily equate to lower risk. To determine which view is most appropriate, we must return to the evidence.

The wealth of research into the thought processes of men convicted of sexual offences (MCOSOs) has led to a greater understanding of the relevance of distorted accounts to both treatment and risk. Similar to IPV perpetrators, MCOSOs are a group for whom distorted accounts are also a common occurrence (e.g. Schneider & Wright, 2004). Maruna and Mann (2006) argued the post-hoc justifications appeared to be relevant for many individuals who committed sexual offences. Research indicates that for this group denial and minimisation are not necessarily linked to risk of sexual reoffending (e.g. Harkins et al., 2010; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005), although they may contribute to risk if they prevent the risk being understood and addressed (e.g. Mann et al., 2010). The literature suggests that denial and minimisation can serve a protective function as they allow the individual to protect their sense of self as a ‘good’ person and alleviate risk inducing feelings of

shame (e.g. Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Blagden et al., 2014). Recent research by Ware et al. (2015) has indicated that the function of denial is relevant for both risk and treatment of MCOSOs. When considering desistance from crime generally, Maruna (2004) found that an externalising attribution was associated with desistance. The volume of research on MCOSOs has allowed for findings to be consolidated, understood more broadly and influence policy and practice. Primarily as a result of the findings in MCOSOs, forensic practice in the UK has moved away from addressing denial and minimisation in treatment and considering it a barrier to risk reduction, focusing on a more strengths-based approach such as the Good Lives Model (Ward & Gannon, 2006).

There are similarities and differences between sexual offending and IPV. Sexual offending is highly stigmatised by society and individuals convicted of sexual offences often struggle to distance themselves from the label once it has been attached (e.g. Tewksbury, 2012). A sexual conviction, particularly against a child, can result in someone becoming a social pariah. Further to this, the stigma associated with committing a sexual offence can also negatively affect the offender's family (Tewksbury & Levenson, 2009). Although there is general stigma for being a spousal abuser (e.g. Panuzio et al., 2006; Stamp & Sabourin, 1995), there is broader cultural acceptance of IPV and gender roles (e.g. Gracia & Lila, 2015), as seen in media portrayals (e.g. Lee & Wong, 2020; Lloyd & Ramon, 2017). In addition to differences in cultural acceptance, sexual offences are often a discrete and compartmentalised aspect of an individual's life, which are hidden from those close to them. IPV is generally more pervasive in an offender's life and those close to them are victims of or witnesses to their offending, and therefore are aware of their behaviour. Given these differences, is it appropriate to assume denial and minimisation play the same role in IPV as they do for sexual offending, or should we be making greater efforts to hold IPV perpetrators to account as current policy dictates?

Aims and objectives

The recent direction of forensic risk assessment and treatment in the UK is primarily being driven by the plethora of literature regarding those convicted of sexual offences. This direction is based on a wealth of research into the motives and thought processes of MCOSOs. As described above, findings relating to distorted accounts in MCOSOs are generally consistent and there is little debate about their function or relevance to risk (e.g. Harkins et al., 2010; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). The robustness of the findings for MCOSOs is currently influencing the direction of travel for treatment and risk assessment with offenders more generally. While there are similarities between IPV perpetrators and MCOSOs, there are also important differences. As described above, research

considering distorted accounts in the IPV population, understanding of the phenomenon is varied and influenced by theoretical stance. An overall picture of the function of denial, minimising, justifying and blaming that brings together these perspectives has yet to be developed. The purpose of this review is therefore to bring together the evidence relating to distorted accounts in IPV and develop a comprehensive understanding of its function to determine whether heading in the same direction of practice as MCOSOs is appropriate.

Method

Protocol and registration

The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). The protocol was registered ("PROSPERO - International prospective register of systematic reviews") after the initial data search was complete but prior to sifting of studies.

Search strategy

The Cochrane library and PROSPERO register were checked to ensure there were no existing reviews of this nature. Pilot searches were run on a variety of databases to identify the most appropriate search terms and databases. A systematic search was completed in January 2019, which included the following databases: Cochrane Library, Criminal Justice Abstracts, ProQuest, PsychInfo, PubMed, Science Direct and Scopus. The search terms used were: *(dating OR domestic OR partner OR spous* OR wife) AND (violence OR abuse OR battery OR aggression OR assault OR homicide OR murder) AND (deni* OR deny* OR minimi* OR justif* OR blam*)*. The terms 'adult' and 'offender' were not used so mixed adolescent and adult papers could be considered and to account for the general underreporting of IPV. The search was repeated in June 2020 to identify any newly published articles.

To limit the impact of potential publication bias, targeted searches were conducted on the Correctional Service Canada, Ministry of Justice, Women's Aid and RESPECT websites, and prominent authors in the field. In addition, hand searching of reference lists of articles included and the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment v.3 manual (Kropp & Hart, 2015) took place.

Study selection

The inclusion and exclusion criteria followed are described in table 2.1:

Table 2.1

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

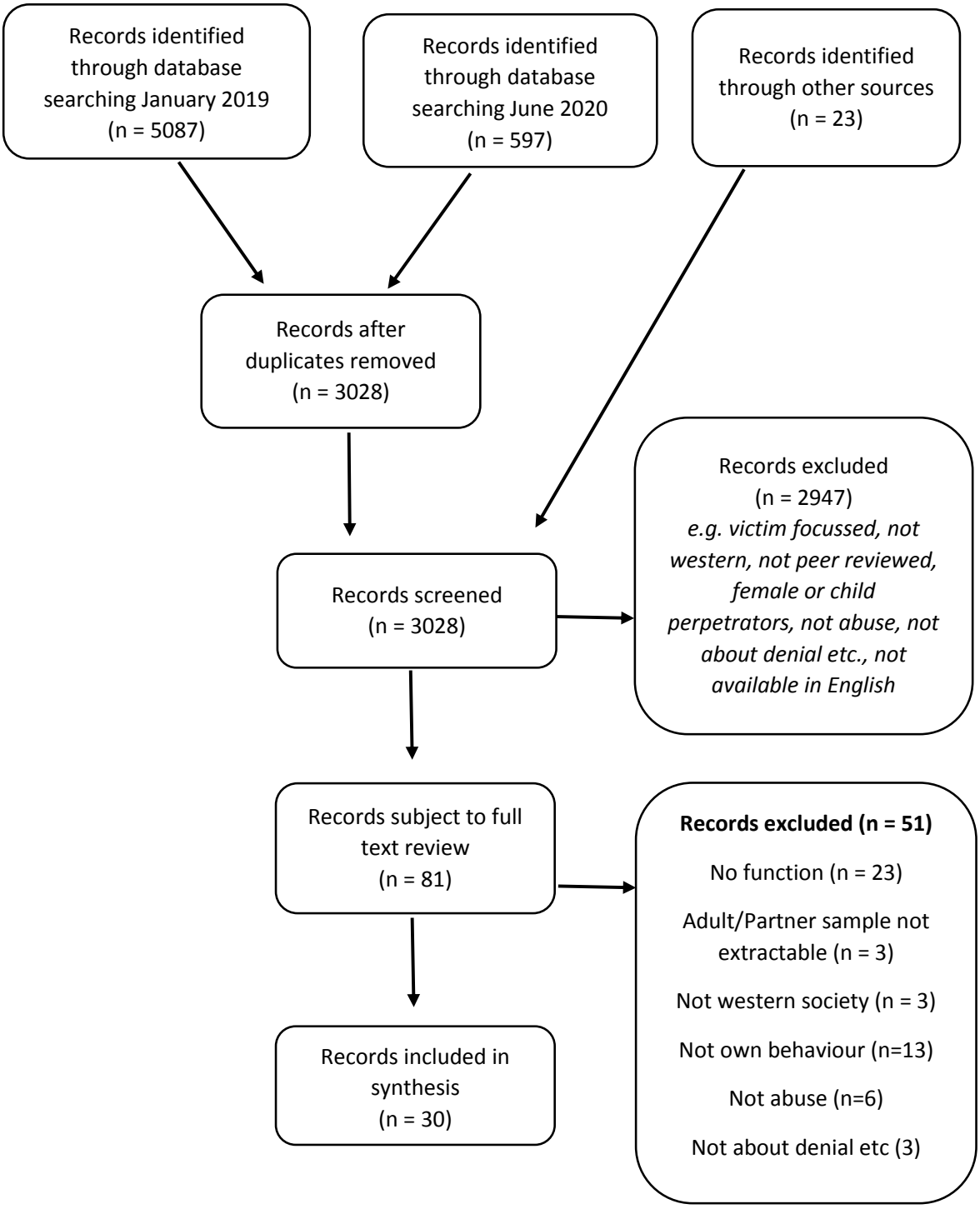
	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population	• Adult male IPV perpetrators (≥18)* • Convicted and unconvicted • IPV has been to female victims • **studies with mixed age participants were included if the adult group was clearly identifiable in results*	• Children and adolescents (<18) • Women • Same sex IPV
Phenomenon of Interest	• Draws conclusions or forms hypotheses about the function of denial, minimisation, justification or blaming relating to abusive behaviour • Related to denial etc. of their own abusive behaviour	• The function of the denial etc is not explored • Attitude or scenario-based studies, or where denial is not of own abusive behaviour
Context/language	• Western cultures • In English (or full translation available)	• Non-western cultures • Full English translation not available
Publication type	• Primary research • Peer reviewed	• Literature reviews • Opinion pieces • Literature review book chapters • Theses
Other considerations	• Both quantitative and qualitative studies were considered	• Meta-analysis

The studies identified through searching (23.01.19) were first reviewed for duplicates, then sifted by title and abstract. Where papers clearly did not meet the inclusion criteria, they were discarded. Papers that appeared to meet the inclusion criteria, or where exclusion could not be determined with confidence from the abstract alone, were examined as part of the full text review. Papers were reviewed in full by the lead researcher to establish if they met the inclusion criteria. Where this was unclear, discussion with the researcher's supervisors took place. The search was repeated in June

2020 to gather any articles published since the first search, adding a further 597 articles. Overall, of the 81 studies reviewed in full, 30 met the inclusion criteria and were subject to quality appraisal and included in the review. The PRISMA flowchart of the stages of study selection can be seen in figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1

PRISMA flow chart of search strategy



Quality appraisal

To contribute to the robustness of the review, each of the 30 included studies was subject to quality appraisal. Studies were not selected or deselected based on quality during the search process to protect against bias (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006), but results were used to weight findings.

Qualitative studies were assessed for methodological quality using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2017) quality assessment. Quantitative studies were subject to quality appraisal using the AXIS (Downes et al., 2016), a tool designed for cross-sectional studies. Studies with mixed methodology were appraised through use of the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT; Hong et al., 2018). The results of all appraisals can be found in appendix B (qualitative), C (quantitative) and D (mixed methods).

Data extraction

Given the number of included studies, each one was given a reference number (e.g. [1]) to simplify identification throughout the data extraction and synthesis processes. Data relevant to the research question were extracted from each paper, and each study was reviewed multiple times throughout the analysis to ensure all findings relevant to the research question had been extracted. Data from qualitative studies were extracted as interpreted and presented by the primary authors and the author did not add her own interpretations (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Analysis

There was significant heterogeneity across epistemology, methodology and analysis, making direct comparison difficult. Narrative synthesis is a useful method for diverse data sets (Popay et al., 2006). In this review, narrative synthesis refers to synthesising qualitative and quantitative data and using text descriptions to summarise and explain the findings of the synthesis (Popay et al., 2006). The stages of the synthesis included:

a. Tabulating the characteristics and main findings from each study (see table 2.2)
b. Exploring the relationships, similarities and contradictions within and between the data
c. Considering the robustness of the review

Results

Study Characteristics

A total of 30 studies met the inclusion criteria, most of which adopted a qualitative approach. For ease of reference, studies are referred to by their reference number as identified in table 2.2. The studies were published between 1983 and 2020, with 24 (80%) being published since 2000. Of the 30 studies, 20 used qualitative methods [1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29], seven used quantitative methods [3, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18], and three adopted a mixed methods approach [4, 10, 30]. One study used an undergraduate sample [14], two made use of substance misuse participants who self-disclosed being abusive [18, 19], one used a sample based on self-report of abuse [21], and all others used men who had been reported to the authorities for IPV perpetration. The participants of five studies were incarcerated at the time [2, 7, 25, 26, 28]. All but five of the studies were conducted in the US or UK; two were conducted in Australia [6, 13], one in Canada [8], one in Spain [16] and one in the UK and Brazil [19]. Four of the studies included explicitly stated they came from a feminist perspective [1, 4, 5, 13].

Two of the qualitative studies did not include interviews; one analysed transcripts of telephone conversations between a perpetrator in custody and the victim [2] while the other analysed prison file information [7]. One of the quantitative studies [8] conducted interviews and then quantified responses. Two studies [10, 11] used the same data set, which had been collected as part of a larger project.

Most studies reviewed a sample of IPV perpetrators in isolation. Of those that did not, seven used male perpetrators and their partners [2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 18, 21], three compared males and females who had been perpetrators, victims or both [12, 14, 27], and one compared perpetrators to a control group with no IPV history [9]. Additionally, one study compared self-referred men in a batterer's intervention to those who had been court ordered to attend [8].

There was consistency across the studies regarding the ways in which perpetrators denied, minimised, justified and blamed, none of which were outside the scope of those described in the introduction. As expected, a wide variety of tactics for avoiding responsibility were observed to be used by participants (e.g. blaming partners and external factors, redefining abuse, minimising their actions, providing rational explanations for the actions, experiencing strong emotions and claims of losing control). The narrative synthesis sought to explore why these methods were used and what function they served for perpetrators. Table 2.2 provides tabulation of the studies, detailing findings related to the review question, in addition to strengths and weaknesses of the study.

Table 2.2

Summary of studies, data extracted, and strengths and weaknesses

Study ID	Authors, date, country	Sample and setting	Measure or data collection	Analysis	Relevant findings	Strength and weaknesses
1	Anderson & Umberson (2001) US	33 men recruited through batterer's programme, most court mandated	Interviews and demographics	Descriptive comparing study group to general population attending service Thematic analysis of interviews	Construct accounts as though rational response to provocation, loss of control or something blown out of proportion to save face due to behaviour that brings social sanctions Describe partners as irrational to show their own superior rationality Describe partners as dominating and position themselves as victim of masculinized women Descriptions of women as controlling due to fear of being controlled by a woman Focus on gender bias in system allows men to deflect attention from their own perpetration and victimisation. Constructions of bias allow them to preserve sense of self as rational, strong, and non-violent and therefore rational masculinity Men use cultural discourses of unstoppable masculine aggression, female weakness and men's rights Through their speech, men presented themselves as rational, competent, masculine actors Described their violence rational and effective, while women's was hysterical and ineffective Try to convince partner to shoulder some of the blame for the abuse	<u>Strengths</u> Good sample size Ethnically and socioeconomically diverse sample Consideration of impact of researcher characteristics Good use of data to illustrate findings <u>Weaknesses</u> Limited description of analysis
2	Bonomi et al. (2011) US	25 heterosexual couples Remanded perpetrators and	Prison transcripts of telephone conversations	Grounded theory	Repeated use of minimisation and avoiding responsibility lessened the victim's perceptions of severity and wore down their agency, leading to	<u>Strengths</u> Robust analysis Large amount of data

		their partner victims where the victim has gone on to recant/drop charges	between the couple		them adopting a modified account of what happened. Redefining abuse narrative while making a plan to recant was a continuation of minimising violence and redefining roles in the incident Minimisation and sympathy appeals used by abuser served to keep the relationship intact	Novel approach – use of real-life conversational data so not vulnerable to impression management as it may be with an interview <u>Weaknesses</u> Not able to ask exploratory questions to check assumptions of meaning Not compared to remanded couples who did not recant therefore unknown if the processes involved are in fact different
3	Cantos et al. (1993) US	139 couples mandated to attend treatment programme for IPV Army base	Conflict tactics scale, dyadic adjustment scale and interview with couple to identify who they believe was to blame for violent incidents and severity of injury	Significant differences between husbands and wives ANOVAs to determine relationship between blame for DVs for husbands and wives	No variables related to husband's attribution of blame for first violent incident For latest violent incident, husbands blaming of wife increased as his and her marital adjustment scores decreased: dislike spouse means more likely to perceive the cause of negative events as internal to them. Latest episode = self-blame increased with degree of alcohol intake, attributing blame to transient state Men blaming wives for repeated violence are likely to feel threatened by accepting blame and resistant to having their beliefs refuted	<u>Strengths</u> Good sample size and was ethnically diverse Allowed for both parties to be blamed simultaneously Data collected soon after most recent incident <u>Weaknesses</u> Participation was mandated Husbands and wives interviewed together Questions regarding blame and injury were dichotomous, no exploration occurred

						No rationale for military sample No rationale for chosen methodology
4	Catlett et al. (2010) US	Men mandated to attend batter programme 154 quantitative, 34 qualitative	Demographic data Sex-role egalitarianism scale Brief symptom inventory – hostility sub scale CTS2	Content analysis Correlation and regression model	Men attach non-violent meanings to their abusive behaviour – do not see it as worthy of CJS attention Abuse viewed as a rational response to a threat (physical or to dominance) – no alternatives Perception of biased system that criminalises their normal male behaviour Men who drop out of treatment cling to idea they are a non-violent person Minimise the significance of their abuse by contrasting it with 'real' violence like hitting and punching Men feel entitled to dominance and respect in relationships and when this is threatened or not received they view it as her fault for not following those rules Men who drop out of treatment cling to idea of themselves as non-violent while men who do complete are able to self-reflect and give more complex meaning to their violence	<u>Strengths</u> Good sample size Clear rationale Gender and ethnicity of interviewer matched to participant <u>Weaknesses</u> In quant phase used CTS to measure denial based on assumptions of what abusive behaviours they have likely engaged in Sample predominantly African American No discussion of rigour
5	Cavanagh et al. (2001) UK	122 men involved in IPV intervention and 136 female partners (95 couples)	Data taken from large study which included interview at time 1, postal questionnaire at 3 and 12 months	Unclear – responses have been sorted into 'remedial work' categories	Defining abuse as not violent implies violence against a woman is different from other types of violence, usually accompanied by judgment of her behaviour. Women/wife do not count in defining something as violent Denial through 'selective amnesia' allows men to exercise power through meaning of their	<u>Strengths</u> Large sample size Using data to assess appropriateness of remedial work model to IPV

			T1 interviews of men used for this study, women and qual data used as supplementary		violence. Often do not remember things about injuries etc., which are difficult to define away Silence as a form of selective amnesia suits their accounting purposes as means they are not spoken about so can't be interpreted. Blaming allows men to admit acts of violence at same time as absolving self of most/all responsibility By blaming women, make abuse problem for women not for them and therefore they are not responsible By denying their own agency and blaming external factors (including inanimate objects), men detach themselves from their behaviour and the fact they exercised choice By construing abuse as a fight, responsibility shared between them and then acceptable to consider it violence Reduced competence due to alcohol and temper – not the real them Rationalisations used to excuse behaviour often masked the purpose and intent inherent in requests (e.g. stop nagging) Contradiction: men attempt to mitigate and obfuscate their culpability while also wanting forgiveness for behaviour they denied. Men's accounts seek to neutralise and eradicate women's experience of abuse and control the ways they interpret and respond to it	<u>Weaknesses</u> No information on researcher impact, analysis method or rigour No demographic information presented
6	Dempsey & Day (2011) Australia	8 Male community corrections clients, during or post IPV treatment	Interviews	Grounded theory	Men generally feel threatened by others, and violence viewed as an effective way of settling disputes Men felt attacked if people disagreed with them and needed to defend themselves	<u>Strengths</u> Categories supported by high frequency of presence in data

					Childhood trauma resulted in men feeling misunderstood, abused or abandoned, leading them to retreat from life stressors Saw themselves as moral people who tried to do the best they could and were misunderstood. Struggled to reconcile their abusive behaviour with these beliefs about themselves. Through this mechanism minimised nature of harm	Rationale for research and approach well-grounded in literature <u>Weaknesses</u> Very limited description of analysis and none of rigour Limited quotes to support Categories States interviewer has feminist perspective but no consideration of how that may have impacted data collection of analysis
7	Dobash & Dobash (2011) UK	Subset of 104 male IPV perpetrators in custody taken from larger Murder in Britain data set	Prison casefile information (e.g. police reports, trial documents, prison records, psychological assessment reports)	No identified approach Data from case files coded then analysed via software. Reflexive process to identify themes	For IPV men minimisation of violence, denial of responsibility and victim blaming are normative and deeply enmeshed in views about women and intimate partners. This orientation serves to justify abusive behaviour and negate responsibility Sees partner at fault because of her flaws in fulfilling her role as woman, justifying his violent response as role of man Complete denial way to avoid intervention and treatment in prison	<u>Strengths</u> Good sample size Description of process for generating themes from coding, indicating rigour <u>Weaknesses</u> Primarily based on opinions of professionals rather than data from the subjects No consideration of potential bias/influence of professionals making the reports Interviews with subjects were part of the original dataset, so

						unclear why not at least incorporated in analysis
8	Dutton (1986) Canada	Two demographically matched groups of men self-referred to batterers project (n=25) and court referred (n=50)	CTS Interviews with comments used to categorise subjects in terms of locus of attribution, excuses vs justification and minimising	χ^2	Self-referred men acknowledge more personal responsibility but compensate for it by minimising incidence, severity and impact If view wife as cause of violence, more likely to minimise severity, frequency and impact When accept responsibility, justify as acceptable via cultural norms Court referred men did not realize they had a causal role in their violence While men who were self-referred highly minimised the offence, men who were court referred and self-attributed responsibility did not minimise the assault, suggesting a 'conviction induced motive to 'come clean''	<u>Strengths</u> Compared court referred and self-referred Interesting to consider how the different DVs interact <u>Weaknesses</u> No discussion of rigour given qualitative data was being coded to be quantified No consideration of ethical issues or interview factors
9	Goodrum et al. (2001) US	33 men recent IPV history, 25 men no IPV history Demographically matched Community	CTS Interviews	Symbolic interactionist framework	Did not think terms abusive or violent reflected their true selves. Saying separate to 'real me' allows them to uphold positive self-view despite evidence to the contrary Batterers use extreme measures to disassociate from violent selves (construct a non-violent self in relationships), indicating a psychological pathology Use denial and blame to dismiss suggestions by others that they are violent people Batterers view partners behaviour as threatening or challenging and feel they need to respond while control group do not Batterers deny criticism while control used it for self-improvement Batterers say partners made unreasonable and unnecessary attempts to control their behaviour, control don't	<u>Strengths</u> Comparator group Comparator group checked for IPV history Practice interviews conducted to ensure neutrality of interviewers <u>Weaknesses</u> 4 of comparison group committed "very minor" violence, which was pushing and shoving, so remained in comparison group

					Dismissing the batter label allows disassociation from it and stalls self-change Avoiding seeing consequences of violence allows construction and maintenance of nonviolent self-view Constructions of nonviolent self creates contradictions which make it difficult for them to take on role of other (partner) Some men have limited ability to role take partner's emotional state which may be why they do not recognise potential for emotional impact of abuse Others emotionally role take but not viewpoint as emotional does not challenge your position in an argument	Sample has higher education and socio-economic status than the population (IPV support service), so they assume that means there would be a bias towards less denial, more insight and more empathy if there was a sampling bias. No rationale for this assumption No information regarding rigour
10	Heckert & Gondolf (2000a) US	840 men court ordered to attend batterer programme Female partners of some of primary sample	Men, partner and police reports of incident Men and partner's reports of re-assault during 12 month follow up using CTS Telephone interviews every 3 months	Concurrent validity of self-reports using cross tabulation Qualitative assessment of narratives	Men more likely to minimise severity of violence than victims, and more likely to minimise than deny Men underreport when relationship is over because consider the matter behind them Male underreport increased sharply at follow up, thought to be because at start still involved in CJS so may think verifying what is on record will lead to leniency In men's rational interest to deny violence at follow up to avoid further consequences Programme may have increased awareness of abusive behaviour so at follow up feel more shame and socially desirable responding may increase Underreporting may be a situational response	<u>Strengths</u> Large sample size from a range of areas Coding of statements incorporated IRR Use of police reports to verify both men and women's accounts Followed up with new partner if necessary <u>Weaknesses</u> No significance testing, just reporting percentages

						No detail regarding rigour for qualitative analysis No consideration of ethics or researcher impact
11	Heckert & Gondolf (2000b) US	144 men court ordered to attend batterer programme and female partners	Perpetrator, partner and police accounts Men: CTS, alcohol screening, personality inventory, demographic information Both: telephone calls using CTS every 3 months for 12 months	Predictive modelling of underreport using logistic regression	Cannot assume denial and minimisation just dispositional or due to personality, as social background, situational factors and assessment of consequences of reporting are relevant In clinical samples, underreporting may be more likely to be influenced by perceived consequences than personality traits Personality traits and situational factors may interact in clinical sample Once caught, tend to shift from denial to minimisation and justification: most likely lying is situational and depends on consequences	<u>Strengths</u> Triangulated with police reports Good sample size for model testing <u>Weaknesses</u> No consideration of ethics or researcher impact
12	Henning et al. (2005) US	1267 male and 159 female IPV perpetrators	Secondary use of data collected by DV assessment centre all participants mandated to attend Demographic Attribution, denial, minimisation and justification	t-tests comparing male and female perpetrators	Both men and women more likely to blame victim than self Both genders more socially desirable responses than norm comparator Men working to present overly positive image of self in assessment Self-reports by batterers influenced by socially desirable responding, minimisation, denial and external attributions Incidents result from partner's poor behaviour	<u>Strengths</u> Large sample size Internal consistency of measures acceptable <u>Weaknesses</u> Sample mostly African American Not examined relationship between variables

			scales developed by researcher Socially desirable responding (self-defensiveness from SASSI-III and Crowne-Marlow scale)			
13	LeCouteur & Oxlad (2011) Australia	9 attendees at batterer programme (8 self-referred, 1 court)	Interview	Discursive psychology	Men highlight how partner has deviated from common sense, moral order of proper behaviour for the various categories of woman, and this is used to justify violence The temporal order of their stories constructs a situation where their behaviour is understandable and category appropriate (husband) Men used every day discursive practice of gender membership to justify violence – need to maintain moral order of gender roles	<u>Strengths</u> Description of ethical considerations Theoretical basis for analysis clear Well evidenced by data <u>Weaknesses</u> No description of analysis or rigour No consideration of researcher impact
14	LeJeune & Follette (1994) US	465 male and female undergraduates, of which 31% reported violence	Dating violence survey incorporating demographics, blame for violence and CTS	χ^2 comparing men and women	Women more likely than men to take responsibility for initiating violence. Women may be socialised to accept responsibility for relationship conflict while men less likely to take responsibility due to stigma attached to being seen as an 'abusive man' Men who report initiating violence more likely to report alcohol/drug use than female initiators. Men may be more likely to attribute blame to intoxication	<u>Strengths</u> Large sample <u>Weaknesses</u> Inconsistent analysis: some things just reported as percentages

						Reasons for differences in responsibility taking not related to data gathered No discussion of validation of blame scale No discussion of ethics or rationale for sample
15	Levitt et al. (2008) US	12 low income IPV perpetrators Community	Interview CTS used for screening	Grounded theory	Blame because they experience their partners as 'willfully and skillfully' trying to upset them rather than trying to meet their own needs See anger as the only way to gain respect and avoid threats to masculinity One participant altered his partner's gender to permit his choice to assert his own masculinity through aggression	<u>Strengths</u> Good description of steps to assure rigour, including credibility checks with participants Saturation reached Interesting angle considering interplay with religious beliefs <u>Weaknesses</u> Quite homogenous sample
16	Lila et al. (2013) Spain	314 IPV perpetrators court mandated to attend a batterers programme	Close and Intimate Companions Scale Formal Social Support from Community Organizations Centre for Epidemiologic	Correlations and structural modelling	Victim blaming negatively related to self-esteem and positively related to depressive symptoms. Low self-esteem and depressive symptoms = more likely to perceive situations and behaviour of others as threats. Blaming others helps to protect self-image	<u>Strengths</u> Clear rationale for study Good sample size Examined relationship between variables <u>Weaknesses</u> No data for ethnicity

			Studies Depression Scale Rosenberg Self-esteem scale Victim-Blaming Scale from responsibility Attribution Scale			Victim blaming assessed by only 3 questions
17	Mullaney (2007) US	14 men either pre (11) or post (3) IPV treatment	Interviews	No information	Overwhelmingly justified rather than excused, e.g. I did it but in response to her behaviour The things they *do not* do count more than the things they *do* because that shows they aren't batterers and allows them to uphold image of men as protectors of women Not interested in saving face generally (i.e. by excusing or denying) Justifying allows them to save face as *men*: violence presented as positive as restoring their rights and privileges. They focus on the unjust ways others (women, CJS) have emasculated them. Feel justified in violence because they are doing what men should do and women are not thankful When men blame women, are upholding a dichotomous view of gender where women are unruly and unable to control themselves Men saw their partner's hurtful decisions as the reason their violent responses were appropriate Men continued to exert power over their partners by the way they apologised (only after she had), blamed or refused to account for their violence at all	<u>Strengths</u> Discussion of limitations Data supports identified themes <u>Weaknesses</u> No information on analysis method Judgemental language used in researcher's analysis of comments suggesting bias No consideration for ethics or researcher impact

					By refusing to account to their partner men invoke their male privilege of not needing to account for their actions	
18	Panuzio et al. (2006) US	303 men in alcohol abuse treatment and their partners	CTS Alcohol Dependency Scale Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test Marital Status Inventory Dyadic Adjustment Scale Males only: Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-III-R Antisocial Personality Disorder module California Personality Inventory Socialization Scale	Estimates, correlates and direction of partner concordance	Higher alcohol problem severity and poorer relationship adjustment correlated with higher concordance of psychological aggression at bivariate level Higher antisocial and psychopathic personality features correlated with higher concordance of male perpetrated physical and psychological aggression Antisocial personality only significant predictor of concordance when others accounted for Higher ASPD traits may be more accepting of violence and identify more strongly with masculine gender roles, so don't feel they need to conceal violence Men may underreport their aggression to avoid negative evaluation	<u>Strengths</u> Clear rationale and methodology Considered female perpetration in the couple <u>Weaknesses</u> No mention of ethics Entire sample were help seeking rather than some mandated

19	Radcliffe et al. (2017) UK & Brazil	Men attending substance misuse treatment who disclosed IPV in UK (20) and Brazil (20)	Interviews	Does not specify	Male and female characteristics used to normalise and legitimise violence; extremes of gender role breaches warrant violence View IPV as uncharacteristic because loss of control is inconsistent with mature masculinity Attributions related to respect representative of stable attributions linked with reoffending rather than the excuses associated with desistance Men felt they were unable to articulate themselves due to a 'barrage of angry female criticism' resulting in violence	<u>Strengths</u> Cross cultural comparison Efforts to achieve cross-sectional sampling Consideration of rigour <u>Weaknesses</u> Lack of heterogeneity in some demographics No information on epistemology
20	Reitz (1999) US	9 men attending community IPV programme	Interviews	Existential phenomenology	Men value being dominant but violence is seen as 'bad', so construct an out of control, not me narrative where violence is a forced choice and therefore they are not accountable, thus avoiding conflict between violence bad, dominance good Men saw their relationships as fundamentally adversarial where they would win or lose, which justified their aggression Men tried to position themselves as good by stopping the 'evil' they saw in others, especially partners Men remember their violent behaviour but find it inconsistent with who they think they are and rationalise it as being out of control to relive the internal conflict Believe violence is justified because partner has triggered a chain of events Justify abusive behaviour due to cultural beliefs and values about roles of men and women (e.g. can shout at wife but not boss)	<u>Strengths</u> Very robust methodology and clear description of steps to ensure rigour Consideration of researcher impact <u>Weaknesses</u> all participants involved in treatment and volunteered for altruistic reasons

21	Rodriguez et al. (2020) US	20 heterosexual couples from a health clinic who reported IPV – 15 completed study and included in final sample	Daily telephone surveys for 8 weeks (touch tone responses) and post study interviews	Descriptive analysis of demographics and daily abuse reports Sorting data into pre-identified themes, creating additional themes and sub themes. Sorting quote by couple to assess concordance	Hesitant to call their aggressive behaviour abuse or violence, suggesting a boundary on abusive behaviour that they had not crossed Two main themes in male accounts: disassociation from identity of an abuser and justification for abuse. Indirect language is used to disassociate and remove men from the story Male participants made use of six types of justification, all blaming partner or substance use	<u>Strengths</u> Consideration of participant safety Use of data to support findings <u>Weaknesses</u> Representativeness of sample: all Latina, participants in dangerous relationships excluded Researcher built relationship with participants over the 8 weeks, but this is only considered as a positive and not in terms of how it may have affected her interpretation
22	Smith (2007) US	24 men about to start batterer treatment, most court ordered	Interviews	Existential phenomenology	Did not feel remorseful, felt abuse was normal, justified or not a big deal All men emotionally defend and protect themselves through self-deception Due to childhood trauma have deficits in emotional skills needed to recognise and cope with strong feelings like fear, shame and vulnerability, so have to defend against these feelings with denial, rationalisation and projection Saw themselves as law abiding citizens so rejected the interpretations that their behaviour was criminal and focussed on how they had been victimised	<u>Strengths</u> Clear rationale for methodology Some description of rigour Good use of quotes to support findings Interesting intertwining with self-deception theory <u>Weaknesses</u> All participants White

23	Stamp & Sabourin (1995) US	15 men mandated on batterer programme	Interviews	Constant comparison	Attributional processes reinforce behaviour and need to be considered in treatment Experience powerlessness in the abusive situation and lose control over the violence, so managing the account allows them to have control over how their violence is represented Seem to be seeking understanding because alleviating so much personal responsibility in narrative, and the narratives they construct are understandable because work within dominant metaphors of American life Emphasis on what they did not do (restraint) allows them to reconstruct it as them having control and makes if more palatable (could have been worse) Minimise amount of violence so are not categorised as abusive Resulting injury is described as result of an accident not his behaviour	<u>Strengths</u> Use of data to support themes Interesting inclusion of entire narrative to show themes working together <u>Weaknesses</u> Interviews very short (4-19 mins) No information regarding ethics or researcher impact
24	Tilley & Brackley (2005) US	16 men on mandated batterer's programme	Interviews	Grounded theory	Men did not recognise behaviour as abusive, thought it was appropriate and did not think about the consequences of their behaviour, which contributed to their abuse Justifying includes beliefs that people deserve to be hurt and violence is a normal response 1 person consciously justified in order to not feel bad about it Model of the violent family, where justifying and minimising violence are primary elements and contribute to the development of family violence Desensitising of violence over time allowed perpetrators and victims to justify violence or dismiss it as normal	<u>Strengths</u> Ethical considerations Develops a model of the violent family rather than just focussing on perpetrator <u>Weaknesses</u> No description of analysis methods to ensure rigour No consideration of researcher impact No supporting quotes

25	Weldon & Gilchrist (2012) UK	6 male IPV perpetrators in custody	Interviews	IPA	Clear theme of violence being acceptable Women seen as provoking and responsible for abuse because man needs to regain control Violence is due to external factors and therefore out of participant's control Violence justified as a way to put a woman in her place so she can't hurt him Disassociate from batterer identity and do not want interviewer to see them as one	<u>Strengths</u> Description of analysis detailing rigour Provides quotes to support themes <u>Weaknesses</u> Sampling is from staff recommendations of who might be willing to take part No data regarding ethnicity
26	Weldon (2016) UK	11 men in custody with current or previous convictions of IPV & sexual offences	Interviews	IPA	Minimisation and denial serve a protective function and are linked to 'I'm not like that' Have a perception of themselves as not inherently bad and cognitively distance themselves from the acts they committed; narcissistic coping mechanism to protect the belief they are not bad View partner as provoking, which lead to his behaviour Minimised or denied the sexual conviction, which may reflect a desire for researcher not to see them as bad	<u>Strengths</u> Ethical considerations Robust methodology and rigour Selection method (all eligible approached) Good use of data to support themes <u>Weaknesses</u> All participants post treatment No data regarding ethnicity
27	Whiting et al. (2012) US	13 men and 16 women who have been the perpetrator of	Interviews incorporating example vignettes	Grounded theory	Denial, minimising, rationalising and blame used as techniques during abuse to influence the appraisals of the victim	<u>Strengths</u> Robust methodology and rigour

		IPV, victim or both, and completed some form of treatment Community			Denial involves refusal to accept truth from others or hide it from self Minimising directly to partner and in mind Blame sometimes used to soothe feelings of guilt Some refused to admit blaming even though apparent they were Objectify victims and stop seeing them as people, exaggerating their negative qualities. Use denial, rationalisation and minimisation to deflect responsibility, justify their actions and reduce dissonance so can maintain image of themselves as someone who wouldn't be violent without good reason Blaming served to dehumanise and objectify the partner Able to keep power by finding evidence to support the decisions you have already made Contextual factors (e.g. family of origin and cultural beliefs) can disguise power and excuse responsibility	Ethical considerations Considered interaction between perpetrator and victim Ethnically diverse sample Model development <u>Weaknesses</u> All participants post treatment (although this was intentional for safety)
28	Wood (2004) US	22 men in custody about to start an IPV intervention	Interviews	Grounded theory	Violence viewed as a legitimate response to being disrespected as a man Excuses part of larger systems of justification that make their behaviour reasonable Distance self from real abusers by: disassociating act from being an abuser; saying they don't enjoy it; attribute violence to external causes External causes don't excuse actions, separate them from their 'real selves' and provide legitimate, reasonable explanation of why they aren't really abusers	<u>Strengths</u> Ethical considerations Rigour Focus on function from the perpetrator point of view <u>Weaknesses</u> No consideration of researcher impact Limited details of analysis

					The things they do not do mean they aren't real abusers, because real abusers don't limit their violence Justification resists seeing the action as harmful or abnormal Saw victim as provoking them into their abusive behaviour Conflict between idea of a real man as dominant and superior (and entitled to enforce that) and a protector of women (who does not hit them) When thinking of man as protector of women, tend to apply it to other women or women in the abstract rather than their partner	
29	Worley et al. (2004) UK	7 men engaged in community court ordered IPV intervention	Adult Attachment Interview Questions exploring IPV history	AAI coding system Unclear if questions about IPV history were code as part of AAI	Due to their internal working models of relationships and narrow perspectives and expectations of the world, emotional development and interpersonal skills are undeveloped so have poor insight into their relationship difficulties and their violence (lack reflective function)	<u>Strengths</u> Consideration of victim safety Use of data <u>Weaknesses</u> No details regarding ethnicity Unclear why AAI and blame go together and how the findings of the two parts of the interview were incorporated
30	Barbaro & Raghavan (2018) US	81 men on a batterer intervention programme	Interpersonal relationships rating scale interview	Interviews coded to identify presence of coercive, controlling behaviours (CCBs) and denial and minimisation	Only three participants admitted to or acknowledged fault in their treatment relationship, majority denied or minimized use of control Perpetrators seem to employ more denial tactics when describing a more recent fight than one from an earlier relationship	<u>Strengths</u> Rationale for mixed methods and incorporation of both aspects Ethnically diverse sample Use of data

		Denial and minimisation are crucial to understanding how perpetrators understand their abuse Lower recall of CCBs in narratives compared to questionnaires may be due to participants' defending their own use of CBB and other abusive behaviour and cognitive load of having to recall it rather than being presented with options When they did describe their controlling tactics, they did not take responsibility for them, suggesting they fail to recognize their use of CCBs	<u>Weaknesses</u> Limited details of qualitative analysis Lack of consideration of researcher or analyst impact

Quality of Studies

Across the qualitative studies strengths related to recruitment strategies (95% fully achieving) and clear statements of findings (95%). Weaknesses generally related to consideration of the impact of the researcher (37%; with their relationship to the participants rarely being mentioned), sufficient rigour within analysis (50%; for example simply stating data were 'analysed' or 'coded') and consideration of ethical issues (51%; generally due to an absence of information). With regards to rigour, the word limits relating to publication may have contributed to the lack of information resulting in an inconclusive result for five of the studies (25%). Three studies achieved a full score on the CSAP [22, 26, 27], with two studies achieving observably lower scores than the others [17, 23].

Strengths within the quantitative studies included study design (100% fully achieving), appropriate sampling (86%), providing results for the proposed analyses (100%) and conclusions being justified by the results (86%). Weaknesses related to justifying sample size (0%), describing basic data (29%; with few providing more than the outcome of tests), considering non-responders (43%; with many not stating whether or not there were non-responders), internal consistency (29%; most did not provide sufficient information for this to be determined), ethical considerations (14%; generally due to an absence of information) and discussion of limitations (43%; with more than half omitting this aspect). One study was of notably higher quality than the others [18], with three being observably lower [3, 8, 14].

Of the three mixed methods studies, one [4], was considerably higher scoring than the other two [10, 30]. While all three studies included a clear rationale for a mixed methods approach, limited detail in studies 10 and 30 made it difficult to appraise the qualitative aspect. Studies 4 and 30 clearly integrated the findings of both aspects of the study, whilst study 10 did not.

Narrative Synthesis

Narrative synthesis (Popay et al., 2006) resulted in three overarching themes being identified: maladaptive traits, self-protection and used instrumentally. Each theme comprises several sub themes. The themes are presented in table 2.3 in order of frequency within the sample.

Table 2.3

Themes identified in analysis

Theme number	Overarching theme	Sub theme
1	Maladaptive traits (n*=24)	Skewed perceptions (n=16)
		Gender and cultural norms (n=13)
		Violence is normal (n=8)
		Lack of awareness (n=6)
2	Self-protection (n=22)	Protect self-image (n=14)
		Avoid negative emotions (n=9)
		Influence how they are seen (n=8)
3	Used instrumentally (n=10)	Avoid consequences (n=4)
		Influence victim (n=4)
		Regain power and control (n=4)

**n=number of studies the theme is identified in*

Theme 1: Maladaptive traits

This theme represents the inherent characteristics of perpetrators that support and drive their use of denial, minimisation and justification, and includes four sub themes, supported by 24 studies. These traits result in the perpetrator believing his minimised and justified account as it is consistent with the way he views and experiences the world. Rather than the perpetrator deliberately denying, minimising or justifying his behaviour, his account represents his truth.

1a. Skewed perceptions

This sub theme reflects how minimisation and justification of abusive behaviour is driven by a skewed perception of events and is supported by 16 studies [1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28]. This skewed perception results in an account which appears to minimise, justify and blame, but is in fact a true reflection of how the perpetrator views events. Their perception of the incidents leading up to and during an abusive incident generally involves perceiving threat and is real for the perpetrator, resulting in him using violence to protect himself. Perpetrators are prone to perceiving others as threatening generally [6, 16], and see violence as the only possible response, justifying their use of violence against a partner [4, 6]. Perpetrators view their relationships as fundamentally adversarial and a setting in which they could win or lose, which justifies their

behaviour [20]. Two studies found that a fear of being hurt [25] or controlled [1] by their partner were justifications for being abusive.

Perpetrators appear to perceive their partner's behaviour to be the cause of the abusive incident and something that is deliberately *done to them* that they react to [9, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 26, 28]. In a comparative study of IPV perpetrators and men with no IPV history [9], perpetrators were found to interpret their partner's behaviour as controlling and threatening while controls did not. Other studies support this finding, identifying that perpetrators considered partners to be "willfully and skillfully" (p. 438) trying to upset them [15] and viewed the cause of negative events as being internal to their partner as their marital dissatisfaction increased [3]. In a similar vein, one study found that perpetrators objectify victims, resulting in them exaggerating their negative qualities [27], thus resulting in a seemingly blaming account.

1b. Gender and cultural norms

Denying, minimising and justifying was found to be as a result of believing in and enforcing gender role and cultural norms in 13 of the included studies [1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13, 16, 17, 19, 22, 25, 27, 28]. Accounts justified and blamed through gender and cultural norms, with abuse considered a rational response given the situation. Men's justifications for violence were driven by a perception that women had deviated from expected gender roles and a belief that the correct male response was to regain control and maintain the order of said roles [4, 7, 13, 17, 19, 25, 28]. Dichotomous gender roles were upheld, for example women being out of control and needing to be dealt with or unstoppable masculine aggression and female weakness [1, 8, 17, 25, 28]. Some men reversed these gender roles to justify their violence, describing victims as dominating, and positioning themselves as victims of masculinised women, where violence was their only recourse [1, 16]. Two studies identified that the minimisation of violence, victim blaming, denial of responsibility [7] and attributions about respect [19] represented stable attributions and deeply enmeshed views about women and intimate partners. Contextual factors such as cultural beliefs served to disguise power and excuse responsibility for perpetrators [27], and men used their belief in a culture of family and community violence to justify their own [5]. By refusing to categorise abuse as violence (in comparison to fights with males), it was suggested that perpetrators were demonstrating a fundamental belief that violence towards women is different and does not count as 'real' violence [5]. Justifying their abuse may allow perpetrators to save face as men as it presents violence in a positive light and something that restores their rights and privileges as men [17]. To support this, perpetrators focussed on how victims and the Criminal Justice System had emasculated them [17]. By refusing to account for their violence to their partner, men are asserting their male privilege [17].

1c. Violence is normal

Minimising and justifying were found to be representative of underlying attitudes that violence is normal and acceptable in eight studies [4, 6, 16, 18, 22, 24, 25, 28]. Five of the studies identified a clear theme of violence being perceived as normal and an acceptable response to resolving a dispute or being disrespected [6, 16, 24, 25, 28]. One study [4] found men did not see their behaviour as worthy of criminal justice attention and felt their normal male behaviour had been criminalised, while another [22] found men simply did not consider their violence to be a "big deal" (p. 199). One study [24] developed a model of the violent family where justifying and minimising violence (through considering it appropriate and legitimate) were key elements that contributed to the development of family violence. Victims and perpetrators may be desensitised to violence over time, allowing them to justify violence and consider it normal [24]. Higher levels of antisocial personality disorder traits were associated with greater levels of concordance about abuse between perpetrators and victims, perhaps due to antisocial men being more accepting of violence and identifying more strongly with masculine gender roles, so they did not feel the need to conceal their violence [18].

1d. Lack of awareness

Six studies suggested that a lack of awareness about themselves, others or abuse resulted in a distorted account of their behaviour [4, 8, 9, 24, 25, 30]. Court referred men did not realise they had a causal role in their violence [8]. It was hypothesised that men deny, minimise and justify because they do not have the ability to critically reflect on their behaviour due to the impact of their developmental experiences, internal working models of relationships and view of the world [29]. Without critical reflection they do not have the ability to consider alternative perspectives or provide an objective account of their behaviour, therefore they are not deliberately minimising or justifying their behaviour, their account is their truth. Support for this is present in the finding that men who complete IPV treatment are more able to self-reflect and give alternative meanings for their violence than those who drop out [4]. Some men did not recognise their behaviour as abusive at all [24, 30] or consider it to be 'real' violence [4], while others struggled to consider their partner's emotional state, resulting in them not considering the potential for emotional abuse, and thus providing a seemingly minimised account [9].

<u>Theme 2: Self-protection</u>

This theme represents the way perpetrators use denial, minimisation and justification to protect themselves and includes three sub themes supported by 22 studies. This theme represents the ways

in which using distorted accounts of their behaviour allow perpetrators to protect themselves emotionally and psychologically. The first two sub-themes appear to be sub-conscious, with the third lacking clarity regarding whether it is a deliberate tactic employed by abusers.

2a. Protect self-image

This sub theme comprises two factors that are intertwined (distancing the 'real' them from the batterer identity and managing their masculinity), and was supported by 14 studies [1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28].

Participants in these studies generally wanted to distance themselves from the batterer identity, using as evidence ideas such as the lower frequency and severity of their behaviour not meeting the threshold for being an abuser [5, 17, 23, 28] or not naming their behaviour as abuse or violence [21]. Participants disassociated themselves from the abuse and characterised it as behaviour that did not represent the 'real' them [5, 6, 9, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28]. Perpetrators experienced conflict between their behaviour and the reasonable person they perceived themselves to be, who would not be violent without good reason [6, 9, 26]. Perpetrators saw themselves as law abiding citizens and rejected the criminal interpretation of their behaviour [22]. They perceived and positioned themselves in their narrative as good (or at least not bad), which meant they needed a justification for their behaviour, for example eliminating evil where they saw it or focusing on their own victimisation [6, 20, 22, 26]. External attributions allowed men to provide a legitimate account of their behaviour that reinforced their view of themselves [3, 5, 27, 28], as did avoiding seeing the consequences of their behaviour [9]. For some men, blaming others helped to protect their self-image [16]. One study [5] hypothesised that by considering violence against women as not 'real' violence, men were able to maintain their view of themselves as non-violent.

In addition to experiencing conflict between their abusive behaviour and the 'real' them, four studies found men experienced discord between their behaviour and their identity as a man [1, 19, 20, 28]. A conflict arose between their perceptions of them embodying rational [1] and mature masculinity [19], and their out of control, irrational actions, which was soothed by denying, minimising and justifying their behaviour. Similarly, men experienced a conflict between wanting to be a 'real man' who, while being dominant and superior, is simultaneously a non-violent protector of women [28]. Acknowledging they enforced their dominance through violence and hurting women would be in conflict with their identity as a 'real man' and they used denial, minimising and justification to resolve this conflict.

2b. Avoid negative feelings

The use of denial, minimisation and justification to avoid experiencing negative emotions was identified in eight studies [3, 5, 9, 10, 22, 23, 27, 28]. The reconstruction of events as being not harmful or abnormal [28] and one they had control over [23] made the situation more palatable for perpetrators, as did perceiving it as a fight between them where responsibility was shared [5]. Blame was used to soothe feelings of guilt [27], and self-deception to emotionally defend themselves [22]. Childhood trauma had left participants unable to cope with strong negative feelings, so they defended themselves with denial, rationalisation and projection [22]. In study 9, compared to the control group, perpetrators were found to deny criticism rather than use it for self-improvement. Men may also feel threatened by accepting blame and having their account challenged [3].

2c. Influence how they are seen

This sub-theme represents men using denial, minimisation and justification to influence how they are seen by others. It is closely linked to, and likely reinforces, 2a: protecting self-image. It was unclear from the studies whether this was a conscious process deliberately chosen by the perpetrator. It is supported by eight studies [1, 12, 14, 17, 18, 23, 25, 26]. Men were concerned about the social stigma associated with IPV [14] and were thought to underreport their violence so as not to be categorised as an abuser [23] and avoid negative evaluation [18], particularly by the researcher [12, 25, 26]. Men worked to present themselves as rational by presenting their partners as irrational [1] and focussed on the things they did not do so they could uphold the image of being a protector of women [17]. Perpetrators were thought to be seeking understanding from others by presenting a culturally reasonable narrative of their behaviour [23].

In contradiction to this sub theme, study 17 concluded that perpetrators were not interested in saving face generally as they did not excuse or deny their abusive behaviour in interview but acknowledged being abusive then justified it. The nuances of definitions were highly relevant to this study, and the author considers the use of justification rather than denial and excuses to be an indication that perpetrators are not concerned with presenting a positive image.

<u>Theme 3: Used instrumentally</u>

This theme represents the way perpetrators use denial, minimisation and justification to achieve goals and includes four sub themes, supported by 10 studies. In contrast to themes one and two, this theme represents a conscious choice on the part of the perpetrator to deny, minimise and justify abusive behaviour.

3a. Avoid consequences

This sub theme represents denial, minimisation and justification as a tool men deliberately use to avoid sanctions for their behaviour, and is supported by four studies [7, 8, 10, 11]. Altering the narrative allowed them to avoid further judicial consequences [10, 11]. While one study found underreport (i.e. denial and minimisation) to increase at follow up [10], another found the opposite to be true [11]. Despite the studies coming from the same dataset, they provided different explanations for their observations. Those who initially admitted violence in study 10 were thought to believe that confirming official accounts may lead to leniency, while at the follow up stage it was no longer in their best interests to be honest about their behaviour as they may face further sanctions. In study 11, perpetrators were seen to move from denial to minimisation and justification after being caught, which they concluded was due to having already faced the consequences (i.e. they got caught). The rationale for these different conclusions was unclear. Support for a motive to provide a more honest account post-conviction is available in one study [8] where self-referred abusers who accepted responsibility highly minimised their accounts while court referred abusers who accepted responsibility did not. For those in prison, complete denial can be a way to avoid treatment [7].

3b. Regain power and control

Four studies identified denial, minimisation and justification as a way for the perpetrator to regain power and control [5, 17, 23, 27]. It was not clear in the studies whether this represents a conscious decision as the others do. Through their accounts to partners (or lack thereof), men continued to exert power over them [17]. Through 'selective amnesia' men were able to exercise their power by controlling the meaning of their violence [5]. Similarly, men were able to compensate for the loss of power and control in the abusive incident by controlling the narrative surrounding it [23]. A third study [27] identified that men were able to retain power by finding evidence to support their decisions (i.e. the justification for their decision to use violence), and blaming allowed them to dehumanise and objectify the victim.

3c. Influence victim

Four studies identified denying, minimising and justifying as strategies perpetrators used to influence the perceptions and accounts of victims both during and after abusive incidents [1, 2, 5, 27]. Perpetrators tried to get victims to shoulder at least part of the blame for their abuse [1] and control the way they interpret and respond to it [5, 27]. In one study such strategies allowed perpetrators to reconstruct the narrative of the abuse, leading to victims recanting, and along with

garnering sympathy worked to keep the relationship intact [2]. The authors of study 5 found that men's rationalisations served to hide the way they had manipulated a situation in the first place. The perpetrator presents himself as having made a simple, rational request, which in itself was abusive, submitting the idea to both the listener and the victim that if she had simply done what he asked the abuse would not have occurred.

Uncategorised

One study [10] hypothesised that men underreported abusive behaviour after the relationship had ended as they had moved on and no longer considered the abusive behaviour as relevant to their lives. This is potentially supported by the finding that men tended to use more elaborate minimisation and denial for more recent abusive behaviour than earlier relationships [30].

Discussion

The aim of this review was to advance understanding of the function of denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming for IPV perpetrators. 30 studies met the inclusion criteria and were synthesised in this review.

Summary of findings

The themes identified within this review support a model of denying, minimising, justifying and blaming that is multi-faceted and complex. The primary theme *Maladaptive Traits* indicates the accounts of perpetrators can represent their truth; it is not that they are deliberately trying to avoid responsibility, but that their view of the situation is skewed by an overly active threat system, underlying beliefs about gender norms and violence, or a lack of understanding that their behaviour is abusive. As a result, what appears to be a distorted account is in fact an explanation of their abusive behaviour and the underlying factors evident in their account are part of what drives their abusive behaviour. This is consistent with the potential applicability of the General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002) to IPV, where these maladaptive traits may represent the cognitions of the offender. Similarly, the role of cognitive distortions in persistence in ex-partner stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2013) is supported by this theme, as are previous findings relating to perpetrators having limited understanding of what constitutes abuse (e.g. Barbaro & Raghavan, 2018; Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Much can potentially be learnt about the drivers of their abuse therefore, by accepting their accounts as their genuine perception of events.

The theme *Self-protection* identifies the (often sub-conscious) work done by perpetrators to protect their sense of self, avoid negative feelings and manage how they are viewed by others. It suggests a self that is fragile and vulnerable, where their behaviour is in clear conflict with their view of themselves. This theme is more consistent with the findings of justifications in men convicted of sexual offences often being post hoc and can serve a protective function by protecting one's identity as a 'good' person (e.g. Blagden et al., 2014). This theme also highlighted the relevance of masculine identities and how these are confused and conflicting. While a man should be dominant and in control, he must also avoid violence and protect women. This conflict is difficult to navigate and threatens the perpetrator's sense of self. Perpetrators demonstrated a difficulty tolerating strong emotions, with distorted accounts alleviating that pressure by eliminating the negative feelings. This difficulty with strong emotions may be further evidence of an overactive threat system (Gilbert, 1993) and parallels the difficulty managing emotions seen in the abuse itself (Whiting et.al., 2014).

The *Used instrumentally* theme acknowledges the deliberate attempts by perpetrators to avoid sanctions, influence the victim and regain power and control by managing their accounts. The lower level of support for this theme compared to the other two suggests that the assumption that men are deliberately manipulating their accounts to others often found in policy and feminist research (e.g. Pence & Paymar, 1993) should be made with caution.

It was notable that themes were evident both within and between studies, indicating that an individual perpetrator's distorted account may serve multiple functions. In comparison to men convicted of sexual offences (MCOSOs), the function of distorted accounts appears to be more complex. The post-hoc nature commonly seen in the distorted accounts of MCOSOs is not as dominant in IPV, with distorted accounts also representing a hostile world view and offence supportive attitudes that *drive* abusive behaviour. Whilst offence supportive attitudes are relevant to sexual offending, meta-analyses have shown they are not as predictive of offending as they are in IPV (sexual offending showing a small effect size, Helmus et al., 2013; IPV showing a moderate effect size, Stith et al., 2004). As described earlier, the quality of the studies varied. Qualitative studies often did not provide sufficient detail to allow rigour to be assessed, or assurance that the role of the researcher had been accounted for. While this may be due to restrictions of publication word counts (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006), it is notable that one of the longest studies [17] did not achieve either of these benchmarks. Quantitative studies often did not provide enough detail to confirm internal consistency, none justified their sample size and consideration of non-responders was limited. Mixed methods studies also rarely provided sufficient information for an accurate appraisal of quality to be made. Despite these issues, the number of studies supporting the dominant themes identified within this review suggest some homogeneity in findings, lending support to their

reliability. Overall, this review highlights the importance of exploring distorted accounts to understand their function as it may differ between and within individuals. We should be asking ourselves; are they an accurate account from the perspective of the perpetrator? Do they protect a vulnerable sense of self? Are they deliberately manipulative? Doing so may help us to understand why the individual engages in IPV and what prevents him from changing.

Strengths and limitations of the review

It is important to consider the strengths and limitations of the review itself. The systematic search process limited bias (Sayers, 2007), and search terms included a wide range of variations of terms for the different concepts. The search did not include unpublished sources, such as doctoral thesis, which may have garnered relevant findings, to ensure the level of quality of the articles included. Similarly, articles were only included if they had been published in English, potentially excluding beneficial data from Western countries who do not routinely publish in English. Several articles from Western countries published in other languages did have an English translation, so the impact of this limitation is considered to be minimal. Hand searching of reference lists for included and relevant but excluded articles, alongside author specific searches and grey literature sources aimed to reduce potential publication bias. Abstracts were read in full to reduce the risk of excluding relevant studies, and if there was any uncertainty the full text was reviewed.

The inclusion criteria excluded same sex relationships and female or adolescent perpetrators, potentially impacting on the generalisability of the results. As the majority of perpetrators of serious IPV are male (e.g. Warner, 2010) and there are differences as well as similarities between risk factors for IPV perpetration for women (Capaldi et al., 2012), same sex perpetrators (Rollè et al., 2018) and adolescents (Glass et al., 2006) it was considered prudent to begin with the group who have been subject to the most research. Focussing on male perpetrators also allowed a better comparison with people who commit sexual offences, which again are primarily male (e.g. Crime Survey England & Wales, 2017[4]). A focus on western populations meant several studies were excluded, generally from Africa and Asia, again impacting on the potential generalisability of conclusions. The rationale for this exclusion was the relevance of cultural influences on perpetration of and attitudes towards IPV and therefore appears justified given the aim of the review was to inform policy and practice in a Western country. Nevertheless, a useful topic for further research may be how a similar review of non-Western populations might compare.

[4] Crime Survey England & Wales, year ending March 2017 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/sexualoffencesappendixtables

Due to time constraints, all studies were identified, and all data extracted, by the review author, potentially impacting on the data included. The author was conscious of her own preference for a non-feminist orientation to IPV and used reflexive practice to ensure she was not engaging in confirmation bias. The identification of a clear and strong theme relating to gender suggests this effort was successful, however the addition of a second reviewer would have provided greater assurance.

Implications for policy, practice and future research

The findings of this review have a number of potential implications for policy, practice and future research. The policy of holding perpetrators to account does appear to be warranted, but in a more nuanced way than it is often interpreted. Rather than demanding perpetrators admit wrongdoing and accept full responsibility for their behaviour, a policy requiring perpetrators to address the underlying drivers of their behaviour, whatever they may be, may be more appropriate. This review suggests it is not legitimate to assume perpetrators are simply knowingly providing a false account. The role of cultural beliefs highlights the need for a community wide approach to tackling IPV, which should include early intervention with children and adolescents while attitudes are still developing (Lundgren & Amin, 2015). This adds support to calls for education on how to have a healthy relationship and educating children about relationship abuse to be part of the national curriculum[5].

This review suggests it is not appropriate to adopt a treatment approach that accepts the account of perpetrators without question. For IPV perpetrators their accounts can be representative of distorted perceptions of events and underlying beliefs and attitudes that drive their abusive behaviour and thus need to be addressed, and their use of denial, minimising, justifying and blaming can represent a need to regain power and control through their account. The strength of the second dominant theme of self-protection highlights the importance of addressing these factors in a way that does not further threaten a perpetrator's sense of self, particularly given that shame and threat to sense of self are linked to abusive behaviour (Brown, 2004; Lawrence & Taft, 2013) and violence generally (e.g. Velotti, 2014). The current strengths-based approach (e.g. the Good Lives Model, Ward & Gannon, 2016) has merit as a method of facilitating the construction of a positive, non-abusive identity, but this review suggests that it should be combined with developing the ability to tolerate acknowledging and addressing underlying unhelpful beliefs and attitudes. Navigating a confused sense of masculinity and building tolerance for experiencing strong negative emotions appears likely to be helpful. Given the complexity of the function of denial, minimisation, justifying

[5] e.g. https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/view/1186537-new-statutory-relationships-and-sexuality-education-for-wales

and blaming, an integrated perspective such as the Power Threat Meaning Framework (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) where responses are seen as adaptive to help them survive may be appropriate when both treating and assessing IPV.

Future research concerning the function of denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming for same sex, female and non-Western perpetrators would be beneficial to determine the generalisability of these results. Practitioners may benefit from studying ways of addressing IPV supportive attitudes and beliefs to determine their impact on sense of self and self-esteem. Further work on the role of an overactive threat system in IPV generally would be beneficial, as this review indicates it is both a driver of abuse and a reason for inaccurate accounts.

Conclusions

As the first of its kind, this review has shown that denial, minimisation, justification and blaming in relation to IPV can serve multiple functions both between and within individuals. It has highlighted the error in assuming that perpetrators deliberately manipulate their accounts to avoid responsibility and revealed that these distorted accounts can in fact expose the underlying drivers of the abuse itself. The need for interventions to consider the impact of any work to address distorted accounts on self-esteem is also emphasised. This review has shown the importance of practitioners exploring distorted accounts to assess their function, as a way to identify treatment targets and inform risk management. Further, it has emphasised the importance of researchers, practitioners and policy makers ensuring theories and findings from research are explored in terms of how they relate to different offending groups, rather than assuming applicability across offence types.

Chapter 3: Disrupted connections: What drives a perpetrator to continue engaging in partner abuse once they are in prison?

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience and motivations of male perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) who continue to be abusive from custody. Male IPV perpetrators in custody were asked to discuss their efforts to make contact with victims from prison, including what was going on for them at the time, what motivated them to do it and the means with which they made contact. Using phenomenologically informed thematic analysis, researchers analysed data from 16 men currently in custody in Wales, who had made or attempted to contact a victim. Three key themes with nine sub themes were identified, including disrupted connections, external influences, and internal processes. Clinical implications and areas for future research are presented.

Introduction

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a widescale problem, affecting all ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, genders and ages (Khalifeh et al., 2013). A potentially dangerous time for a victim of IPV is when they choose to leave their abuser, although this risk is relatively short lived; if a partner is killed it is most likely to occur within the first year (Campbell, et al., 2007). Many victims have spent years being emotionally and psychologically abused, to the point that their capacity and/or belief in their ability to leave is minimal (e.g. Eckstein, 2011). Once the decision to leave is made, a victim will often return to the relationship multiple times before making a final break (Merritt-Gray & Wuest 1995), therefore when a victim does end an abusive relationship permanently they are likely to need support in maintaining that break. One protective action taken by the authorities is to incarcerate perpetrators to both punish them for their behaviour and protect the victim. Theoretically, removing the perpetrator from the relationship in such an extreme way should provide both the victim and the perpetrator with the space to move on safely. This study aims to explore why some perpetrators do not take this opportunity and continue to contact the victim from custody.

Unwanted pursuit behaviours (UPBs) have been defined as *"activities that constitute ongoing and unwanted pursuit of a romantic relationship between individuals who are not currently involved in a consensual romantic relationship with each other"* (p.73, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2000). UPB's may occur following the end of a relationship and can escalate to the point that they meet the legal

definition for stalking, i.e. a pattern of behaviour (including pursuit or harassment), which causes the victim to become fearful for their safety. For a victim of IPV, UPBs and stalking are a continuation of the abuse. Some perpetrators continue to be abusive from custody (e.g. Bonomi et al., 2011), despite the practical restrictions in place to try to prevent such behaviour, causing ongoing victimisation. Crossman et al. (2016) found that non-violent post relationship coercive control incited fear in victims even when there was no history of violence in the relationship, so the potential impact of abuse from custody remains relevant. IPV can include victimisation by proxy perpetrators (Kropp & Hart, 2015), particularly in terms of surveillance (Dutton & Goodman, 2005), which could represent a means of abuse that is easier to achieve from custody. However, not all perpetrators who go to prison continue to engage in abusive behaviour. For some offenders, incarceration is the end of that relationship and they appear to move on.

Deterrence theory (e.g. Gibbs, 1975) suggests that offenders may be less likely to engage in future offending if they perceive potential sanctions to be both likely and severe. Stafford and Warr (1993) suggested that previous experience of avoiding punishment either personally or vicariously through the experience of others would increase the likelihood of engaging in the behaviour. Piquero and Pogarsky (2002) found that while this aspect of Stafford and Warr's model held true, their assertion that previous experiences of punishment would reduce offending did not; previous punishment experiences actually encouraged offending and reduced perceptions of certainty regarding punishment. The authors hypothesised this was due to an emboldening effect potentially caused by the gambler's fallacy (Piquero & Pogarsky, 2002), in that people do not believe they will be caught again.

Williams (2005) considered deterrence theory in terms of IPV and suggested that while legal sanctions for IPV may reduce offending via a deterrence effect, it may also be influenced by other pathways, such as normative declarations (laws change society's view about the behaviour so the cost of engaging in it increases) and procedural justice (by the sanction being administered fairly, the individual is more invested in the social order). Various studies have found that arrest and court ordered sanctions (including custody) have a minimal impact on IPV recidivism (e.g. Gross et al., 2000; Woolridge & Thistlethwaite, 2005). So why are formal sanctions not serving to protect victims?

The literature has begun to explore why, in some cases, restraining orders do not deter offenders (Strand, 2012). Strand found that restraining orders are less likely to be effective with high risk cases in the community. Motives for breaching restraining orders generally (as opposed to an IPV situation) appear to be two fold – expressive/violence (driven by rage at rejection by the victim or

wanting to stay in the relationship) and instrumental/pursuit (a reaction to a past negative event, providing the perpetrator with emotional relief) (Häkkänen et al., 2003). Similarly, Brownridge (2006) proposed post separation IPV was motivated by anger, attempts to regain power and control, and attempts to reconcile simultaneously. Relational goal pursuit theory (RGP; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004) suggests that when a person considers the desired relationship to be linked to achieving their life goals (goal linking), ruminates about the end of the relationship and the partner (rumination), experiences negative emotions about the breakup (affective flooding), interprets their actions or those of their partner as supporting the achievement of the goal (rationalisation) and believes they will be able to reform the relationship (self-efficacy), they are more likely to engage in Obsessive Relational Intrusion (ORI) (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003). It is of note that this research focuses on offenders who are in the community where it is relatively easy to continue their behaviour.

The literature has identified several common themes when considering drivers for post relationship IPV/stalking/persistent pursuit: anger (e.g. Dye & Davis, 2003); jealousy (e.g. Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000); desire for reconciliation/failure to accept relationship status (e.g. Crane et al., 2013); desire to regain power and control (e.g. Douglas & Dutton, 2001). From an evolutionary perspective stalking aims to regain sexual or romantic access to a partner (Duntley & Buss, 2012). Ex-intimate partners account for almost half of all stalkers (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014) and the rejected stalker (Mullen et al., 1999) is a category of stalker motivated by the desire to re-establish an intimate relationship or gain retribution for its breakdown. Ex-intimate stalkers are generally persistent for a moderate period of time (weeks and months), and their persistence is supported by problematic personality traits (McEwan et al., 2009). It may be that these drivers are particularly strong for men who continue to engage in abusive behaviour from custody despite the barriers the Criminal Justice System put in their way. These drivers could fit with Häkkänen et. al's (2003) expressive/violence and instrumental/pursuit motivators for breaching restraining orders. Allison et al. (2008) found the complex attachment profiles in violent relationships resulted in abusive behaviour to regulate distance in the relationship. For those with an attachment profile dominated by a preoccupied style, a pursuit strategy (including violence) was employed to regulate the distance within the relationship. This may be relevant to why some individuals continue to pursue their victim from custody.

IPV perpetrators who have been given a custodial sentence have committed more serious offences and the risk they pose to the victim is considered too high for them to be given a community sentence. Given Strand's (2012) finding that high risk perpetrators were less likely to adhere to a restraining order in the community, this may explain why some men in custody are not deterred. Abuse from within prison requires forethought, planning, determination and manipulation of the

environment. For example, in order to send a letter to a victim an offender would hypothetically need to convince or pay another prisoner to send the letter or send the letter to someone else in the community for them to pass on to the victim. Whilst continuing to be abusive from a secure setting is harmful to the victim while it is occurring, the difficulties that need to be overcome in order to do it may suggest a level of preoccupation with the victim that could be indicative of increased risk once the perpetrator is released. In terms of risk management and victim safety planning, it is therefore important to be able to identify those perpetrators and understand what drives their behaviour. The limited existing research into interactions between victims and perpetrators from custody has been based on transcripts of phone calls between the couple in US correctional institutions (Bonomi et al., 2011; Carotta et al., 2018). These studies exclusively considered cases where the offender had not yet been convicted. While this literature does provide some information about the potential motives of perpetrators who are abusive from custody (getting victims to recant statements and recovering the relationship), there is an absence of research exploring the views and experiences of the perpetrator themselves. Studying the area from the perspective of the perpetrator may provide greater understanding and garner insights unavailable from a purely observational approach.

The current study

One of the key priorities of Her Majesties Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is to *'prevent victims by changing lives'*[6]. There is an assumption that victims are safe once the perpetrator is in custody, for example Spitzberg (2002) commented *"The stalker, short of dying or being in prison, could forever be the voice on the next phone call or the person around the next corner"* (p. 273, emphasis added). The literature provides some understanding of the potential drivers of ORI and UPB's in the community, however the absence of research in a custodial setting from the perpetrator's perspective means the phenomenon is not clearly understood. The practical difficulties and the fact that greater external controls need to be overcome in order to be abusive from custody mean it would be remiss of the field to assume that the drivers are the same without exploring the phenomenon in more depth. HMPPS is not achieving its goal of protecting the public if victims continue to be abused once the perpetrator is in custody. It is therefore necessary to have a greater understanding of this cohort so their risk can be managed more effectively. The risk these individuals pose and why they engage in abuse from custody has not previously been explored.

Qualitative approaches are useful when not much is known about a topic (Camic, Rhodes & Yardley, 2003) or when the researcher wants to learn about the thought processes and feelings associated with a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative research can make a useful contribution to

[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service/about

discussions about policy (Silverman, 2001), and IPV related policy is currently an area of priority in the UK. Given the area has not been studied before, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate to allow exploration of the phenomenon. By taking a close look at the experiences of male perpetrators, this exploratory research aims to develop an understanding of what drives abusive men to continue to contact and harass ex-partners from custody. It will provide a novel and unique contribution to the field due to being the first known study of its kind.

Method

Design

Carter and Little (2007) proposed that quality qualitative research should be based on an internally consistent framework of epistemology, methodology and method. As the goal was to understand motivations and experiences, this study was approached from a realist perspective. The study took a phenomenologically informed stance as it was interested in the lived experience of the participants. Thematic Analysis was chosen as the method of analysis due to its flexibility and ability to identify patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis ([IPA] Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) was not considered to meet the needs of the research due to the need to look at convergence and divergence at the overall sample level rather in and between individuals. Additionally, grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was not considered an appropriate method as the aim of the research was to explore the fine detail of the experiences of participants and the underlying reasons for carrying out IPV from custody, rather than developing a theory of how males commit and perpetuate IPV from custody. Given the lack of available research in the area, an inductive approach to analysis was adopted to ensure the results were driven by the data and not pre-existing theoretical frameworks. Interviews were conducted with a custodial sample of male IPV perpetrators to gather data about the phenomenon, which was then analysed using thematic analysis.

Ethical considerations

Approval: Ethical approval was gained from both the Nottingham Trent University Research Ethics Committee and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) National Research Council. The research was conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014) and the HCPC (Health and Care Practitioners Council) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HCPC, 2016).

Victim safety: When interviewing perpetrators about their abuse of partners, there is a risk of inadvertently increasing risk to the victim by bringing the victim back to the forefront of their

consciousness or disclosing a complaint they were not previously aware of. To minimise that risk, only men who were aware the authorities knew of their contact were approached for interview. During interviews the researcher did not prompt participants with information she had gleaned regarding incidents to avoid inadvertently revealing complaints of which the participant was not aware. At the end of the interview participants were reminded not to contact the victim under any circumstances. In addition, where possible, after the interviews had been conducted the researcher contacted the participant's Offender Manager (Probation Officer) to inform them the interview had taken place so they and victim services could be vigilant for indications of contact being prompted by the research. The researcher was not made aware of any attempts to contact victims following interview.

Consent: Potential participants were provided with an information sheet (appendix E) that advised them of the aims of the research, why they had been approached, the nature of the interview and what to expect, the limits of confidentiality and their rights to both refuse and withdraw. Potential participants were asked to reply indicating whether they were willing to be interviewed. To ensure consent was appropriately informed and valid, and account for responsivity issues, when participants arrived for interview the information sheet was reviewed verbally, understanding was checked by the researcher and consent forms (appendix F) were signed.

Confidentiality: The information sheet included details regarding the limits of confidentiality. The use of quotes in qualitative research means confidentiality cannot be assured, but anonymity can through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying information. Men in prison are generally used to the restricted levels of confidentiality permitted by the setting, however it was clearly explained prior to the interview commencing. In one interview a participant made a comment regarding the current safety of others that needed to be reported for security purposes, and it was made clear to the participant that this would happen. The participant was unconcerned commenting he knew it would need to be reported and continued with the interview. Participants were made aware their data would be fully anonymised, and they would not be identifiable from any quotes used within the write up.

Power imbalance: The researcher works as a Senior Registered Psychologist with Forensic Psychology Services for HMPPS in Wales and as such is involved in completing risk assessments for parole, making recommendations for future treatment and has clinical oversight of Offending Behaviour Programmes at one of the establishments. As a result, it was important that participants were clear there would be no negative consequences for refusing to participate, nor would there be favourable treatment for agreeing to. The researcher was careful to ensure all information from

interviews was kept separately to the day to day business of her role so that information gleaned in interview could not inadvertently be used by herself or others as part of that work.

Participant safety: The information sheet advised participants the interview may be upsetting and the debrief sheet (appendix G) provided information regarding self-help and sources of support. Two potential participants were not interviewed due to welfare concerns; one because he was concerned it would upset him and the other because he was currently subject to suicide and self-harm monitoring and had recently self-harmed.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to identify potential participants for the research. HMPPS provided a list of all men incarcerated in Public Sector Prisons in Wales whose Offender Assessment System (OASys[7]) indicated they had a history of perpetrating domestic violence (n=1193, 40.63%). The researcher reviewed the relationships section of each individual's OASys to determine if they met the basic criteria for further inclusion:

- The victim of their domestic violence was a female intimate partner
- They had not murdered their partner (as contact would no longer be possible)

This reduced the initial sample to n=1062. The sample was further reviewed to determine if the OASys indicated the participant had contacted the victim from custody (n=129, 12.14% of the eligible sample). Exclusion criteria were then applied to the remaining sample as follows:

- *To ensure the contact being explored was reported as unwanted:* Where the OASys indicated that the contact was clearly consenting, and the couple remained in a relationship (n=23, 17.83%)
- *To ensure victim safety:* Where it was not clear if the participant was aware a complaint had been made by the victim (for example the incident was recorded in a confidential section of the OASys), if the abuse was ongoing or there were unresolved charges relating to the contact (n=44, 31.11%)

[7] The OASys is a tool used by the National Probation Service to review areas of criminogenic risk for offenders. Qualitative data is entered by the Probation Officer, who then makes a judgement on the seriousness of problems in any given area. The OASys incorporates quantitative measures, which are combined with the qualitative data and scoring to develop ratings for risk of serious harm. Additional specialist assessments are added for sexual and domestically violent offending.

This left a total sample of 62 (48.02%) who could be approached regarding the research. Individuals were sent an information sheet regarding the research and asked if they would be interested in participating; 11 (17.74%) confirmed they would be happy to participate and were interviewed.

Further participants were identified via self-identification through a request for participants via the electronic messaging system at one establishment (n=6). The author identified one further participant via an internal public protection meeting where an appropriate incident had been mentioned and it was clear the individual was aware (i.e. he had been reprimanded). It is of note that all but one of these additional participants had been screened out by the sampling method, suggesting that actual frequency of this behaviour may be higher than indicated here. Another six potential participants confirmed they met the criteria and were willing to be interviewed after the cut-off date for interviews. All but one of these had initially been screened out by the researcher. A total of 16 interviews were conducted, a number sufficient to conduct robust thematic analysis (e.g. Brooks et al., 2020; McKenzie et al., 2020; Watt & Scrandix, 2013).

Participants

The 16 participants were all male and residing in Welsh Public Sector Prisons. Table 3.1 provides details of the participants and their relevant history. All participants were given a pseudonym.

Table 3.1
Participant characteristics

Name	Age at time of interview	Ethnicity[a]	Current sentence	IPV index?	Contact on this sentence?	**SARA[b]** rating	**ROSH known adult[c]**	**ROSH general public[d]**
Adam	37	W1	Determinate	No	Yes	High	Med	Low
Ben	28	W1	Determinate recall	No	Yes	Missing	High	Med
Chris	23	W1	Determinate recall	Yes	Yes	High	Very High	High
Dave	36	W1	Determinate	No	No	Med	High	High
Ed	34	W1	IPP[e]	No	No	Low	Med	High
Frank	25	W1	Determinate	Yes	Yes	Med	High	High
Guy	37	W1	Determinate	No	Yes	High	High	High
Hal	27	A3	EDS[f]	Yes	Yes	High	High	Med
Ian	22	W1	Determinate	No	Yes	Missing	Missing	Missing
Joe	35	W1	Determinate	No	No	High	High	High
Karl	28	W1	Determinate	No	Yes	Med	Med	Med
Luke	38	W1	Determinate	Yes	Yes	High	High	High
Matt	32	W1	IPP	Yes	Yes	High	High	High
Neil	26	W1	Determinate recall	Yes	Yes	High	Med	Med
Owen	26	W1	Determinate recall	Yes	Yes	High	High	High
Paul	44	W1	EDS recall	No	Yes	High	High	High

[a] Ethnicity codes: W1 = White British, A3 = British Pakistani
[b] Spousal Assault Risk Assessment; [c]Risk of Serious Harm to a known adult (a named individual); [d] Risk of Serious Harm to the general public, all taken from OASys
[e] Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection; [f] Extended Determinate Sentence

Procedure and materials

Participants were interviewed in private rooms within their establishment. The information sheet was reviewed and consent form signed prior to the interview commencing. Based on the literature relating to post IPV stalking and breaches of restraining orders described above, a semi structured interview schedule was developed (appendix H) and used as a general guide for the interview. Questions aimed to gather information about how participants felt about the relationship and the victim to glean insight into potential motive, e.g. reconciliation as in Thompson et al. (2012) or to regain power and control as in Douglas and Dutton (2001). Triggers for contact were explored by discussing what was happening for them at the time, and an incident analysis sought to explore the relevance of the various facets of RPG theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004).

Interviews lasted between 15 and 110 minutes. The interview with one participant (Joe) was stopped after 15 minutes as he had recently received news from home that he wanted to discuss with his solicitor. Although Joe had been offered the opportunity to reschedule the interview at the start, he had wanted to continue, but after 15 minutes felt that he was not giving it his full attention and asked to reschedule. A further appointment was made, however long-term restrictions to movement within the establishment occurred meaning the interview could not be completed. Despite the shortness of the interview, Joe discussed the phenomenon of interest and therefore his interview was included in analysis. A debrief concluded the interview and participants were provided with a debrief sheet (appendix G). Field notes were made after interviews on the researcher's initial impressions and reflections on her own methodology. Interviews were recorded on an encrypted Dictaphone and later transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

Data analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2012) approach to thematic analysis provides a six-step process[8], all of which were followed in this research. All data relating to the phenomenon of interest were coded. Analysis was done by hand by the researcher without the use of software. During the process of analysis, Patton's (1999) suggestions for enhancing quality and credibility were utilised. Alternative explanations were sought and tested against the data, negative cases were explored and different theoretical perspectives on IPV were considered when interpreting the themes identified. The researcher remained aware of her own credibility and the experience and bias she potentially brought to the research, keeping a reflexive account in analytical memos. Doing so allowed her to ensure she maintained an open and inquisitive approach throughout development and delivery of the research, exploring the experience and perspective of participants rather than trying to 'prove'

[8] Familiarisation with the data, assigning preliminary codes to describe the content, searching for patterns, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, producing a report.

her own preconceived ideas. An excerpt was independently coded by both the researcher and her supervisor to ensure consistency in identified concepts. Themes were reviewed at various stages by the researcher's supervisors to review grounding and internal consistency. Following discussion, the themes were adjusted and relabelled to ensure a best fit for the story of the data. Member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the data (i.e. giving participants the opportunity to review transcripts) was not possible due to time constraints and the transient nature of the prison population.

Results and discussion

In this section, excerpts of the data are used illustratively and analytically to tell the story of the data[9] (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The three overarching themes and 9 themes that were developed from the analysis to answer the research question are shown in table 3.2. The remainder of this chapter will discuss these three themes and how they relate to participants choosing to contact their partners from custody.

[9] Quote conventions used are as follows:

- (numbers) at the start or end of the quote refers to the corresponding lines from the transcript
- [----] in the body of the quote refers to an uninterpretable part of the recording, with – indicating a shorter and ---- indicating a longer period
- … in the body of the quote indicates the removal of a section of the quote that does not contribute to the meaning
- [text] in the body of the quote refers to non-verbal additions by the participant and/or words added by the interviewer to improve the readability of the quote
- (text) in the body of the quote refers to comments made by the interviewer
- Text indicates emphasis added by the speaker

Table 3.2

Super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes

Super-ordinate theme	Sub-ordinate theme
Disrupted connections	*"It's very hard to just turn love off": The pull of the dysfunctional attachment* *Difficult endings: Negotiating the unfinished business of broken relationships* *"I was gonna speak to my daughter by hook or by crook": Family is everything*
External forces	*Partner as protagonist* *The influence of friends and family* *Reacting to the system*
Internal processes	*Rationalising* *I'll do what I want* *The end justifies the means*

Disrupted connections

This theme describes how contact allowed participants to keep their connections with others alive and navigate the sudden breach caused by their incarceration. Although their relationships were difficult and confusing, the pull to maintain them was strong and all consuming, and their need to preserve them was more important than the consequences they may face for doing so. Dysfunctional attachments are thought to be caused by the interaction of individual genetic factors and the behaviour of primary caregivers (Gervai, 2009). Attachment insecurity is a predictor of IPV in adults (e.g. Spencer et al., 2020; Velotti et al., 2018) and appears to alter an individual's threat perception and reduce their ability to effectively manage themselves (Dutton & White, 2012). Anxious attachment is also linked to pursuit of a former partner (de Smet et al, 2011; Dutton & Winstead, 2006). If participants struggled to maintain healthy attachments and relationships, and have an anxious attachment style, it seems logical that they found an interrupted connection difficult to manage. The themes within this overarching theme and the next also appear to support the different aspects of RPG (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004), as discussed below.

"It's very hard to just turn love off": The strength of the dysfunctional attachment

All the participants described dysfunctional relationships they felt a strong pull to. Approximately half of the participants described a powerful attachment between the couple that felt almost impossible to break. There was a strong sense of the push and pull of these relationships: the pull of the 'need' to maintain the relationship counteracted the push of the dysfunction, thus perpetuating the cycle and creating conflicting feelings, supporting the role of insecure attachment as a risk factor for pursuit of a former partner. Adam summed up the strength of the pull in a way that represented the experiences of several participants: *"I was thinking to meself, I'd rather be in jail in a relationship with her, than not in jail without her, at the time (ok) that's how strong it was"* (918-920). Neil's comments confirm that the pull was all that mattered: *"I probably still loved her at the time … when I love her I couldn't care what happens"* (536-537). Guy described the sense of powerlessness he felt to the pull: *"I don't understand why I contact 'em. I don't know. Its summit in your head just won't let go"* (554-555), while others experienced the pull as something that drove them:

> Frank (605-608): *"I have kept contact with her because obviously I loved her, I didn't care what anyone else said, I wasn't bothered by what anyone else said, even army could come in front of me and tell me stop contacting her and I wouldn't listen to them"*
>
> Adam (1212-1214): *"I think it was more me than her what needed the contact. She did want the contact, but I needed the contact at the time (ok) I felt like I needed it (yeah) do you know what I mean. It was getting me through the day."*

Several participants talked about the all-consuming nature of the pull to their connection to the victim and how central it was to their lives, as shown in the following excerpts:

> Guy (350-352): *"I started getting bad mental health to be honest (yeah) and I was in prison in a cell and I could hear her having sex (right) it sounds mad that dunnit"*
>
> Matt (309-310): *"It was probably just because I was so in love with her and just madly infatuated with her (mm). If, I couldn't have her then, I, I didn't want to be here."*

The strength of this pull and how central this was to the lives of participants provides support for two aspects of RPG theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004); the relationship being strongly linked to the perpetrator's sense of self (goal linking) and its all-consuming nature (rumination).

Many participants experienced confusing mixed emotions about the relationship. While they recognised the relationship was dysfunctional and volatile, they also had good memories. This confusion exemplifies the dysfunction in the relationship and how difficult it felt to navigate, as Adam's comments demonstrated: *"I hated her but I loved her at the same time (ok) you know, I*

hated her for putting me in jail (yeah) but I loved her at the same time" (767-768). This shows the conflict between the intellectual knowledge of the reality of the relationship with the emotionally driven need to secure the attachment. Owen summed up the difficulty participants faced when being expected to fight this strong pull: *"When you love someone it's, it's hard to just turn love off"* (712). This confused relationship dynamic between the pair may be evidence of traumatic bonding (Dutton & Painter, 1981), where the cycle of positive and negative interactions creates a powerful interpersonal bond.

Only two participants did not discuss the need for an emotional connection with their partner; Ed did not recall much about his contact and therefore found it difficult to identify his motives, while Hal openly talked about not wanting a relationship with his ex-partner and described his contact with her as intended to hurt her and make her fearful. This is discussed further in the sub-theme 'the ends justifies the means', however it is useful to note that despite Hal maintaining he did not want a relationship with his ex-partner, there was a palpable sense of needing to maintain the contact with her and still having influence over her life. It seemed that Hal did want the connection, just in a way that he was in control of:

> Hal (457-461): *I: "so what would happen then that would make you think 'I'm gonna do something else'?"*
>
> *Hal: "Eh? [Laughs] For her not to ring me. Cos every time something'd happen she'd ring me straight away. I got her mum's house windows smashed in, [she didn't] ring me, so I got a petrol bomb thrown at her mum's house, she ring me straight away"*

He too raised the all-consuming nature of his contact with his ex-partner: *"she was on my mind constantly, I'm not gonna lie and say she wasn't (yeah) she was on my mind constantly"* (266). Although Hal's motive was different to the others, it is clear he still needed the connection and that it was a driving force in his decision to continue to be abusive from custody.

The pull from the attachment appeared to be experienced by both parties, particularly when the cycle had existed for some time. In several cases participants felt they shared responsibility with their partner, as Chris explained: *"It's not always me contacting her"* (194). Paul, who had been subject to multiple imprisonments and restraining orders relating to his partner summed this up by saying no matter what authorities imposed, *"we'd always find a way"* (297). In the following excerpt, Frank describes his partner's behaviour in a way that suggests she also felt a strong pull to the connection:

> Frank (486-489): *"She's just fucking wasting police time for nothing (yeah) because she'll still contact me no matter what, she even says it 'no matter who tells me to stop contacting you I'm not gonna tell, it's not gonna stop me'"*

Others, like Owen, found their desire to maintain the connection was reinforced by their partner's behaviour:

> Owen (739-742): *"But it wasn't, I wasn't getting that illusion from her, she was saying the same to me she's do you know she loves me and she wants me and even going to the extent that she off- d'you know she wasn't going to turn up at court and she wasn't (yeah) do you know what I mean"*

Participants felt confused by the mixed messages they received from their partners, providing further evidence of the complex nature of their relationships, whilst also providing an ambivalent message that people who struggle with separation are prone to misinterpret (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004), as shown in the following excerpt:

> Adam (1202-1205): *"The last email she sent me, err, I've heard, I've heard what you got sentenced, this was next to the 5-year restraining order the same time got pushed under, [---] 'I love ya, I miss ya, contact me and let me know you're ok'. I didn't get it, I didn't get the restraining order next to the email, I didn't understand it"*

These accounts seem to replicate Allison et al.'s (2008) finding that the complex attachment profiles of both people in the relationship can result in pursuit strategies by either party. Similarly, ongoing contact between the victim and their stalker is linked to persistence of the stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2013). Although it may be the case that victims did find it difficult to escape the pull of these attachments, an alternative explanation may be that they felt unable to pull away due to the implicit coercive control created by their contact with the perpetrators (Dutton & Goodman, 2005).

The strength of the pull to these participants' connection with their ex-partner may be explained by dysfunctional attachment style and fear of abandonment, which was evidenced in the wider accounts of some participants. This theme appears to replicate Allison et al.'s (2008) finding of a strategy of pursuit being used to regulate the emotional distance between the couple.

Difficult endings: Negotiating the unfinished business of broken relationships

Whilst the strength of the dysfunctional attachment seemed to pull participants back to the relationship and drive contact, the nature of the ending also contributed to the need to make contact. There was a cyclical pattern to the relationships that continued through contact in prison.

Participants were not used to an abusive event meaning the end of a connection and therefore did not see this time as any different. The cycle of abuse often seen in abusive relationships (Walker, 1979) and proposed to be replicated in post abuse stalking (Douglas & Dutton, 2001) appears to have been evident in the ongoing contact from custody, as Owen's comments show:

> Owen (308-314): *"she said have you got a number for him can you get him to phone me (yeah). So obviously I've phoned her off unknown first saying what's up and that, she's like 'ah I miss you blah, blah, blah' and do you know we were just speaking and then (yeah), obviously, something would happen. Like we'd end up having an argument, then she'd go out and whatever, and then she'd, she'd end up phoning the jail telling them I had a phone. And then I'd get another one. And then, d'you know, I'd leave, I wouldn't speak to her for a bit (yeah). Then I'd speak to her again, same thing"*

The complicated nature of participants' dysfunctional relationships meant they were used to the cycle of abuse, thus replicating the pattern in their contact from custody. The intermittent reward caused by their positive experiences appeared to make it feel worth it for them. Going round in this abusive cycle seemed to have taught participants that it was the true nature of a relationship, and that conflict was easily overcome as Owen explains:

> Owen (488-490): *"Cos none of us really stay pissed off for long do we, no matter what, what it's about you did, it's not forever, and it's not usually for long, usually you're calm after a bit do you know what I mean"*

This sense of the conflict being normal is consistent with the implicit theory literature that IPV offenders believe 'violence is normal' (Gilchrist, 2009). For others, childhood experience taught them that dysfunctional relationships were normal as Matt described: *"In my head it was, well my parents used to argue like this all the time (ok) so, they used to get back together"* (85-86). This is consistent with Dutton's (2006) social learning perspective that being exposed to family conflict in childhood increases an individual's sense that conflict is an acceptable way to deal with an interpersonal problem.

Feelings of loss and rejection were apparent for many participants. They grieved the loss of the relationship, their contact with children and what might have been. Dave explained it as *"You've lost everything and you're in a bad place, and then you stop seeing your kids"* (757-758), while Karl's account demonstrates the loss of their joint history: *"I felt like shit like do you know what I mean she's just not arsed about me after 5, 5 and a half, 6 years, she's not arsed like do you know what I mean"* (222-224). There was a sense of this loss feeling catastrophic, which may be due to it being

combined with the recent loss of their freedom and 'normal' life; their available alternatives had reduced significantly, linking to RGP theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). These feelings of loss resulted in a number of externalising responses, including trying to fix the relationship through contact.

For many participants, the ending of the relationship felt sudden or uncertain, as Matt explained:

> Matt (168-170): *"It was on my mind that I wanted to speak to her (mm) definitely, because, like I say, 4 years of being there every day and speaking to her every day to then have nothing was, well, where's this gone now, what's happening"*

The sudden loss of something that had been such a big part of their lives left them feeling confused and as if something was missing. The sense of loss of self, compatible with RGP theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004), was again evident. This sense of confusion was echoed by participants who felt uncertain about where they stood. From their point of view nothing had changed, so they were left confused by the requirement to not have contact, as Neil describes.

> Neil (173-175): *"Cos before they even nicked me she was still speaking to [me] and she was like yeah, but this can't happen [--] so technically still in a relationship with her, so when I've come to prison I've just not thought anything of it"*

None of the participants seemed to consider their partner might want the relationship to end or that she may be glad of an excuse to end contact, consistent with the role of lack of empathy for the victim in persistence of stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2013). Participants talked about times when they had been subject to restraining orders before, but the relationship had not ended, so did not understand why it was ending this time, echoing the cyclical pattern of abusive behaviour; it was normal for them to be abusive then reconcile, so it was difficult for them to comprehend why that would not happen again. Participants' repeated journey round the abusive cycle likely increased their belief that they would reconcile this time, evidencing the self-efficacy aspect of RGP theory.

For some men there was a sense of unfinished business. It did not seem to be enough for them that victims had made complaints and they had been convicted of offences against them, they needed personal closure, as Matt and Guy describe:

> Matt (353-356): *"And it was like that page of the book was still open and never actually got closed, and that's what I was trying to get done (mhmm) just get the, I wanna get these apologies out, I wanna get this done and then I can close that book and that's dealt with"*

> Guy (522-524): *"I wanted closure I think. I want, I wanted [partner] to tell me that it were over properly (right ok) I think. Instead of her hiding, getting other people to say stuff, I wanted her to tell me to my face (mm) that she didn't love me and that anymore."*

Mumm and Cupach (2010) found that an ambiguous message from victims of UPBs often led to 'flare ups' where the perpetrator periodically escalated his behaviour. Although their sample consisted primarily of people who had not had a romantic relationship with their pursuer, their finding that a more successful approach was to *"reject unwanted pursuit in a direct, succinct, and unambiguous fashion"* (p. 724) appears to represent Guy's needs. Similarly, Dutton & Winstead (2011) found that perpetrators of unwanted pursuit advised that a direct message from the victim to cease and desist was most effective in stopping them, perhaps helping to target the misconstruing of a partner's behaviour involved in the rationalising aspect of RGP.

Many participants described experiencing high levels of uncertainty that they found it difficult to live with. For these men, contact was often a way of alleviating the thoughts and worries they were experiencing. Crane et al. (2013) found that failure to accept relationship status was linked to higher levels of verbal aggression. Several of the men struggled with the uncertainty of not knowing if the relationship was going to survive. Participants could not sit with that uncertainty and often felt a need to repair the relationship, so things could go back to how they had been. Adam, for example, described feeling an urgency to get back to normal that was echoed by other participants:

> Adam (747-751): *"I was basically praying to god that she'd stay with me because we'd been broke up for six weeks only and I hadn't contacted her and it was hard, I'd missed her like hell (yeah) you know what I mean, I really had missed her. And all I had in me head was stay with me, get me off with this charge (mm) like [--] and let's get back, let's be together".*

Several participants described thinking the relationship would get past the offence. Owen, for example, who had kidnapped, falsely imprisoned and assaulted his partner and a man she had been with at the time, could not see that his offence may be a barrier to the relationship continuing, as this excerpt demonstrates: *"At that time I was thinking that we were still gonna, that we still had a future together do you know what I mean (mhmm) that we were gonna get through this"* (244-245). His contact with his ex-partner aimed to reassure him that things would be ok. Individuals who have difficulty tolerating uncertainty often engage in impulsive behaviours to alleviate the uncertainty, generally without consideration of the potential consequences for doing so (Bottesi et al., 2018), which appears to have been the case for these participants. This appears to support Dardis and Gidycz's (2019) other pathway to OPB's, reconciliation, which is supported by RGP theory, and was evident in the account of several participants, who used the need to eliminate the uncertainty of

what happens next to justify contacting the victim. Karl explained this in a way that demonstrates his continued need to rationalise his behaviour: *"It was for a good reason (mhmm) it was not just to contact her and give her abuse and stuff like that (yeah) do you know what I mean, it was genuinely to try and sort stuff out"* (294-296). This echoes research findings that the most common goal of persistent pursuit is reconciliation (e.g. Dennison & Stewart, 2006).

While some participants wanted to move on within the relationship, others were aware the relationship had ended and were finding it difficult to cope. The strength of the attachment and an ending they felt had been done to them or had been uncertain seemed to concentrate these feelings, at times leaving participants feeling confused, which drove contact in an attempt to get answers;

> Guy (354-356): *"I know people fall in love and fall out of love, but you don't, you have to, I thought you have to do something wrong (mm) do you know what I mean people don't just fall out of love with you for nothing."*
>
> Neil (262-265): *"I was just saying 'how are you, what's going on (mm) how come this has happened? How come it's got to this point? It should have never got to this point' … repetitive letters cos it pretty much said the same thing but in different ways all the time."*

Making contact worked for Neil as he got his answer (that his girlfriend needed a break from him as he could be too intense) and it allowed him to move on; *"Well I've got the response I've found out so, then, yeah I'm at ease then I can get out of the jail do you know what I mean"* (288-289). The powerful impact of a definitive ending on participants demonstrates the strength of the pull to maintain the dysfunctional attachment. Barbara and Dion (2002) found that individuals who were insecurely attached found it more difficult to cope with the end of a relationship. This break up distress aligns with the affective flooding aspect of RGP theory, where individuals experience intense negative emotions. Engaging in pursuit behaviours at the end of a relationship and cycles of trying to make it work is common (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000) so it is unsurprising that men who are in a complicated abusive relationship find this time confusing.

Overall, there was a general feeling of the difficulty participants experienced when losing their connection to their partner, and the strong desire they felt to maintain it, regardless of the motive. Their inability to tolerate the uncertainty about whether it was over for good resulted in them making contact to try and force reconciliation or understand what had gone wrong.

"I was gonna speak to my daughter by hook or by crook": Family is everything

A strong theme for those participants who had children with the victim was the need to maintain ties with their children. Continuing abuse once a relationship has ended has been found to be linked to child contact arrangements (Morrison, 2015) and is linked with recurrence of stalking in rejected stalkers (MacKenzie et al., 2013). The literature suggests that abusive men want contact with their children in order to maintain control over the mother (e.g. Beeble et al., 2007; Bonomi & Martin, 2018; Hayes, 2012), however this seemed inconsistent with the motivations of participants in this study. Most participants seemed desperate to maintain the connection with their child; they did not care about the rules or the consequences for themselves as the need to maintain their families felt essential, as this excerpt shows:

> Karl (272-275): *"I've been done for breach of a restraining order before (mm) so I knew I was, if I got caught doing it I was looking at another, minimum 12 weeks in prison … but that's the risk I was willing to take to try and sort my family out"*

Luke on the other hand did not want to maintain his family as a whole unit but felt a strong duty to be a good father. In his eyes, he needed to do whatever it took to ensure his relationship with his daughter continued or he would be letting her down. This felt intolerable to him and there was a sense of him seeing the barriers to his contact with his daughter as something he needed to overcome to prove his worthiness as a father.

> Luke (97-99): *"I sent her a birthday card, Christmas card, just letters every, every week, you know, just, I had to, I've got no choice, I have to do it, cos if I don't I'll be a fucking idiot"*

> Luke (142-143): *"I was gonna speak to my daughter by hook or by crook"*

Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993) proposed that a father's level of involvement post separation was related to how strong and salient his identity as a father was to him. Perhaps for the men in this study, who had begun to lose their sense of self due to the breakdown of the relationship, their role as a father became more salient, driving the need for contact. Being a good father appeared to be important to their sense of self and maintaining the relationship was their way of achieving that goal, this fulfilling RGP's (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004) goal linking aspect.

Participants discussed the difficulty of not being around their loved ones and the uncertainty that brought. Contact was sometimes used to reassure themselves that the people they cared about were ok. It was difficult for them to tolerate not knowing what was happening in people's lives and they needed reassurance to be able to cope with being in custody. Paul described this phenomenon well;

> Paul (413-417): *"It's, insecurity, you wanna make sure they're alright, you care about them you know (yeah). its hard innit. You know you're, you're, you're miles away you wanna know they're alright, you worry about them, you don't sleep at night cos you're constantly thinking about them (yeah) you worry, you're stressed and so you think fuck, any way to contact them to make sure they're alright, so you can sleep at night"*

For Paul and others, making contact was a way of alleviating the uncertainty they felt about their relationship with their loved ones, which made being in prison more difficult. This theme represents a different type of disrupted connection; it is not just the relationship with the victim that drives men to breach restrictions and make contact from custody, their relationships with children and family also have an influence.

The disruption to connections experienced by participants due to their incarceration appear to have caused them distress, which they have alleviated by making contact from custody. They felt an all-consuming need to maintain contact with their ex-partner, and the abrupt ending to their relationship left them with unanswered questions and a sense of confusion about why this time was different. They were also motivated by their need to maintain connections with those they were connected to through the victim.

External forces

This theme captures the role of the external forces that influence the participant's need or desire to continue contact, including the partner being the protagonist, the influence of friends and family and the impact of the criminal justice system. The social circles of participants were generally a negative influence and the prison system often served to trigger or facilitate abuse. While some of this theme may represent the blame often seen in IPV perpetrator accounts (eg. Dutton, 1986; Eckhardt & Dye, 2000), it also reflects the complex factors that contribute to IPV generally, for example wider societal and social structures (e.g. Dutton, 1985).

Partner as protagonist

This theme captures the idea that the partner is seen as a lead player in the ongoing abuse. Her behaviour is perceived as causing abuse by instigating contact, sending mixed messages or playing games. Dutton et al. (1995) found that those who developed an 'abusive personality' due to early shaming experiences were prone to externalising blame, as was seen in this sample, and Spencer et al.'s (2020) meta-analysis found external locus of control to be predictive of male IPV perpetration.

Perceiving others to be hostile (e.g. Bernard & Bernard, 1984) may also be relevant here, as may Senkans et al.'s (2020) Aggressive Relational Schema model, which proposes that aggressive relational schemas present in IPV men result in them distorting social cues and events in ways that result in aggression and violence.

Tangney (2011) found that shame (the negative evaluation of the self) was linked to externalising blame for one's actions. It is possible that the participants, who had been officially reprimanded for their abusive behaviour, felt shame about their offending and felt the need to deflect blame. Contact may have served as a way of them doing this, by directly blaming their partner. Alternatively, they may feel shame about breaking the rules relating to contact and made use of blame as an externalising strategy to alleviate shameful feelings in interview. In this study it was clear participants believed their partner knew what she was doing and was culpable. Dichter et al. (2018) found that women self-reported high frequencies of perpetrating psychological abuse, regardless of whether they were subject to coercive control themselves, which may support the view of perpetrators that their partners were acting deliberately. Alternatively, this theme may be consistent with Weldon and Gilchrist's (2012) finding that IPV perpetrators hold an implicit theory that 'women are provoking' and are responsible for the abuse they experience. The sense provided by participants was that it was a case of the former, however that may speak to the strength of the implicit theory rather than being a true reflection of the situation.

Of the 16 participants in this study, 14 described their partner as being actively involved in the ongoing contact in some way and in many cases the partner was seen as the instigator of the contact. It could be that these were mutually abusive relationships or further evidence of the two way pull of the connection as described in the earlier theme. Alternatively, it may be evidence of rationalisation as part of RGP theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004) in that participants believed victims wanted the contact. This is consistent with the role of ongoing contact between victim and stalker and a lack of empathy towards how the victim may be impacted in the persistence of stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2013). Participants described their partners as being a willing participant who made active choices to continue contact by either prompting first contact themselves or actively engaging in the contact (for example calling or writing to the participant, asking to be contacted again etc.). Dave found this contradictory: *"I just thought you fucking bitch (yeah) I thought 'you contacted me [laughing] I fucking left you alone, that's, that's what we wanted in the beginning, I left you alone'"* (487-489).

Partners were often seen as protagonists because they were perceived to be playing games. Most participants described partners lying about them, being manipulative and using the system to their

own advantage. Even though Ed could not remember much about the events surrounding him sending a threatening letter to his ex-partner, his default position was that it must have been in response to something she had done; *"she probably done something, cos it wouldn't just a been cos I wanted it to happen"* (128-129). There was a sense of it being intolerable for him to consider that his behaviour may have been unreasonable or unprovoked. Such an idea clearly did not sit well with his view of himself and therefore he assumed that his behaviour was justified. Adam described how his partner used the system to get him in trouble without implicating herself. Although he made passing comment that he should not have threatened her, his focus was on her bad behaviour and there was a clear sense of injustice and betrayal.

> Adam (992-999): *"So she would record … I'm not joking we probably had a hundred phone calls between august and October, we were speaking every day (yeah) multiple times a day, but she only give the police the 5 or 6 when I was threatening her (right, ok) … She didn't give them the ones where she said 'I've fucking shagged blah blah blah, bluh, bluh' and then ah, put phone down and I rang her back 'you little fucking tramp, wait until I get out I'm going to fucking throw acid on ya you fucking slag. Blah blah' Recorded that one. (yeah) 'oh look what he's just sent me'. Not the one where, why I'd said it to her."*

Across the sample there was a strong sense of the victims being underhanded and manipulative and the participants feeling they were a victim of her games. This could provide support for Gilchrist's (2009) suggested implicit theory of "women are dangerous" or represent a true reflection of events. Guy's experience captured the sense of betrayal that some participants felt due to their partner's behaviour as shown in this excerpt:

> Guy (147-149): *"I was due to get out on me tag, but then she went and took all the letters I'd been sending her cos I weren't supposed to be writing her. She took all the letters I'd been sending to her to the police"*

In addition to playing games, partners were also seen as vengeful and participants often believed the victim reporting them was the reason they got in trouble rather than because of their abusive behaviour, as shown in the following excerpts:

> Dave (361-362): *"It's just a power trip (mm) that's, that's what it comes down to I think, personally, it's a way of hurting someone innit"*

> Frank (441-443): *"so clearly she's been pissed one night and thought right I'll get him back for that now do you know what I mean? (right) That's what she's like, she's always been like that"*

Nearly all the participants provided examples of their partner playing games, being manipulative and behaving badly throughout their relationship. Regardless of whether their accounts were accurate or not, there was a sense of it being important to convince the researcher that the victim was unreasonable and unpredictable and that their behaviour was therefore understandable. By providing the additional evidence of situations outside the phenomenon of interest, participants hoped to strengthen their case that it was not down to them being a bad or abusive person. This would be consistent with participants wanting to distance themselves from the negative abuser label (e.g. Cavanagh et al., 2001; Whiting et al., 2012). Alternatively, their account may reflect their hostile perception of their partner (e.g. Bernard & Bernard, 1984) or their Aggressive Relational Schemas (Senkans et al., 2020).

Many participants' accounts of their experiences gave a sense of seeing the world as a hostile place where people cannot be trusted. This is consistent with the impact of past life experiences resulting in individuals being hypervigilant to threat (e.g. Ehlers & Clark, 2000). Capaldi et al.'s (2012) systematic review found hostile attributions added to prediction of IPV over and above general anti-sociality, while relevant implicit theories for IPV perpetrators were identified as 'trust no-one' (Dempsey and Day, 2011) and 'dangerous world' (Weldon, 2016). It is easy to see why a person with these underlying beliefs might perceive ulterior motives on the part of their ex-partner, which could then serve to justify their ongoing contact from custody.

This theme may represent a deeply entrenched tendency to blame their (ex)partners for their own behaviour in order to manipulate the perceptions of others (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1979), however it could also be that participants genuinely believed their partner to be responsible due to their implicit theories about women and responsibility (Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012), or that their relationships really were characterised by situational couple violence (Johnson, 1995). As only the perspective of the perpetrator was included in this analysis, it is not possible to determine whether it is an accurate representation of events or evidence of participants externalising blame. Regardless of what the truth actually is, as discussed in chapter two, this theme represents the perpetrator's truth.

The influence of friends and family

For several participants, friends and family impacted on the abuse by supporting or facilitating it. IPV can involve multiple perpetrators, where partners engage others in using abusive behaviour towards the victim (Salter, 2014), and Fox et al. (2013) found that social learning theory via peers influenced and reinforced stalking behaviour as it was accepted or normalised in the peer group. DeKeseredy

(1998a) proposed male support theory as a potential explanation for the role of peers in IPV, explaining it as *'the attachments to male peers and the resources that these men provide that encourage and legitimate woman abuse'* (p. 11; DeKerseredy & Schwartz, 2013). Some participants described how their friends and family engaged in abusive behaviour on their behalf, for example Adam, who asked a friend to post on social media about the offence and Hal who asked friends to assault the victim's mother; *"that's pissed me off (yeah) then I sent, I sent people around her mam's house and got her mam battered"* (260-261).

For others, friends and family played an important role by passing on messages from the victim and facilitating contact, for example Neil commented: *"well me mate passed her number saying this, his exact words on the phone was, 'she's told me to give you her number but put her number down on the pin as Jenny'"* (249-252). This passing of messages from the victim served to reinforce the participant's perception that their partner was a willing participant and wanted the relationship to work, replicating the rationalisation aspect of RGP (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004).

For some participants, receiving updates about the victim from friends and family also acted as a trigger for further contact and abuse. For example, whenever Neil was informed of his ex-partner's actions by his friends he would begin ruminating on it and would be driven to write to her to find out what was going on: *"Obviously I'd get told all these and I'll be like well, I'll send that then (mm). And then, a few weeks'd go by and they'd say something else, I'd write it down and send it again"* (399-400). This rumination further supports the applicability of RGP to this behaviour.

Friends and family also influenced contact in another way. All but one participant gave a clear sense of wanting to distance themselves from the negative connotations of the abusive behaviour and associate with a more positive identity. This theme was consistent with Dempsey and Day's (2011) theme of 'I am a good person' and Weldon's (2016) sub theme of 'I am not like them', where IPV perpetrators distanced themselves from the kind of 'bad' person who committed these types of offences, as Guy explained: *"When they give you a restraining order it makes you feel like a stalker (yeah) I mean I wasn't stalking anybody if you understand what I mean"* (594-596). Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) proposed a link between RGP theory and the fear of losing face, in that individuals may engage in persistent pursuit to achieve their goals and save face. Two of the participants actively engaged in abusive behaviour to alter the perception of them by others. Luke deliberately sent cards to his daughter, knowing that he would get in trouble if caught, so that people would know he had not abandoned her, thus maintaining his image of himself as a good father: *"nobody can say to me now 'oh you haven't bothered'"* (283). Adam asked a friend to create a post on Facebook about the offence and the infidelity of the victim. It was important to him that others

knew the 'real' story. For Guy, concern about what other's thought combined with his hostile world view: *"Everyone was against me, everyone was laughing at me. I could see everyone laughing at me in me head (yeah) that's what got me more than anything"* (367-368). The anger and embarrassment he felt led him to make threatening phone calls to his ex-partner and leave the area on release from custody, even though it meant he was homeless.

Friends and family thus both trigger and facilitate abuse from custody; by providing updates and acting as an intermediary they fuel the cycle of abuse and the pull of the connection to the victim. Perpetrator's concerns about how they are viewed by friends and family triggers a different type of abuse where men attempt to right perceived wrongs in how they are seen.

Reacting to the system

This sub-theme captures the perceived role of the Criminal Justice System in triggering abuse. Several participants discussed trying to go about things the 'right way' and feeling as though they were not getting anywhere, resulting in them choosing to breach restraining and no-contact orders to achieve their goals. The most telling account of this came from Owen who described his contact with his ex-partner earlier in his sentence as mutually desired. After the relationship had definitively ended Owen chose to write a threatening letter to his ex-partner to facilitate a transfer and get what he needed from the system. Without the system failure, he would not have needed to send an abusive letter:

> Owen (516-522): *"Because I was trying to go through the right routes you know putting in for … I wanted out of the jail (yeah), but I couldn't get out of the jail … and in the end I thought this is gonna work this, and it worked. Within me writing this letter, within 10 days the police were up and interviewing me (yeah) and it got me straight back to [prison] you know and to court."*

There was evidence of the system using its processes appropriately, however the impact of the consequences on participant behaviour varied significantly. For Ian and Matt, being reprimanded for making contact was sufficient to get them to stop, as Matt explains: *"I think that was kind of the warning that I needed make me stop"* (342). However as seen in the sub-theme 'I'll do what I want' later on, punishments were generally seen as insignificant and participants were not stopped by them.

The experience of being in custody also triggered abuse in different way; several participants spoke about the role of incarceration in heightening the need for contact. The isolation and boredom of

prison, coupled with a lack of ability to do anything about the situation appeared to escalate levels of rumination and obsession (further linking to RPG theory), as these excerpts show:

> Adam (909-911): *"Little things like that might not feel like a big deal outside, but when you're in jail (mm) things escalate 10 times worse than it is and all you've got is your thoughts (yeah, yeah) I mean, it can fuck your head up"*

> Neil (639-642) *"And then they're speaking to someone at that moment in time where their heads all over the place cos they're locked behind door anyway"*

In addition to triggering abuse, it is of note that system failures often facilitated abuse. Eight of the 16 participants described being able to contact the victim either by post or phone without trying to circumvent public protection systems or making limited efforts (for example using initials instead of a name). Several participants, like Neil, knew they had a window to take advantage of at the start of their sentence where systems would not yet be in place, but others simply took a chance, as in the case of Karl:

> Neil (208-210): *"I come in on reception, they obviously hadn't got all the things yet had they, the process hadn't been done yet had they, you could send like a couple of letters out"*

> Karl (400-401): *"I put her number on my phone, it got accepted, I took the risk, it got accepted, spoke to my kids"*

Many participants described a sense of injustice at the way they had been treated by the system. Research has shown that offenders are more likely to be compliant if they perceive the authority in question to be legitimate and the outcome to be procedurally just (e.g. Papachristos et al., 2012; Paternoster et al., 1997), so this sense of unfairness and injustice in its various forms may be a vital component for why some men choose to continue to make contact from custody, as they did not respect the authority that made the rules. There was a sense of being both treated unfairly and abandoned by the system, as though male victims did not matter. Several participants described their behaviour as being all that was considered when authorities investigated, and there was a sense of an inherent injustice in the system where the behaviour of women was ignored. Karl described the unfairness of this situation from his point of view when he got punished for responding after his partner broke the restraining order:

> Karl (558-561): *"It's just how the system is really like do you know what I mean (mm). If you've got like, obviously [ex-partner]'s got the restraining order against me but if she's contacting me, surely that should say something (mm) well, I'm not the one that's initiating contact do you know what I mean"*

This sense of inevitability and resignation to inequality was apparent across participants. Although participants did not directly link this sense of injustice to their decisions to make contact, there was a clear disregard for the 'system' across the sample, which meant they did not care about the rules the system imposed, supporting Carlson et al.'s (1999) assertion that IPV perpetrators are less concerned about social conformity. For some there was a sense of being 'done to' by the system and the restrictions being an external force acting on the relationship. This was described by participants as being relevant throughout the relationship, not just while participants were in custody, and appeared to create a sense of them and us between the relationship and the authorities. Chris summarised this sense of an external force; *"there is police officers there and that forcing these people to do that when they don't want to do that"* (334-335). This sense of them and us may be further evidence of the strength of the connection between the couple and something that consolidates the bond between them, supporting the rationalisations suggested by RPG theory. If the restrictions are seen to be imposed on the relationship rather than something both parties want, it is logical for perpetrators not to comply with them, an aspect discussed further in the sub-theme 'I'll do what I want'.

External forces influenced a perpetrator's decision to make contact from custody in three ways; providing a trigger, providing justification and enabling the behaviour. While some of these factors may be due to the participant having a skewed perception of events, the influence of external factors is clearly both relevant to the occurrence of abuse from custody and somewhat outside of the perpetrator's control.

Internal processes

Whilst the previous two themes consider the relationship, situational and external factors influencing participants' decisions to contact partners from custody, this theme represents the internal processes driving the behaviour. The General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002) asserts that violence is cyclical and considers the relevance of the cognitions, affect and arousal of the perpetrator. This theme is in keeping with the GAM and emphasises the role of individual perpetrator characteristics.

Rationalisation

Rationalisation in some form was used by all participants when describing both their abusive behaviour generally and their contact from custody. Cognitive distortions are associated with

persistence in stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2013) and Weldon and Gilchrist's (2012) implicit theme of diminishing personal responsibility, which incorporated blaming external factors and minimising the nature of harm, is relevant to IPV generally, as discussed in chapter two. Although some of this is post hoc, i.e. rationalisation after the behaviour has occurred, as discussed in chapter two, minimising, justifying and blaming can drive abusive behaviour through distorted perceptions, abuse supportive attitudes and permission giving.

As described in previous themes, participants often used their partner's behaviour or their own desire to reconcile the relationship as a justification for continuing contact, supporting the rationalisation aspect of RGP (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). Other methods of rationalisation included participants justifying their behaviour by focusing on the fact that *technically* they had not broken any rules. Adam, for example, felt his decision to ask his friend to upload an abusive post on Facebook had not broken the rules; his rationalisation gave him permission to engage in the abusive act.

> Adam (829-832): *"But I didn't contact her directly, cos that would have been a breach of me restraining order, I didn't mention her name or anything (yeah), I just made people aware that the person who I was in here for (yeah) and that's why I done what I done""*

There appeared to be unwritten rules for participants about the way the world should run, and these being breached sometimes served as a justification for contact, for example in the case of Frank who immediately contacted his ex-partner to threaten her after being visited by the police and warned to stop that same behaviour; "*you grassing cunt (yeah) why the police been to see me about me threatening you"* (380-381). Alternatively, the rule could be used to rationalise the contact, for example Ed planned to get another woman to assault the victim as this meant that he was not breaching the rule that men should not hurt women. Eckhardt et al. (1998) found that maritally violent men were prone to being dichotomous in their thinking resulting in "rigid all-or-none ground rules for acceptable and unacceptable behavior" (p. 266), which seems consistent with this theme.

While there was little evidence of denial (i.e. denying the event occurred or that he had any part in it), several participants minimised the seriousness and impact of their behaviour. Some did this by focusing on the semantics of how it was described as in the case of Owen:

> Owen (387-390): *"I'd be abusive (yeah) I wouldn't say so much threatening. Sometimes of course I probably come across as threatening, but, probably not even meaning to come across as threating d'you know (yeah) and just my manner the way I am its coming across as a bit of threatening but definitely abusive yeah"*

Others focussed on the perceived disproportionate harshness of the consequences. Ben felt the consequences he faced were unfair and minimised his actions when describing them, greatly underplaying the seriousness of what he had done: "a *lifetime restraining order for a hot moment on the phone threatening her family and a few things (yeah) is a bit much"* (730-731). Because participants did not see their behaviour as particularly serious, the barriers to engaging in it were reduced.

Rationalisation appears to play an important role in driving contact from custody, either through providing motivation or reducing barriers. This is consistent with the role of rationalisation in RGP theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004), the role of cognitive distortions in persistence of ex-partner stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2013) and the findings in chapter two.

"I'll do what I want"

As described in 'reacting to the system', participants described a sense of injustice, which appears to have led to a general lack of respect for the system, resulting in contact. Refusal to conform to legal directives and a sense of entitlement are linked with persistence in stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2013), and having a lower stake in conformity is relevant to risk of violating IPV related orders (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2005). Participants felt both entitled to do what they wanted and unconcerned by the consequences they faced as they felt they had nothing to lose. For those participants who were generally anti-social (the majority), this disregard for the system was coupled with a sense of feeling that they could do or have whatever they wanted. The system could not tell them what to do and they were the master of their own destinies:

> Frank (336-340): *"Police come and see me and everything in [prison] ... But I didn't even listen to them do you know what I mean they said 'listen if you contact [ex-partner] again, you'll be getting done for fucking harassment' or summit like that and I just said, I walked out of the room and said 'do what you're doing mate, I'm in jail you can't do nothing to me' and just walked out"*

Immediately after this meeting Frank called the victim and was aggressive and threatening towards her because she had broken the unwritten rule of not reporting abuse to the police. Participants were not concerned about the view of the authorities and circumventing the rules was something they took in their stride, as Guy and Adam explained;

> Guy (332-336): *"Who the fuck do these people think they are telling me I can't speak to my girlfriend (ok) if you want the truth (absolutely) that's what I thought. How can someone*

stop me from speaking to someone else? Who the fuck do they think they are? I'll do it anyway"

Adam (781-784): **"***I thought … yeah I'm not allowed to contact her, but so what, I can get a mobile in jail, (mm) so what? I can still contact her, it's not hard to get a mobile in jail (yeah) so I'm not arsed what anyone else says, I can do whatever I want"*

In the accounts of these participants their entitlement was not explicitly about gender and appeared to be more a sense of 'you can't tell me what to do/I can do what I want', suggesting that it was more in keeping with the implicit theory of general entitlement proposed by Pornari et al. (2013) than Gilchrist's 2009 implicit theory of entitlement which is clearly linked to patriarchal views.

While the consequences of contact were generally in the participant's awareness, they often felt irrelevant or inconsequential. Within this theme there may be an element of Piquero and Pogarsky's (2002) gambler's fallacy, where people feel the odds of them being caught *again* are reduced. Given the underreporting of IPV generally (e.g. Chan, 2011; Office for National Statistics, 2019[10]) it is perhaps not unreasonable to take the gamble that the victim will not report them, thus making it worth it. A common theme among participants was that they had nothing to lose so they might as well do what they want. There was a sense of being at rock bottom and that contact was worth it because things could not get any worse. For Paul this was clearly the case. He had been in and out of prison all his life and did not see further prison time as a deterrent, leading him to dismiss it as a reason to adhere to the rules.

Paul (283-285): *"I'm already in jail, what's the worst they can do? (yeah) you know, I'm already in here so, but nothing, nothing much worse they can do is there? (no). What, give me a couple of extra days? Minor."*

For Neil, the strength of his need for the connection to be maintained combined with his sense of having nothing to lose to give him permission to make contact.

Neil (543-545): *"If the feelings are strong I, I wouldn't say disregard the consequences, I know exactly what the consequences are going to be but it's like, it's more like well, I'm already here anyway (mm) so, I might as well go for it"*

This sense of having nothing to lose and being entitled to do what they wanted appears to have acted as an enabler for other drivers of contact. Participants felt they had nothing to lose by trying to

10 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2019

reconcile, so they tried; they did not care what the system thought about their behaviour, so they did what they wanted. Generally participants had no regard for the CJS and consequences were not a deterrent, often due to their perception of the CJS as an unfair and biased system, providing further support for the need for procedural justice and authority to be seen as legitimate (Williams 2005).

The end justifies the means

For all participants, contact with the victim was seen as a way to achieve goals or alleviate unbearable thoughts and feelings. Motivation for IPV generally is mixed and individuals can have more than one motivation (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012). Motivations relating to reconciliation and alleviating negative feelings due to separation were discussed in 'Disrupted Connections'. This theme represents a more practical, problem solving motivation for abuse from custody. For these men, the need to resolve these problems was more important than the consequences they may face. Whereas in the previous subtheme participants did not care about potential consequences, in this subtheme the consequences were deliberately sought.

Participants often used contact to achieve a practical goal, get revenge or abuse the partner. Practical goals varied, and contact was seen as problem solving tool. Participant's past experience had taught them that using threats and violence got them what they wanted, so it was the strategy they employed when faced with a new problem. Adam described a sense of desperation to try anything to resolve his problem:

> Adam (983-985): *"I threatened to throw acid at her and stuff (right) on phone calls. I didn't mean it, but I was threaten-, saying anything I could (mm), like I was offering her money to change her statement (yeah) even though the statement was a lie"*

Adam hoped to get his ex-partner to change her statement and drop the charges, leading to abusive and threatening contact from custody: *"I wanted to know that she was alright, but I was more concerned that I was going to be alright"* (1090-1091). For Adam, the immediate consequences of the situation he was in, i.e. awaiting trial, were at the forefront of his mind, outweighing any concerns he had about getting caught for his contact from custody.

Hal's description of how he used contact as a tool showed how he was used to using fear and intimidation as a way of getting what he wanted. His readiness to share this explanation in such a matter of fact way suggested that it was normal behaviour for him and the obvious way to deal with a problem:

> Hal (494-497): *"I said to her I'm not standing scared [---] do you know what I mean I said I could be sat here from jail for fucking life and you lot gonna be terrorised on road so this is for free, I'm not paying nothing. Do you know what I mean I said give me contact with my daughter and all of this will stop."*

Several participants talked about wanting to hurt their ex-partners as they had been hurt. There was a real sense of an eye for an eye for these participants, as Frank explains: *"I want her to feel hurt if anything (ok) cos she's hurt me so I want her to feel pain as well"* (303-304). Grievance/revenge has been identified as an implicit theory for IPV offenders (e.g. Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon, 2016), and appears to be relevant to why men in this study were abusive from custody.

Although Hal did talk about wanting revenge, the general flavour of his contact was very different to that of other participants. There was a real sense of anger and need to show he had the power in his description of events. He was the only participant who talked about contact as a way to deliberately abuse. He described enjoying knowing the negative impact he was having on the victim and seemed proud of his ability to make her life 'hell':

> Hal (428-432): *"I was getting a thrill out of it (yeah) cos obviously I'm sat in jail and people think he's sat in jail he can't get things done and obviously she's said he can't get things done, he's sat in jail and that was just to prove a point (yeah) cos obviously I was sat in jail and I still can get you battered do you know what I mean and from them she knew I was serious then, she knew listen he's serious"*

Dutton and Winstead (2006) found the desire to control a partner was a predictor of engaging in persistent pursuit after a break-up. For Hal the need to control appears to have extended into his pursuit and fits with Dardis and Gidycz's (2019) proposal that one of the two pathways to UPB's is retaliation, supported by coercive control theory. They found self-control to be particularly relevant for individuals on this pathway, which fits with Hal's description of himself and his behaviour as impulsive. Regardless of the problem they were trying to solve, this theme represents the conscious choices participants made to use contact to achieve their practical goals.

Nearly all participants described experiencing intense emotions that felt catastrophic and unbearable, and contact was one of the impulsive strategies used to alleviate these intense feelings. While 'Difficult Endings' incorporated strong feelings of loss associated with the end of the relationship, 'the end justifies the means' considers contact as part of more general emotional mismanagement. Douglas and Dutton's (2001) review of the literature led them to conclude that IPV perpetrators who go on to stalk are more likely to have a borderline personality organisation, and

Spencer et al. (2020) found Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) to be predictive of male IPV perpetration. BPD disorder is characterised by intense emotional dysregulation (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), which appears to fit with this theme, lending support to Douglas and Dutton's conclusion. Further to this, individuals with BPD and low distress tolerance may find it difficult to manage intense emotions and rumination (emotion cascades), resulting in unhelpful behaviours to distract from the distress (Selby & Joiner, 2009).

Strong emotions other than loss also triggered unhelpful externalising responses, driving contact. Anger was a factor for several participants who used contact to release the intense emotions they were experiencing:

> Adam (612-615): *"Before I went to court I've got a text message … saying I've gone out with such and such a person it was like... they're my friends (mm) I was like wow, so I was thinking that's it definitely be over. But the next day I thought I'm not having this, so I've rang him, I have kicked off at the lad, rang her up, yeah going mad at her"*
>
> Guy (152): *"Lost me temper, started threatening her on the phone"*
>
> Owen (398-401): *"I suppose at the time I wasn't really thinking about the way she would feel. Do you know so I weren't really thinking oh I want to make her feel like shit do you know, I wasn't really thinking about that I were just d'you know being angry innit (yeah) and being 'argh'"*

Anger has been found to be a significant factor in persistent pursuit for men (Dye & Davis, 2003) and IPV generally (Spencer et al. 2020). Another strong emotion, jealousy, has been linked to harassing behaviour (e.g. Wigman et al., 2008) and unwanted pursuit behaviours (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000), and has an evolutionary purpose (Buss & Haselton, 2005). Jealousy was an emotion that was mentioned by a minority of participants, but nevertheless did appear to lead to contact to manage the uncomfortableness of the feeling. For Joe, checking up on the victim via other people helped him manage his jealousy: *"cos I was in prison and she was out there and I wanted to know in me head that she wasn't going with anyone else"* (283-285). Adam described how it was difficult to tolerate not being certain about his partner's fidelity while he was in custody and how having contact with her helped him manage it.

> Adam (1077-1079): *"When I was speaking to her, I just wanted the comfort of knowing that she was still with me and she wasn't with anybody else I think (yeah) I think it was more of a like, ahh, I don't know what the word is … think it was more for me own security (yeah) than anything else"*

People who experience high levels of urgency (strong impulses) are prone to engaging in impulsive actions to alleviate negative emotions (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001). In addition to the deliberate actions represented in 'the end justifies the means', there was also evidence of impulsivity in perpetrator's contact from prison. Poor impulse control has often been associated with IPV (e.g. Dutton, 2007; Spencer et al., 2020), and impulsivity has been found to moderate the link between IPV and rumination (Sotelo & Babcock, 2013).

Most of the contact described by participants appeared to be impulsive and reactive, as described by Luke *"the minute I got a letter back, I'd write one straight away, yeah. I'd make sure it's, it's done and in the post to get it gone"* (450-451) and Ed: *"I just sent it innit (Ok). Thinking ah fuck it I might as well get [another woman] to beat her up" (226)*. Several of the men described themselves as generally impulsive, for example Owen commented *"If I got a feeling or something, I'd (just do it), I wanted to do it you know"* (343). Hal demonstrated how this intrinsic characteristic contributed to his decision to be abusive from custody:

> Hal (412-415): *"I don't decide nothing yeah … with me things happen the spur of the moment, I rung one of the boys said where you at, he said I'm on x drive, I said say no more, I say go past [ex-partner's] house and punch her up (mmhmm) that was the first thing I come into, was punch her mum up"*

This theme demonstrates how contacting their ex-partner was functional for the participants. They were used to abusive behaviour being an effective tool for getting what they want, so employed it to meet their needs. They experienced strong emotions and high levels of uncertainty they found it difficult to cope with, which combined with impulsive reactions to trigger contact and alleviate their distress.

The internal processes associated with contact from custody support existing theories of unwanted pursuit and post relationship stalking. Rationalisations served to justify and excuse behaviour, and a sense of entitlement to do what they want, a disregard for the 'system' and a dysfunctional approach to solving problems led to contact as a way to achieve goals and alleviate overwhelming feelings.

Discussion

Summary of findings

This study has provided a first look at the experiences and motivations of men who have continued to be abusive from custody. It has identified three overarching themes that contribute to this behaviour: 'disrupted connections', 'external forces' and 'internal processes'. Disrupted attachments in some form were relevant to decisions to attempt contact by all participants, while the external force of the partner as protagonist was present for the majority. Through identifying these themes, this research has established the complex nature of this behaviour, supporting an integrated, biopsychosocial perspective. The research has highlighted the powerful role of dysfunctional attachment in abuse from custody and provided an in-depth analysis of how participants feel victimised and vulnerable.

These findings provide support for the relevance of several existing theories of IPV and post relationship stalking to contact from custody. In terms of broader theory, several aspects of the rejected stalker profile (Mullen et al., 1999) are clearly relevant for this group and there is general support for the applicability of Relational Goal Pursuit theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004) to contact from custody for men who want to reconcile or believe the relationship is ongoing. Several individual drivers identified in previous literature were also supported for this group. The role of dysfunctional attachments (e.g. deSmet et al., 2011) is clear, as is the relevance of emotional mismanagement (e.g. Dye & Davis, 2003). Across the sample there is support for Brownridge's (2006) finding of the simultaneous roles of anger, attempts to regain power and control and reconciliation. The replication of Walker's (1979) cycle of abuse seen in post abuse stalking (Douglas & Dutton, 2001) was also evident here. Participants in this study clearly demonstrated an external locus of control (e.g. Spencer et al., 2020) and as discussed in chapter two, their minimisation, justification and blaming appears to represent their truth and validates their behaviour. The consistency of accounts regarding the contribution of the behaviour of the victim also lends support to Allison et al.'s (2008) finding that the attachment profile of both partners is relevant. The combination of internal, external and situational factors found in this research provide support for Bloomfield's (2019) proposed Integrated Nested Ecological and General Aggression Model (INEGAM) as a way to understand IPV.

Potential risk factors for contact from custody have been identified: dysfunctional attachments that drive a need to maintain attachments with the victim and connected loved ones; low levels of ability to tolerate distress and uncertainty; ambivalence from the partner or a distorted perception of the victim's behaviour; social support that enables and triggers contact; tendency to use justifications to

give themselves permission; a sense of entitlement and disregard for authority; a dysfunctional approach to solving problems.

Limitations

Although the research was conducted with men resident in Welsh prisons, the sample was more geographically dispersed than the sampling procedure would suggest, with participants originating from North, Mid and South Wales, the North West, and the Midlands. This added heterogeneity to the sample, potentially diluting the data gathered. The representativeness of the themes across the sample do not indicate this is the case, however, and the outlier in terms of motive (Hal), was not the only person from his area. The sampling was purposive, but self-selecting. This undoubtedly impacted on the nature of abuse from custody that was included. The stark difference between Hal's account of his contact and that of the other 15 participants is indicative of a potential self-selecting bias. When the research was conceived, it was anticipated most participants would have accounts similar to Hal due to the screening out of cases where the perpetrator and victim were recorded as still being in a relationship. For each of the participants included, the victim or prison authorities had made a complaint about the contact (in most cases the victim) and therefore the contact was assumed to be unwanted, however participant accounts did not match this official view. It may be that participants were genuinely in a mutually abusive relationship; Johnson (2011) suggests SCV is overrepresented in survey data as they are the group who are more likely to be willing to discuss their behaviour. Alternatively, the strength of the implicit theories held by participants as women being provoking (Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012) and/or the rationalisation aspect of RGP (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004) and the relevance of cognitive distortions to persistent stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2013) may have resulted in participants presenting a skewed perception of the relationship.

Implications for practice

The knowledge gained by this research is useful to practitioners and policy in a variety of ways. The research highlights the benefits of engaging with perpetrators when researching IPV. A number of assumptions of various IPV theories of post relationship IPV were largely absent in this sample, for example a desire for power and control (Dutton & Goodman, 2005) and contact with children being for the purpose of contact with the mother (e.g. Beeble, Bybee & Sullivan, 2007; Bonomi & Martin, 2018; Hayes, 2012). This may be an effect of sampling (see limitations) or due to participants engaging in impression management. Nevertheless, as highlighted in chapter two, there is value in exploring why participants perceive events and circumstances in the way they do and allowing them to be heard.

There are implications for treatment and risk assessment. Given the role of attachment dysfunction and maladaptive responses to strong emotions, an integrated perspective such as the Power Threat Meaning Framework (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) where responses are seen as adaptive to help them survive may be appropriate when both treating and assessing IPV. There were clear themes and similarities of motives and contributing factors for participants in this sample, but their stories were different. By understanding their stories and how their current behaviour serves to protect them, we can both target treatment more effectively and more accurately assess risk.

Participants (and according to their accounts their partners), struggled to move on from the relationship. Merritt-Gray & Wuest (1995) highlighted that women may need support to leave an abusive relationship, and it appears this is also the case for perpetrators. The assumption that a victim is safe because the perpetrator is in custody may prevent the required post sentence support being prioritised. Supporting both victims and perpetrators after incarceration may also reduce the level of mixed messages and ambivalent behaviour that UPB perpetrators are prone to misinterpret (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). And what support to we offer perpetrators? Currently, a man is arrested and taken to custody and left to deal with the sudden ending of his relationship and loss of his world as he knows it. This research indicates the need for support services for men to help them to come to terms with the loss of the attachment. The clear links with RPG (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004) shown in this research demonstrate the need for men to be supported with potentially losing face, their sense of self and the intense emotions and uncertainty they experience. Helping men find a greater number of alternatives (DeSmet et al., 2013) may be vital in reducing the risk of this behaviour and help them cope with the sense of having lost everything and having nothing left to lose. Increasing support for perpetrators during this time would also allow for observations to be made regarding risk related behaviour. Individuals who are fixated on their ex-partner or children and who are struggling to see a way forward could be highlighted for closer monitoring and their ex-partners flagged with victim liaison services.

There are several implications for policy and systems. This research highlighted that participants did not need to make significant efforts to contact their ex-partners. While some made use of illegal phones, several simply requested access to phone numbers and sent letters addressed to the victim. There is a clear need to review systems in circumstances where restraining and non-molestation orders have been issued. The wider issue of participants' compliance with prison rules and no contact orders indicates the importance of procedural justice (e.g. Papachristos et al., 2012; Paternoster et al., 1997). Many men felt the system treated them unfairly and therefore did not hold its rules or regulations in high regard. The issue of gender bias in the system is one that is beyond the scope of this research and subject to much wider debate, but whether or not decisions regarding

contact are made and communicated in a procedurally just way is within the gift of the Criminal Justice System.

Implications for research

This study has contributed to the field by adding the voices of perpetrators to an understudied area. In doing so, it has provided support for existing theories in a different context, as described above, while identifying additional factors relevant to the custodial setting, for example the increased isolation and lack of control inherent in the prison system. The findings indicate that further exploration of Bloomfield's (2019) INEGAM model is warranted. Additionally, the research has highlighted gaps requiring further attention.

It is unclear if men misinterpret the situations that trigger contact from custody, or if the victim is as active as the perpetrator suggests. There has been much debate about the true prevalence of SCV versus intimate terrorism (see Bates & Graham-Kevan, 2016, for a useful review), making it difficult to determine what is the reality when only one half of the couple is interviewed. Three of the participants in this sample fell clearly into the intimate terroriser category according to their own account of their contact. Several of those who were interviewed were, on paper, not in an SCV relationship but shared their stories as though they were. It may be the case that a general gender bias in the system means events were reported as though the participant was the main protagonist when the abuse was in fact mutual (e.g. Hamel, 2020), or the participant may be deflecting blame onto the victim (e.g. Pence & Peymar, 1993). Further research that interviews both perpetrator and victim regarding contact would provide useful insights.

The role of contact with children was powerful for many participants. They felt unfairly treated and saw their role as a father as important to their identity. It is, of course, natural and sensible to prioritise the safety of the child and the victim in any child contact situation, and participants here did demonstrate a lack of awareness of the impact of their abusive behaviour. Nevertheless, given the potential role of fatherhood as an aid to change for IPV men (e.g. Broady et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2012), there may be benefit in further exploring the motivations of men who want access to their children rather than working from the assumption any contact will be used as a tool to abuse.

Conclusion

This study has investigated a previously unexplored area of IPV, and in doing so has developed understanding of why male IPV perpetrators may continue to be abusive from custody, furthering the knowledge base. It has identified potential risk factors for the behaviour, leading to a number of implications for policy and practice.

Men who continue to be abusive from custody have many of the same drivers as rejected stalkers and individuals who engage in persistent pursuit in the community. The disruption to their attachments is felt more keenly due to their incarceration and the suddenness with which they are cut off from their loved ones. These men do not have the ability to tolerate the distress generated by not knowing what is happening with the relationship or their family and the lack of access to their usual coping mechanisms (functional or not) exacerbates the issue. We have learned that current risk management systems are insufficient for men with these difficulties, and they are able to circumvent them, often with ease, to meet their needs. The behaviour of the victim is a key factor in persistence, with the perpetrator perceiving it to be encouraging, instigating or both. The system itself plays a role in this type of abuse, with lack of procedural justice and effective systems at times triggering abuse as a way of solving problems.

This research has identified that abuse from custody is not being prevented because we are not addressing its underlying cause. Simply telling people they are not allowed to make contact is insufficient; to effectively protect victims and reduce reoffending, we must support men in coping with the sudden disruption to their connections.

Chapter 4: Can prison misconduct predict who will be abusive from custody?

Abstract

The study aimed to explore for the first time whether it was possible to predict which IPV perpetrators would be abusive from custody using proxy indicators. Using the literature relating to post relationship IPV and stalking, unwanted pursuit and prison misconduct, a set of proxy indicators were developed; risk relating to IPV, violence history, violence in custody and anti-social conduct in custody. A sample of 261 prisoners with a history of IPV were identified and screened to determine if they had been abusive from custody, of which 14% (n=36) had. Using existing prison data, the proxy indicators were operationalised, and data gathered for each individual. Binomial logistic regression indicated that the model explained 23.3% of the variance in abuse from custody, correctly classifying 85.4% of cases, however only 45.45% of abusers were correctly identified. Two proxy indicators contributed significantly to the model, anti-social conduct (p=0.008) and Risk of Serious Harm to a Known Adult in custody (p=0.001). The findings suggest there is value in further exploring the use of proxy indicators to predict abusive behaviour from custody. Implications for practice and further research are discussed.

Introduction

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) can continue once the perpetrator is in custody, creating difficulties in protecting victims and allowing both them and the perpetrator to move on safely. To date, research examining this behaviour has been limited (Bonomi et al., 2011; Carotta et al., 2018), and related solely to the content of phone calls from custody prior to conviction. Given the potential risk to victims while the perpetrator is in custody, it would be beneficial if institutions were able to identify those most at risk of engaging in abuse from custody. To date, there is no defined methodology for predicting risk of being abusive from custody, and this study aims to address that gap. Prison misconduct has previously been used as a signal for recidivism (for a useful review see Cochran & Mears, 2017); breaching contact restrictions from custody is a form of recidivism, and therefore there may be value in exploring the utility of prison misconduct as a predictor of abuse from custody. Risk factors associated with IPV, post relationship stalking/abuse and prison misconduct that may be externally observable are reviewed to identify potential overlap that may

prove useful in this endeavour. Types of information available to prison authorities are then considered to identify potential proxy indicators for risk of abuse from custody.

Relevant risk factors

Perpetrators of IPV who are assessed as high risk are less likely to adhere to restraining orders (Strand, 2012). The more dangerous an individual is considered to be, the more likely he is to receive a custodial sentence, therefore most IPV perpetrators who receive a custodial sentence are likely to be considered higher risk than those who receive community sentences. Nevertheless, some perpetrators may be incarcerated due to the severity of their first offence mandating a custodial sentence, but as chronic IPV is related to increased risk (Kropp & Hart, 2015) their overall level of risk is not rated as high as it was a single incident rather than a pattern of behaviour. There are therefore a variety of risk levels found in the prison IPV population. As not all perpetrators who go to prison breach their restraining orders by contacting the victim from custody, it may be that men who do are assessed as higher risk than those who do not.

Post separation IPV is thought to be motivated in part by anger (e.g. Brownridge, 2006; Dye & Davis, 2003), and IPV perpetrators who are less concerned about social conformity are less likely to adhere to restrictions and orders placed upon them (e.g. Carlson et al., 1999; Cattaneo & Goodman, 2005). Relational Goal Pursuit (RGP) theory (Cupach & Spitzburg, 2004) identifies the relevance of affective flooding and rumination to unwanted pursuit. In chapter three, potential risk factors identified included low levels of ability to tolerate distress and uncertainty, social support that enables and triggers contact, a tendency to use justifications to give themselves permission, a sense of entitlement and disregard for authority, and a dysfunctional approach to solving problems.

General strain theory (Agnew, 2001, Agnew, 2006) posits that experiencing strain creates pressure to offend in individuals and is useful in combining the various theoretical perspectives on prison misconduct (Blevins et al., 2010). Individuals who are both high in negative emotionality and low in constraint are prone to responding to strainful events with aggressive or anti-social behaviour (Agnew et al., 2002). Gordon and Eagan (2011) found violent breaches of prison discipline to be more indicative of problematic impulsivity than non-violent breaches, and hypothesised this was a result of violent breaches requiring less planning than non-violent breaches (e.g. being abusive and threatening vs having an unauthorised article). Seager (2005) proposed that impulsivity combined with a hostile world view contributed to violence and prison assaults, finding that hyper-vigilance regarding weapons was positively correlated with prison assaults. Adults who have experienced trauma have been found to be more likely to engage in custodial violence (e.g. Kuanliang & Sorenson, 2008; Martin et al., 2015), and focussing on and venting emotions has been found to serve

as a predictor of serious prison misconduct (Rocheleau , 2014). Beliefs and implicit theories supporting the use of violence are associated with general use of violence (e.g. Bowes & McMurran, 2013) and violence in custody (e.g. Klatt et al., 2016). External locus of control was not found to be related to prison misconduct (Miedich, 2017).

Proxy indicators

The most easily observable potential proxy indicators in custody relate to misconduct. Prison misconduct is recorded through behavioural warnings on computerised records, adjudication histories (where an individual has engaged in a quasi-court for a breach of prison rules) and security reports (intelligence regarding observed behaviours, connections, and suspicious activity). Official reports of prison misconduct are generally significantly lower than self-report (e.g. Steiner & Wooldredge, 2014), in part due to prison staff using their discretion (see Steiner & Woolredge, 2014, for a useful review). Nevertheless, official misconduct may still have value as a proxy indicator as at a minimum it highlights behaviour that is significant enough to come to the attention of authorities. In addition, on occasions when staff do not give formal sanctions for misconduct, they have the option to make a security report to ensure the incident is logged for pattern identification across the establishment. Incorporating security information may therefore increase the utility of misconduct data as a proxy indicator.

Potential variables worthy of consideration are now discussed. Given the links between higher risk and non-compliance with restraining orders, risk of IPV may have potential as a proxy indicator for risk of being abusive from custody. The literature indicates a potential role for violence as a proxy indicator. Beliefs supporting violence impact on violent behaviour (both general and IPV) and were identified as a driving theme for abuse from custody for participants in chapter three; it may be that violence supporting beliefs are stronger for IPV perpetrators who are abusive from custody. Difficulty managing emotions, particularly anger, is relevant for post relationship IPV/stalking/unwanted pursuit (e.g. Dye & Davis, 2003; Häkkänen et al., 2003) and violence both in (e.g. Gardner & Moore, 2008) and out of custody (Rocheleau , 2014). Difficulty tolerating intense emotions was identified as a theme for participants in chapter three, further suggesting the potential relevance of emotive outbursts. Rates of violence, both in and out of custody, may therefore have potential as a proxy indicator. It may be that individuals more likely to be abusive from custody have greater difficulty managing their emotions generally (potentially indicated by their overall violence history) or that they are beginning to struggle in custody due to the additional strains they face by being forcibly removed from the relationship (potentially indicated by violence

in custody). Anti-social behaviour and impulsivity also appear relevant to both post relationship IPV and prison misconduct, suggesting that prison misconduct may prove useful as a proxy indicator.

The current study

Abuse from custody in England and Wales is neither systematically measured nor predicted in a consistent or robust way. Extra protective measures are often reliant on staff working with the perpetrator to have a good understanding of the fluctuations of his risk and the willingness/ability of the victim to report breaches. There appears to be some overlap between factors that drive breach of restraining orders, post relationship IPV and stalking, and prison misconduct, with the findings of chapter three offering further support to the existence of this overlap. Being able to use proxy indicators to predict abusive behaviour from custody would allow for more robust risk management, targeted intervention for the perpetrator and greater protection for the victim.

The current study aims to explore the potential use of proxy indicators readily available in prison data to help the Criminal Justice System men at higher risk of being abusive from custody. Based on the literature explained above and its potential relationship to the themes identified in chapter three, the following hypotheses were generated:

> **H1:** The assessed level of risk of a perpetrator can be used to predict whether or not he will attempt to be abusive from custody. Specifically, men assessed as higher risk will be more likely to attempt contact than those assessed as lower risk
>
> **H2:** The amount of custodial violence can be used to predict whether or not an IPV perpetrator will attempt to be abusive from custody. Specifically, men with higher levels of custodial violence will be more likely to attempt contact than those with lower levels
>
> **H3:** The amount of violence in an IPV perpetrator's offending and prison history can be used to predict whether or not an IPV perpetrator will attempt to be abusive from custody. Specifically, men with more violent offences and adjudications will be more likely to attempt contact than those with fewer
>
> **H4:** Levels of delinquency in custody can be used to predict whether or not an IPV perpetrator will attempt to be abusive from custody. Specifically, men with higher levels of anti-social behaviour will be more likely to attempt contact than those with lower levels

Method

Design

This study was a retrospective secondary data analysis study, with a between-subject design, aimed at predicting abusive behaviour from custody. The dependent variable was engaging in abusive from custody and was binomial (yes/no). The independent variables were risk to partner, institutional violence, history of violence and delinquent behaviour in custody.

Participants

HMPPS provided a list of all men incarcerated in Public Sector Prisons in Wales whose Offender Assessment System (OASys[11]) indicated they had a history perpetrating domestic violence (n=1193, 40.63%). The researcher reviewed the relationships section of each individual's OASys to determine if they met the basic criteria for further inclusion:

- The victim of their domestic violence was a female intimate partner
- They had not murdered their partner (as contact would no longer be possible)

This reduced the initial sample to n=1062. The original sample was collated over a period of several months, and due to the nature of the data required, it was necessary for participants to still reside in the establishment at the time of the full data being collected. Due to the difficulty accessing data from several establishments, all participants in the final sample were from the same prison, which should serve to account for variation in misconduct due to management specific variables. The total remaining sample was n=354.

As described in chapter three, the data were reviewed to identify men who had been contacted an ex-partner from custody. As participants did not need to be contacted, those for whom security and welfare concerns made them inappropriate to approach for the previous study were not excluded from this stage. Individuals who had self-identified as meeting the criteria were added to the 'in' group. The 'out' group consisted of men who had been screened out due to their not being any evidence of them contacting an ex-partner from custody. The final sample comprised 'in' n=67, 'out' n=286.

[11] The OASys is a tool used by the National Probation Service to review areas of criminogenic risk for offenders. Qualitative data is entered by the Probation Officer, who then makes a judgement on the seriousness of problems in any given area. The OASys incorporates quantitative measures, which are combined with the qualitative data and scoring to develop ratings for risk of serious harm. Additional specialist assessments are added for sexual and domestically violent offending.

Data was missing for several participants across all variables, however analysis revealed it was missing completely at random (Little's MCAR test: $\chi^2(4) = 4.637$, p=0.327). As the analysis approach would be multinomial, participants with missing data on one or more of the independent variables would be automatically excluded by the analysis, so have been removed from the demographic summary, resulting in an 'in' group of n=37 and an 'out' group of n=224. A sample size of 261 provides a sample to variable ratio of 43.5:1.

Table 4.1

Demographic information

Variable	Not abusive from custody	Abusive from custody
N	224	37
Mean age (min-max)	34.87 years (22-67)	33.14 years (22-51)
Ethnicity	White = 202 (90.2%) Not white = 22 (9.8%)	White = 32 (86.5%) Not white = 5 (13.5%)
IPV index	Yes = 68 (30.4%) No = 156 (69.4%)	Yes = 13 (35.1%) No = 23 (62.2%) Missing = 1 (2.7%)
Sentence type	Determinate = 208 (92.9%) Indeterminate = 16 (7.1%)	Determinate = 31 (83.8%) Indeterminate = 5 (13.5%) Missing = 1 (2.7%)
Mean sentence length (min-max)	141 months (8-999)	201.06 months (12-999)

Materials

The independent variables were operationalised using existing prison data.

Risk to (ex-)partners is rated in two ways in custody, both as part of the Offender Assessment System (OASys); scoring of the e-SARA (an electronic version of the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment version 2 (SARAv2), Kropp et al., 1995) and the Risk of Serious Harm to Known Adults (ROSH-KA). The OASys is completed by probation staff who have been trained in its use. It considers a wide range of criminogenic factors and authors use professional judgment to determine risk levels. The SARA is scored by the report author and is summarised by final risk ratings relating to risk to partners and risk to others. The SARAv2 has extensive support in terms of both validity and reliability for use in correctional settings (e.g. Kropp & Hart, 2000). The OASys includes an overall rating of risk of serious

harm (ROSH). Serious harm is defined as 'an event which is life threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible'[12] and is considered in terms of risk to the public, known adults, children and staff, both in custody and community. For the purpose of this study, ROSH to a Known Adult (ROSH-KA) was considered relevant. While it might seem at first glance that the ROSH-KA in custody may be the most informative, it is important to note that OASys assessments are generally updated annually at most and if the individual's index offence is not IPV related the SARA will not be updated. Given that some participants in chapter three had been abusive on their current sentence, while not being incarcerated for an IPV offence, reviewing risk ratings may not be sufficient.

Computerised prison records provide an account of a prisoner's recorded behaviour. For this research, the records of interest were adjudication reports and behaviour warnings. A prisoner is subject to an adjudication when he has broken prison rules. The incident is investigated, a quasi-court is run, and a verdict given. The number and nature of adjudications in a 12-month time frame were recorded. Prisons in England and Wales operate an Incentive and Earned Privileges (IEP) system, where better behaviour results in more privileges (e.g. access to private cash or the gym). Behaviour warnings are recorded by staff when a prisoner has made a more minor infraction of prison rules, and negative IEPs are given for more moderate infractions or repeated behaviour warnings. Prison staff give IEPs and when three have been given in a specified time frame (usually six months), the prisoner's privilege status is reviewed. Numbers of behaviour warnings (both official 'warnings' and 'negative behaviour' entries) were recorded.

Variables used for each of the hypotheses were as follows:

- **H1:** Risk was determined by the SARA risk to partner rating (low, medium, high) and OASys Risk of Serious Harm to Known Adults rating (low, medium, high, very high) in custody (ROSH-KA:cust) and community (ROSH-KA:com).
- **H2:** Institutional violence was measured via number of adjudications for violence where the individual was found guilty over the 12-month period prior to the analysis being run.
- **H3:** History of violence was measured by combining number of violent convictions across the individual's life and the number of adjudications for violence as calculated for H2.
- **H4:** Delinquent behaviour in custody was measured by creating an anti-social indicator which combined the number of negative behaviour warnings and negative IEPs on computerised prison records, the number of adjudications for any reason and number of security reports over a 12-month period.

[12] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/risk-assessment-of-offenders

Procedure

Data were gathered from HMPPS computerised offender record systems. Demographic information collected included age, ethnicity, nature of index offence (IPV related or not), sentence type and sentence length. Data relating to the independent variables were collected. Data were entered into SPSSv.26 and appropriate analyses were run. Binomial logistic regression was identified as the most appropriate test to assess the predictive capability of each of the variables. Prior to the regression being run, the relevant assumptions were tested.

Ethics

Ethical approval was gained from both the Nottingham Trent University Research Ethics Committee (18.02.19) and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) National Research Council (22.03.19).

Results

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics relating to the variables (table 4.2) indicate that those who are abusive from custody appear to have a greater average number of adjudications for violence (mean = 1.49), more total violence across the lifespan (mean = 53.14) and higher levels of anti-social behaviour (mean = 9.54). A greater percentage of men who had been abusive from custody had a high SARA rating (62.2%), medium or above ROSH-KA:cust (35.1%) and high or very high ROSH-KA:comm (78.4%).

Table 4.2

Descriptive statistics

		Not abusive from custody	Abusive from custody
Adjudications for violence	Mean	0.75	1.49
	Min-max	0-14	0-12
Antisocial conduct	Mean	31.86	53.14
	Min-max	0-214	1-182
Total Violence	Mean	7.75	9.54
	Min-max	0-38	1-32
SARA risk rating N (%)	Low	24 (10.7)	3 (8.1)
	Medium	112 (50)	11 (29.7)
	High	88 (39.3)	23 (62.2)
ROSH-KA:cust N (%)	Low	205 (91.5)	24 (64.9)
	Medium	15 (6.7)	11 (29.7)
	High	4 (1.8)	2 (5.4)
	Very high	0 (0)	0 (0)
ROSH-KA:com N (%)	Low	19 (8.5)	1 (2.7)
	Medium	96 (42.9)	7 (18.9)
	High	106 (47.9)	26 (70.3)
	Very high	3 (1.3)	3 (8.1)

Data Analysis

Data for anti-social behaviour was initially made up of four individual variables. To determine whether these could be reduced into one dummy variable, a principal components analysis (PCA) was run. Inspection of the correlation matrix showed that all variables had at least one correlation coefficient greater than 0.3 (table 4.3). The overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.810 with individual KMO measures all greater than 0.7 (table 4.4), classifications of 'middling' to 'meritorious' according to Kaiser (1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($p <$ .0005), indicating that the data could be factorised.

Table 4.3
Correlation Matrix

		Number of adjudications	Number of negative warnings	Number of negative IEPs	Number of security reports
Correlation	Number of adjudications	1.000	.620	.597	.572
	Number of negative warnings	.620	1.000	.777	.663
	Number of negative IEPs	.597	.777	1.000	.600
	Number of security reports	.572	.663	.600	1.000

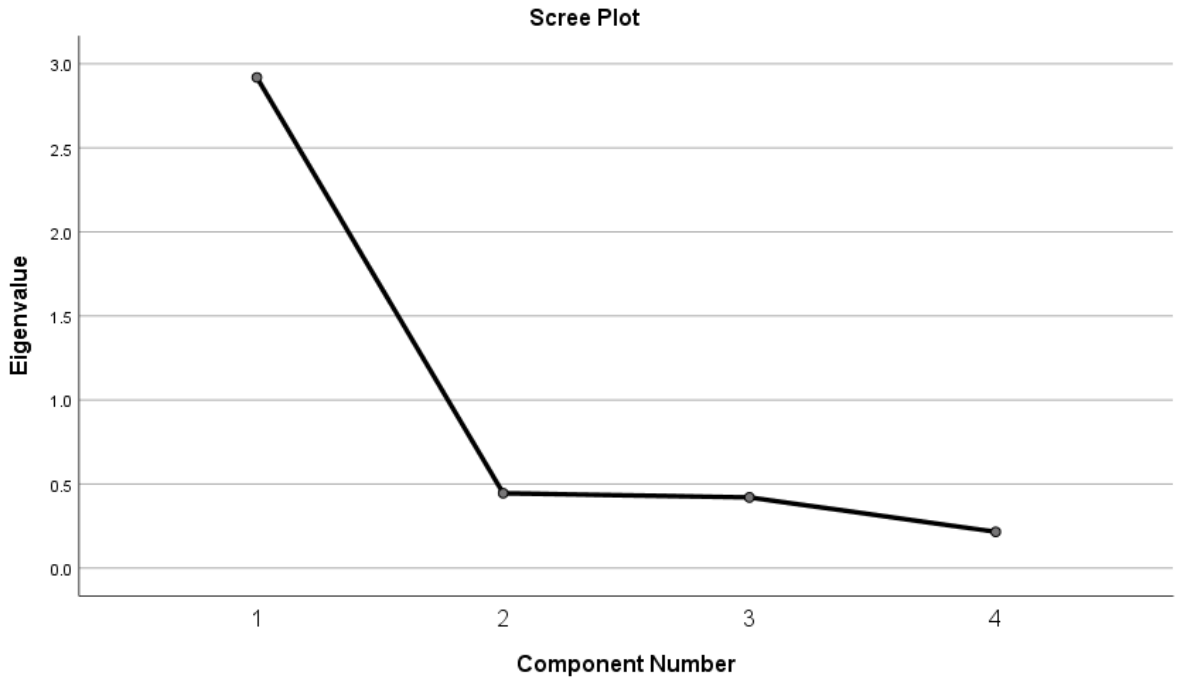
Table 4.4
Anti-image Matrices

		Number of adjudications	Number of negative warnings	Number of negative IEPs	Number of security reports
Anti-image Correlation	Number of adjudications	.885[a]	-.208	-.194	-.242
	Number of negative warnings	-.208	.753[a]	-.568	-.321
	Number of negative IEPs	-.194	-.568	.779[a]	-.124
	Number of security reports	-.242	-.321	-.124	.864[a]

a. Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA)

PCA revealed one component that had eigenvalues greater than one and which explained 73.06% of the total variance. The scree plot (figure 4.1) supported the suggestion that one component should be retained (Cattell, 1966). It was not possible to explore the interpretability criterion as no rotation matrix could be produced with one component. Exploration of the component suggested that it loaded onto all four variables with a co-efficient of at least 0.3. As a result, all four variables were summated to create the component-based anti-social behaviour variable.

Figure 4.1



Testing the model

A binomial logistic regression was performed to determine the effects of risk level (SARA, ROSH-KA:cust, ROSH-KA:com), violent behaviour in custody (adjudications for violence), delinquent behaviour in custody (anti-social) and overall levels of violence (total violence) on the likelihood that IPV perpetrators attempted to be abusive from custody. Linearity of the continuous variables was assessed using the Box-Tidwell (1962) procedure. All continuous independent variables (adjudications for violence, anti-social and total violence) were found to be linearly related to the logit of the dependent variable. Most outcomes for the variable 'adjudications for violence' were 0 (69.7%) and therefore the utility of testing the linear relationship was limited. To address this, each value on the variable was increased by 1 and linearity was tested again, resulting in a linear relationship being confirmed.

There were 12 standardized residuals with a value of over 2.5 standard deviations, all of which were in the 'in' group. Examination of the individual variables revealed that none of them contained extreme values. The limited range of values in adjudications for violence and the small sample size of the 'in' group made it difficult to determine if the variables were genuine outliers and unduly influencing the model. To avoid reducing the sample size further, and in the absence of a clear rationale for their presence, outliers were kept in the dataset.

The logistic regression model was statistically significant; $\chi^2(10) = 36.292$, $p < .0005$. The model explained 23.3% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in being abusive from custody and correctly classified 85.4% of cases. Sensitivity was 13.5%, specificity was 97.3% (table 4.5). Positive predictive value was 45.45% and negative predictive value was 87.2%, indicating that while the model is good at predicting *not being* abusive from custody, it is slightly worse than chance at predicting *being* abusive from custody.

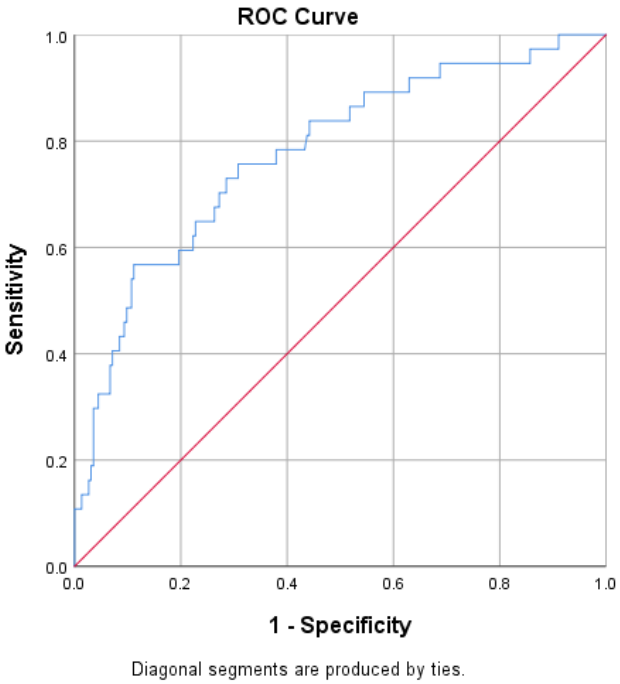
Table 4.5
Classification table[a]

			Predicted Abusive from custody		Percentage Correct
	Observed		no	yes	
Step 1	Abusive from custody	no	218	6	97.3
		yes	32	5	13.5
	Overall Percentage				85.4

a The cut value is .500

The full model was determined to be a good fit according to the Hosmer and Lemeshow test: $\chi^2(8) = 2.693$, $p = 0.952$. The area under the ROC curve (figure 4.2) was .777, 95% CI [.693, .861], which is classed as an acceptable level of discrimination (Hosmer et al., 2013).

Figure 4.2



Two of the six predictors were statistically significant: antisocial conduct and ROSH-KA:cust (as shown in table 4.6). Increasing antisocial behaviour in custody slightly increases odds of being abusive from custody (1.017 times), while higher risk rating on ROSH-KA:cust increased odds by 5.403 times. The primary difference occurred between medium and low levels of ROSH-KA in custody ratings. Having a high ROSH-KA:cust rating did not add to the model.

Table 4.6

Logistic regression predicting likelihood of abuse from custody

Step 1[a]	*B*	S.E.	Wald	*df*	*p*	Odds ratio	95% C.I. for odds ratio	
							Lower	Upper
Total Violence	.026	.027	.916	1	.338	1.027	.973	1.083
Adjudications for violence	-.066	.104	.402	1	.526	.936	.764	1.148
Antisocial conduct	.017	.006	7.138	1	.008	1.017	1.005	1.030
SARA risk rating			1.096	2	.578			
SARA (medium)	-.781	.746	1.096	1	.295	.458	.106	1.976
SARA (high)	-.646	.781	.684	1	.408	.524	.113	2.424
ROSH Custody			11.655	2	.003			
ROSH Custody (medium)	1.687	.494	11.653	1	.001	5.403	2.051	14.232
ROSH Custody (high)	.363	1.092	.111	1	.740	1.438	.169	12.228
ROSH Community			6.008	3	.111			
ROSH Community (medium)	.559	1.156	.234	1	.628	1.749	.182	16.855
ROSH Community (high)	1.742	1.159	2.259	1	.133	5.706	.589	55.285
ROSH Community (very high)	2.233	1.491	2.244	1	.134	9.328	.502	173.301
Constant	-3.625	1.165	9.674	1	.002	.027		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Total Violence, Adjudications for violence, Antisocial conduct, SARA risk rating, ROSH Custody, ROSH Community.

Discussion

Logistic regression was used to determine whether proxy indicators available in custodial records could predict abusive behaviour from custody by IPV perpetrators. The model explained 23.3% of the variance in abusive behaviour from custody and correctly classified 85.4% of cases. While only 45.45% of positive cases were correctly identified by the model, 87.2% of negative cases were correctly identified, indicating that numbers of false positives are low.

Hypothesis testing

Each of the four hypotheses tested in this study are now discussed.

> ***H1:*** *The assessed level of risk of a perpetrator can be used to predict whether or not he will attempt to be abusive from custody. Specifically, men assessed as higher risk will be more likely to attempt contact than those assessed as lower risk*

Partial support was found for H1, as increased Risk of Serious Harm to Known Adults in custody did significantly add to the model, however only between low-moderate risk men. This is somewhat contradictory to Strand's (2012) finding that high risk individuals in the community are less likely to adhere to restraining orders. The finding that high or very high ROSH-KA:cust did not add to the model may indicate that higher risk men are subjected to higher levels of restriction in custody and therefore have less opportunity to offend. Alternatively, it could indicate that current measures of risk are not capturing all relevant factors. The risk levels used in the analysis were all generated by Offender Managers (OMs) and based on a subjective assessment of current presenting risk. The assessments are dynamic and provide a snapshot of the *current perceived risks* to partners. If the individual is not in custody for an IPV offence or the abuse from custody is historical, it is likely OM's will have reduced risk levels accordingly. This may explain why increased risk rating for the SARA and ROSH-KA:comm were not predictive of abuse from custody. It is of note that the version of SARA used in OASys is SARAv2, which was replaced by SARAv3 (Kropp & Hart, 2015) in 2015. SARAv3 provides a more comprehensive account of risk of IPV and considers victim vulnerability factors. Given the findings relating to partners in chapter three, the addition of victim vulnerability factors would likely be useful for assessments of risk of abuse from custody.

> ***H2:*** *The amount of custodial violence can be used to predict whether or not an IPV perpetrator will attempt to be abusive from custody. Specifically, men with higher levels of custodial violence will be more likely to attempt contact than those with lower levels*
>
> ***H3:*** *The amount of violence in an IPV perpetrator's offending and prison history can be used to predict whether or not an IPV perpetrator will attempt to be abusive from custody.*

Specifically, men with more violent offences and adjudications will be more likely to attempt contact than those with fewer

There was no support for H2 or H3. Levels of violence, either across the lifespan or in custody, did not contribute significantly to the predictive ability of the model. It may be that the underlying mechanisms supporting these factors are fundamentally different than those that support institutional misconduct. Violence supportive cognitions for example, may have been restricted to violence in relationships in this sample and therefore not acted out through violence in custody. Holding an implicit theory or underlying belief that violence is normal is considered relevant to IPV generally (e.g. Gilchrist, 2009; Spencer et al., 2020), and difficulties with emotional management and anger have been found to be relevant to IPV risk (e.g. Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015). These characteristics, therefore, may be so generally applicable to the IPV population that they do not differentiate between IPV perpetrators who do engage in abusive behaviour from custody and those who do not.

H4: *Levels of delinquency in custody can be used to predict whether or not an IPV perpetrator will attempt to be abusive from custody. Specifically, men with higher levels of anti-social behaviour will be more likely to attempt contact than those with lower levels*

Support was found for H4, with anti-social conduct in custody significantly contributing to the model and increasing anti-sociality being associated with increased odds of being abusive from custody. This supports previous findings that IPV perpetrators with a lower stake in conformity are less likely to adhere to restrictions placed upon them (e.g. Carlson et al., 1999).

Limitations

Several limitations were present within the dataset, potentially impacting on the outcome of the study. Firstly, as identified in chapter three, the screening process of using official information to identify those who had been abusive from custody did not appear to accurately capture in/out group status. It appears highly likely that the 'out' group contains individuals who have in fact been abusive from custody, therefore reducing the robustness of the analysis. This begs the question why is the 'system' not aware that individuals are breaching their restraining orders? This must be a combination of prison authorities not becoming aware of it through monitoring and the victim not reporting the contact, suggesting improvements are required on both sides of the equation. This supports findings in chapter three that monitoring and risk management systems in custody are inadequate and victims require ongoing support after the perpetrator has been incarcerated.

Individuals who had been abusive from custody at any point were included in the 'in' group. It was not always possible to determine when the abuse had occurred, and records from previous

sentences (even if they were within the last few years) were not available. As a result, the 12-month period used for observation was, in most cases, not the timeframe when the abuse from custody was occurring. It may be that in comparison to the time they were making contact from custody, their behaviour in the last 12 months was quite different. Longitudinal trajectories for misconduct across an individual's sentence can take different forms (Cihan et al., 2017; Cihan & Sorenson, 2019). Given the small size of the 'in' group, the sample may be dominated by those whose misconduct rapidly decreases.

A potentially confounding variable can be found in the profile of the groups. Although the mean ages of both groups and the ethnic diversity were similar, a greater proportion of the 'out' group had determinate sentences, which is associated with higher levels of institutional misconduct (Bales & Miller, 2012). This may have raised the levels of adjudications for violence and anti-social conduct for the 'out' group, thus skewing results. The small sample size for the 'in' group may have resulted in the group being skewed on one of these factors.

Finally, the analysis is only as good as the data is uses. Given that prison staff use discretion and do not necessarily report misconduct (Hewitt et al., 1984), combined with the fact that different staff use their power differently (i.e. some are more punitive, Steiner & Wooldredge, 2018), the small sample in the 'in' group may not allow for sufficient variation in reporting practices.

Implications for practice

The results of this study suggest there is potential utility in the use of proxy indicators to predict abusive behaviour from custody. It appears that when risk is believed to be higher, greater controls are put in place to prevent potential abuse from custody. Practitioners may therefore benefit from focussing on medium risk individuals who are engaging in anti-social conduct in custody; their lack of adherence to custodial rules may indicate a propensity for breaching restrictions relating to contact with a victim. These individuals could be targeted for intervention and enhanced monitoring, and victim support workers could be advised of the potential for increased risk. Although such an approach would likely only identify half of people likely to engage in abusive behaviour from custody, the low likelihood of false positives may make it a worthwhile endeavour.

Implications for further research

The significance of the model combined with the limitations to the data used in this study suggests the use of proxy indicators to predict abuse from custody is worthy of further exploration. This study indicates the target behaviour is relatively rare in the incarcerated IPV population, with the 'in' group making up only 14% of the total sample, thus making the job of the predictive model more

difficult. Increasing sample size may address some of the limitations described, increasing the predictive power of the model. Further research would also benefit from making use of a prospective design or focussing solely on cases where the date of the contact is known to control for the impact of confounding factors when the target behaviour is historical. Given that custodial violence is not a predictor, it may be worthwhile breaking down anti-social behaviour in custody to determine whether it is a particular aspect of the conduct that is related to increased risk of abuse from custody.

Conclusion

This study has, for the first time, considered whether custodial proxy indicators can be used to predict abusive behaviour from custody. The results indicate that individuals considered to be higher risk to a known adult in custody and those who have engaged in greater levels of anti-social conduct in custody may be more likely to be abusive from custody. This knowledge enhances the ability of the Criminal Justice System to manage risk effectively, in addition to expanding what is known about this group. Further research to determine the generalisability and validity of these results is needed.

Chapter 5: Conclusion to thesis

The aim of this thesis was to identify the motivators and risk factors for domestic abuse continuing from custody. To address this question, the following research aims were developed: to increase the knowledge base regarding the function of denial, minimisation, justification and blaming for IPV offenders, to explore ongoing abuse from custody from the perspective of the IPV perpetrator, and to identify proxy indicators that could be used to predict ongoing abuse from custody. Three pieces of novel work were conducted to meet these aims. The chapter will summarise the main findings of these pieces of work in relation to the aims of the thesis, and conclude with reflections on the strengths and limitations, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

Review of findings

Chapter 2: Systematic Review

Chapter two considered the policy of holding IPV perpetrators to account for their behaviour in England and Wales and the practice based direction of a strengths based approach that does not consider denial, minimisation, justifying or blaming as necessarily relevant to risk, asking whether either approach is supported by the evidence. It considered the relevance of denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming to risk both in IPV and more widely, noting the movement in rehabilitative practice is primarily based on the research into men convicted of sexual offences. A systematic review of the literature relating to the function of distorted accounts for IPV perpetrators was conducted to answer this question.

Through narrative synthesis (Popay et al., 2006), three themes were identified in the existing literature; maladaptive traits, self-protection and used instrumentally. 'Maladaptive traits' represented a skewed perception of a situation due to an overly active threat system, underlying maladaptive beliefs about gender norms and violence, and a lack of understanding of what constitutes abuse. It provided support for the relevance of the General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002) to IPV, representing the role of the cognitions of the perpetrator. The theme 'self-protection' embodied the efforts perpetrators made to protect their sense of self, avoid negative feelings and manage how they are regarded by others. This self-protective work was often sub-conscious and was consistent with the literature relating to MCOSOs where denial, minimisation and justification serves to protect an individual's identity as a 'good person' (e.g. Blagden et al., 2014). This theme also highlighted the confused nature of masculine identities and how men struggled to navigate the conflicting nature of societal expectations (Wood, 2004). In addition to

protecting their sense of self and image, perpetrators also used denial etc. to protect themselves from negative feelings through self-deception (e.g. Smith, 2007). The theme 'used instrumentally' represented the deliberate use of denial, minimisation, justification and blaming by perpetrators to avoid sanctions, influence the victim and regain power and control by managing their accounts. This theme provided support for feminist theories of denial and minimisation in IPV (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1979) but was less well supported by the studies included in the review.

The themes were present both within and between studies, indicating the complex function of denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming for IPV perpetrators. It was concluded that the accounts of perpetrators often represented their truth and exploring them may provide us with insight into the drivers of their abusive behaviour.

The findings from chapter two demonstrated the complex function of denial, minimisation, justification and blaming in relation to IPV. It highlighted the problems with assuming that distorted accounts are a deliberately devious attempt to control the narrative or that they are post hoc justifications that purely serve to protect the sense of self. The importance of considering a perpetrator's account to be his truth and explore what that means for him in a way that does not threaten his sense of self was apparent.

Chapter 3: Qualitative study

Chapter three continued to explore novel aspects of IPV by examining the experiences and motivations of men who have continued to be abusive from custody. A review of the literature identified the paucity of studies relating to abusive behaviour from custody, with the only two conducted being observational in nature. Chapter three therefore sought to expand this knowledge by exploring the perspective of men who engage in the behaviour and conducting a thematic analysis to inductively identify themes within the data.

Three overarching themes that contribute to abusive behaviour from custody were identified: 'disrupted connections', 'external forces' and 'internal processes'. The findings provided support for the relevance of several existing theories of IPV and post relationship stalking to abuse from custody.

'Disrupted connections' represented the difficulties participants faced when their connections with others were disrupted or severed by their incarceration. The role of dysfunctional attachments (e.g. deSmet et al., 2011) was clearly a relevant driver for participants, with the pull from the relationship outweighing the push of the dysfunction, and a factor that was relevant for both perpetrator and victim (Allison et a., 2008). The all-consuming nature of the pull of the relationship and its importance to participants supported the relevance of Relational Goal Pursuit Theory (RGP; Cupach

& Spitzburg, 2004). The connection could be positively (reconciliation) or negatively (retaliation) motivated (Dardis & Gidycz, 2017) and the pull to the attachment perpetuated the cycle of abuse (Walker, 1979), as seen in post abuse stalking (Douglas & Dutton, 2001). Participants struggled to tolerate the uncertainty that came with a sudden and often unclear ending, with contact from custody often being driven by a desire to alleviate the discomfort, supporting previous findings that cycles of trying to fix a broken relationship are common (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000). Perceived ambiguous behaviour and responses from ex-partners made this time more confusing for participants and led to contact, echoing Mumm and Cupach's (2010) finding that an ambiguous message from victims of unwanted pursuit behaviours often led to 'flare ups' where the perpetrator escalates his behaviour. A further driver for abuse from custody was the need to maintain contact with loved ones the participant shared with the victim, particularly children. Participant accounts did not support previous research suggesting child contact was a means of further controlling the mother (e.g. Beeble et al., 2007), but instead appeared linked to the participants' desire to hold onto his identity as a father. This lends itself well to the goal-linking aspect of RGP.

'External forces' comprised the various factors participants felt influenced their abusive behaviour from custody. By far the strongest sub theme was 'partner as protagonist'. This sub theme may be due to the external locus of control often found in IPV perpetrators (e.g. Spencer et al. 2020), an implicitly held belief that women are dangerous (Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012) or their ex-partners actively engaging in unhelpful behaviour (Dichter et al., 2018). Alternatively, perceiving their partner as a willing participant and instigator may represent the rationalisation aspect of RGP theory. Friends and family influenced decisions to be abusive by either facilitating or triggering contact, consistent with previous findings that third parties can be used to abuse (e.g. Salter, 2014) or wider cultural influences that legitimise abuse (e.g. DeKerseredy & Schwartz, 2013). The need to save face with friends and family was present for some participants, consistent with RGP theory. The final external influence was the role of the Criminal Justice System, which served to trigger and facilitate abuse. Clear faults in monitoring and management systems allowed abuse to occur, while the lack of procedural justice (e.g. Papachristos et al., 2012) triggered an anti-social and abusive response.

'Internal processes' drove abusive behaviour from custody, potentially reflecting the internal aspects presented in the GAM (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Rationalisation was apparent across participants, consistent with a general tendency in IPV perpetrators to diminish personal responsibility (e.g. Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). This theme echoed the findings in chapter two that rationalisations could drive abusive behaviour. The feeling of having nothing to lose and a sense of general entitlement to do what they wanted, as seen in IPV offenders generally (Ponari et al., 2013), had a clear role in abuse from custody. A patriarchal sense of entitlement, as proposed by Gilchrist

(2009), was not evident and the entitlement appeared more anti-social in nature. Participants saw contact from custody as a valid way to achieve their goals, exemplifying the multiple motives often found for IPV (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012). There was evidence of several practical goals that have been found to be relevant to both post relationship IPV/stalking and IPV generally, such as revenge (e.g. Weldon, 2016), control (Dutton & Winstead, 2006a) and managing anger (e.g. Dye & Davis, 2003). Poor impulse control, often seen in IPV (e.g. Spencer et al., 2020) was also evident.

Potential risk factors for contact from custody were identified as: dysfunctional attachments that drive a need to maintain attachments with the victim and connected loved ones; low levels of ability to tolerate distress and uncertainty; ambivalence from the partner or a distorted perception of the victim's behaviour; social support that enables and triggers contact; tendency to use justifications to give themselves permission; a sense of entitlement and disregard for authority; a dysfunctional approach to solving problems. The combination of internal, external and situational factors found in this research provide support for Bloomfield's (2019) proposed Integrated Nested Ecological and General Aggression Model (INEGAM) as a way to understand IPV.

In conclusion, chapter three brought a new perspective on a previously under researched area by exploring the perspective of perpetrators. The powerful role of dysfunctional attachment is apparent, as are the internal, external and situational factors that contribute to the behaviour. It identified potential risk factors for the behaviour, leading to a number of implications for policy and practice.

Chapter 4: Quantitative study

Expanding on the findings from chapter three, chapter four sought to determine whether it was possible for prisons to predict who might engage in abuse from custody to improve risk management and rehabilitation efforts. The literature relating to prison misconduct and post relationship IPV and stalking was reviewed and cross over between drivers of both behaviours identified. Areas of commonality that were supported by the findings in chapter three were identified as having potential as proxy indicators of abusive behaviour from custody. The hypothesised proxy indicators related to violence in custody and across the lifetime, anti-social conduct in custody and risk of recidivism and serious harm. Four hypotheses were developed regarding the predictive ability of these proxy indicators. The proxy indicators were operationalised using existing prison data to ensure their practical utility.

Logistic regression was used to determine whether the proposed proxy indicators could predict abusive behaviour from custody by IPV perpetrators. The model explained 23.3% of the variance in

abusive behaviour from custody and correctly classified 85.4% of cases, however only 45.45% of abusers were correctly identified. The low number of false positives produced by the model on the limited data set highlights the potential of some of the proxy indicators as predictive factors for risk of being abusive from custody. One hypothesis was fully supported (**H4:** *Levels of delinquency in custody can be used to predict whether or not an IPV perpetrator will attempt to be abusive from custody. Specifically, men with higher levels of anti-social behaviour will be more likely to attempt contact than those with lower levels*) and another partially supported (**H1:** *The assessed level of risk of a perpetrator can be used to predict whether or not he will attempt to be abusive from custody. Specifically, men assessed as higher risk will be more likely to attempt contact than those assessed as lower risk*), with two proxy indicators showing predictive value; anti-social conduct in custody and Risk of Serious Harm to a Known Adult in custody (ROSH-KA:cust).

Three different indicators were used to assess the predictive value of risk, of which only ROSH-KA:cust contributed significantly to the model. In contradiction to Strand's (2012) finding that high risk individuals in the community are less likely to adhere to restraining orders, a significant predictive contribution only existed between low and medium ROSH-KA:cust. It was theorised that this may be due to individuals assessed as high ROSH-KA:cust being subject to higher levels of control and therefore having less opportunity to be abusive from custody. Potential difficulties with the other measures of risk were discussed.

Levels of violence, either in custody or across the lifespan, did not contribute significantly to the predictive model. It was theorised that this finding may be due to the prevalence of the underlying constructs in the IPV population generally, for example violence supportive cognitions (e.g. Gilchrist, 2009; Spencer et al., 2020) and difficulty managing emotions, particularly anger (e.g. Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015).

The predictive value of anti-social conduct in custody supported previous findings that that IPV perpetrators with a lower stake in conformity are less likely to adhere to restrictions placed upon them (e.g. Carlson et al., 1999).

In conclusion, chapter four has generated the new knowledge that individuals considered to be medium risk to a known adult in custody and engaged in greater levels of anti-social custodial conduct may be more likely to be abusive from custody. The research has identified the potential in these proxy indicators and warrants further exploration. This knowledge may allow the Criminal Justice System to manage this area of risk more effectively and target rehabilitative efforts more precisely.

Overview of findings

The findings of the novel research contained within this thesis have contributed to the field's understanding of both IPV generally and where it continues from custody. The enhanced understanding of the function of denial, justifying, minimising, and blaming demonstrates the complex nature of IPV. It highlights the multiple mechanisms that may be at play in distorted accounts, both risk enhancing and potentially protective. The theme of having a skewed perception of events and perceiving their partner's behaviour as threatening or provocative was clearly seen in the accounts of men who had been abusive in custody. Combined, these findings highlight the need to explore a perpetrator's account to identify potential underlying maladaptive mechanisms. It also raises the importance of considering the victim's ability to take self-protective actions such as refraining from engaging with perpetrators and the potential for mutually abusive relationships. The quantitative study identifies the potential of proxy indicators to predict who might be abusive from custody. Identifying potential perpetrators and applying the learning from the systematic review and the qualitative study in their management and treatment may help to reduce this behaviour and protect victims more effectively. Overall, understanding of the motivators and risk factors for abusive behaviour from custody has been enhanced.

Review of thesis

Strengths and Limitations of Thesis

This thesis has contributed to the literature regarding IPV by conducting novel research into the function of denial, minimisation, justification, and blaming, and the continuation of abuse from custody, thus exploring gaps in the knowledge base.

The limitations of the individual studies have already been discussed in chapters two, three and four, therefore only key limitations to the thesis are noted here. The systematic review only included studies available in English, potentially introducing a language bias, particularly given that not all western countries produce research in English. Only one researcher extracted the data, creating the possibility of omission of relevant data. The sample size for the qualitative study was reasonable for qualitative research, however self-selection bias in participants may have skewed findings. The sample size for the quantitative study was sufficient for the tests conducted, however the rarity of the target behaviour (14% of participants) meant a larger sample size would likely improve the utility of the results. In addition, the accuracy of the screening process used to identify cases where abuse from custody occurred was somewhat limited by the quality of the data it used.

The systematic review followed the PRISMA protocol and made use of a structured approach to data synthesis, providing robustness to the review, and the number of included articles was relatively large, lending reliability to the findings. Several aspects were introduced to minimise the potential for bias; a broad range of search terms were used, hand searching of reference lists and of relevant authors was conducted and the researcher made use of reflexive practice. In terms of the qualitative study, a sample of coding and all theming for qualitative data was reviewed by the researcher's supervisor, and the reviewing of themes through returning to the data continued throughout the report writing process. These factors all lend reliability to the findings. The quantitative study used robust methodology and appropriate assumption testing was undertaken. The sample size was more than sufficient for the test used and the data collected was all information that was readily available, increasing the potential real-life implications of the findings.

Overall, the findings have several important implications for practice and research. The review highlighted the need for a more nuanced approach to policy and practice with regards to denial, minimisation, justification and blaming, while the empirical studies explored a previously under-researched area. Both empirical studies were the first of their kind and produced knowledge previously undocumented in the literature.

Implications for practice

The findings from these three studies have added to the evidence base and have several potential implications of policy and practice.

The findings from chapter two are particularly relevant for policy and treatment. With regards to policy, rather than demanding perpetrators admit wrongdoing and accept full responsibility for their behaviour, a policy requiring perpetrators to address the underlying drivers of their behaviour, whatever they may be, may be more appropriate; it is not legitimate to assume perpetrators are simply knowingly providing a false account (e.g. Pence & Paymar, 1993). This research strongly suggests that denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming serves a complex function for perpetrators, and as such it is important to explore that function rather than make assumptions based on theoretical leanings or standpoints, for example that it is purely instrumental or purely to protect a sense of self.

If, as indicated by the findings from chapter two, the accounts of perpetrators in part represent their truth, they offer a potential window into the drivers behind an individual's abusive behaviour. Rather than seeing it as an account to challenge therefore, we can learn about the underlying

features of a perpetrator's behaviour, for example cognitive distortions (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; MacKenzie et al., 2013), distorting social cues (Senkans et al., 2020) or lack of awareness of what abusive behaviour is (Barbaro & Raghavan, 2018). The distorted account can therefore aid practitioners in identifying targets for treatment or intervention. The self-protective function of denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming identified in chapter two highlights the importance of addressing those target areas in a way that does not threaten the individual's sense of self, given that shame is related to perpetration of IPV (Brown, 2004; Lawrence & Taft, 2013), and in a way that helps them navigate their confused sense of masculinity (Wood, 2004) and build tolerance for experiencing strong emotions so they no longer need to engage in self-deception (Smith, 2007). An integrated perspective such as the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) where responses are seen as adaptive to help them survive may be appropriate when both treating and assessing IPV. Once we understand the underlying drivers, we can begin to address them, thus reducing recidivism and preventing future victimisation.

The role of cultural beliefs in men's accounts of IPV highlights the need for a community wide approach to tackling IPV, which should include early intervention with children and adolescents while attitudes are still developing (Lundgren & Amin, 2015). This adds support to calls for relationship skills education to be part of the national curriculum[13].

The findings from chapter three support the conclusions of chapter two by further demonstrating the complex drivers for abusive behaviour and highlighting the role of distorted accounts and emotional mismanagement in driving abuse, and further supports the use of an integrated model such as PTMF. This chapter also challenges practitioners, researchers and policy makers to question their assumptions about the motivations of people who engage in abuse from custody.

The research findings support aspects of the rejected stalker profile (Mullen et al., 1999) and the applicability of Relational Goal Pursuit theory (RPG; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004) to abuse from custody. The role of internal, external and situational influences found in chapter three provide support for Bloomfield's (2019) proposed Integrated Nested Ecological and General Aggression Model (INEGAM) as a way to understand IPV.

Chapter three highlighted the significant impact of the disruption to the attachment caused by incarceration, and the need for perpetrators to have support managing this sudden wrench. In keeping with RPG theory, the findings suggest the attachment is overly significant for the perpetrator and they need support in identifying alternatives (DeSmet et al., 2013) and managing

[13] e.g. https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/view/1186537-new-statutory-relationships-and-sexuality-education-for-wales

the strong emotions triggered by relationship breakdowns (Brownridge, 2006). Chapter three challenged previous assertions that IPV perpetrators want contact with children to have contact with the mother (e.g. Beeble et al., 2007; Bonomi & Martin, 2018; Hayes, 2012), with the disruption of this parental attachment and its link to the individual's life goals being the primary driver of contact from custody aimed at child contact. As women wanting to leave an abusive relationship need support in doing so successfully (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995), it appears perpetrators would also benefit from support in this area. Offering additional support to victims post sentence and to the perpetrator would help to both address risk in this area and allow for improved monitoring for risk management. Individuals who are fixated on their ex-partner or children and who are struggling to see a way forward could be highlighted for closer monitoring and their ex-partners flagged with victim liaison services.

More broadly, chapter three highlighted weaknesses in prison risk management and monitoring systems that enable abuse from custody. Risk management and custodial monitoring systems should be reviewed in circumstances where restraining and non-molestation orders have been issued, and this should be done as early in a sentence as possible. Lack of perceived fairness in treatment was seen as a trigger for some cases of abuse from custody, while a general lack of trust for 'the system' appears to have contributed to a general lack of need for conformity (Carlson et al., 1999) or adherence to rules. Procedural justice (e.g. Papachristos et al., 2012; Paternoster et al., 1997) increases compliance, and is therefore something that should be prioritised in prison policy and practice. When applying procedural justice to the phenomenon of abuse from custody specifically, decisions relating to contact should be made and communicated in a procedurally just way.

The findings of chapter four suggest there may be things we can learn from the management of high risk IPV perpetrators, given that being medium risk was a predictor of engaging in abuse from custody but being high risk was not. The findings that being medium risk and having higher levels of anti-social conduct in custody are predictive of being abusive from custody suggests that men fitting that criteria should be targeted for additional support, intervention and risk management.

Implications for future research

This thesis highlighted a variety of areas and considerations for future research. An overall point of interest is that chapter three demonstrates the usefulness of perpetrator perspectives in IPV research, indicating that further research in this vein will add to the knowledge base.

The findings in chapter two highlight several potential avenues for further research. The function of denial, minimisation, justifying, and blaming for same sex, female and non-Western perpetrators would be beneficial to expand the findings in chapter two and support the development of more nuanced policy and intervention approaches. Further work on the role of an overactive threat system (Gilbert, 1993) in IPV generally would be beneficial, as this review indicates it is both a driver of abuse and a reason for inaccurate accounts. Research into methods of addressing IPV supportive attitudes and beliefs to determine their impact on sense of self and self-esteem would aid the development of treatment that meets the complex needs of IPV perpetrators.

Chapter three highlighted that further research interviewing both perpetrators and victims regarding contact would provide useful insights would help to explore whether men's accounts of IPV are genuinely distorted or an accurate reflection of events. This may assist in understanding the true prevalence of situational couple violence (Bates & Graham-Kevan, 2016) and the relevance of the victim's attachment and response to contact (e.g. Allison et al., 2008). In terms of other motivators for illegal contact, there may be benefit in further exploring the motivations of men who want access to their children rather than working from the assumption any contact will be used as a tool to abuse, given findings that fatherhood can be an aid for change for IPV men (e.g. Broady et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2012). The findings also indicate that further exploration of Bloomfield's (2019) INEGAM model is warranted.

The quantitative study in chapter four would benefit from being repeated with a larger sample size due to the small proportion of subjects who engage in abuse from custody. This would allow for more rigorous testing of the model and enhance validity. It may be of use to further break down the anti-social conduct variable to determine whether the individual components all contribute usefully. Use of a prospective design or one based on the date of the contact would also be useful in building knowledge about the predictive power of proxy indicators. This would help to address the limitation of the current study relating to the timeframe of the abuse from custody and that of the observation of indicators not necessarily being the same.

Final thoughts

This thesis has achieved its aims and increased knowledge in both the function of denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming and the phenomenon of abusive behaviour from custody. Key findings from this research are the need to explore perpetrators' accounts of their abusive behaviour to determine whether distorted accounts serve a self-protective function, are maladaptive traits that drive the behaviour or both, and the need for greater support for perpetrators brought to custody

who are at risk of struggling with the disruption to their connections. Both the systematic review and the qualitative study highlighted the importance of future research considering the perspective of perpetrators, and, where possible, both partners in the relationship. This research has challenged assumptions about motives for the behaviour of perpetrators and has emphasised the importance of researchers, practitioners and policy makers ensuring the relevance of theories and findings from research to different offending groups. It is hoped that the findings of this thesis will help to improve policy and practice and direct future research in these areas.

Final thoughts and reflections

The following represents my final thoughts and reflections following the viva voce.

Chapter 2: Systematic Review

It was clear from the systematic review that research into denial, minimising, justifying and blaming and IPV is somewhat behind that focussed on people convicted of sexual offences (PCOSOs); while there were clear indicators of denial etc having a self-protective function, none of the studies considered or explored the potential of denial etc. having a protective nature, which has begun to be explored in research with PCOSOs. Ware et al. (2020), for example, found that men convicted of sexual offences who categorically denied any sexual offending were more shame prone than those who admitted in addition to being less anti-social and sadistic. They posit that this indicates the potential protective nature of denial as a way of expressing shame and leaving sufficient space for a positive identity to exist, as evidenced by their lower levels of offending and sadism. Walton (2019) discussed the evolutional basis for denial and its potential function as an adaptive process to allow individuals to belong to the 'in-group', and Ware & Blagden (2020) speak to the importance of adopting a non-disclosure and non-confrontational approach to treatment to prevent unhelpful shame responses. What was clear in the systematic review was an inherent bias in the literature and the included studies, which was distinctly adversarial towards individuals who have been abusive in relationships.

Studies within the systematic review were quality appraised, which included a review of ethical considerations. Many studies did not mention ethical matters, which for some studies was potentially problematic. One study, for example (Bonomi et al., 2011), made use of transcripts of conversations between the alleged victim and the accused but consent was not gained from either party due to the interview 'belonging' to the correctional institution. As I had made the decision not to remove any studies based on quality to protect against bias (Pettigrew & Roberts, 2006), they

remained part of the study, however I reflected on this and how it impacted the quality and suitability of the data throughout the review.

Reflection on the decision to only include western culture has led me to consider that the terminology used is perhaps not helpful. This criterion really referred to countries where what was and was not considered IPV was similar and where societal expectations were similar. This approach, however, did not take into account the potential impact of other cultures in very multi-cultural western countries, such as the UK. Another rationale for the decision was to keep the sample manageable and meaningful due to the large number of studies already included in the review, however it may be useful to consider a broader review in future, or one that considers the countries excluded by this review.

Chapter 3: Qualitative study

I engaged in a reflexive process throughout the qualitative research, which challenged some of my own biases and assumptions. I was conscious of coming from a place of risk assessment and forensic practice where I work with predominantly with individuals who are holding a 'perpetrator' role in our interactions. The process of having sections of the transcripts coded by my supervisors helped me to recognise the inherent bias in my coding and the motivation I attributed to behaviours. The objective view of the data from my supervisors led me to question why I held the position I did in terms of my interpretation of it, which led me to view the data more openly. This was an interesting experience for me because I had consciously gone into coding with an open mind and had still been blind to some of my biases. One example was where I interpreted a man breaching his restraining order to contact his child as him feeling entitled to have contact with his children. The simple comment "well he is his father" made me recognise that the 'risk' part of me was not fully in the background and prompted me to actively challenge this aspect of my assumptions and interpretations as I continued through the coding and theming process. My background in risk assessment also reared its head when I began to write up the chapter as my instinct was to use quotes as evidence rather than to tell the story. Discussion of this in supervision and further reflection was a useful process for helping me to switch my thinking to how I could use the data to tell the story.

General reflections

During the viva I was shocked to see how the language I have used throughout the thesis was interpreted, as the interpretation does not accurately represent my own positioning. This was particularly striking in the systematic review, where my use of language gave the impression that I was coming from a place of risk and something being wrong with the individual who was denying, minimising, justifying or blaming. In reality I was trying to challenge the narratives that I often hear about people who are abusive in relationships and intended to say these 'maladaptive traits' are things that individuals need support with and should be used to inform treatment. My default language from my practitioner background appears to have been influential here as well, as my terminology often pathologises the experiences I am trying to describe. These issues are something I will need to consider further before publication to ensure I am not contributing further to the bias in the literature and am supporting a more progressive agenda.

This thesis has highlighted the need for development in two primary areas of policy and practice. Firstly, research into denial, minimisation, justifying and blaming must be pushed to explore different perspectives on IPV, from an empathic and compassionate position where people who are abusive are seen as more than a 'perpetrator'. Secondly, there is a clear need for the development of support strategies to be developed and implemented for men who have been abusive and then incarcerated. This support should recognise and validate the trauma they experience due to the loss of their relationships, particularly with their children, while supporting them to enhance their sense of self and increase their available alternatives.

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Appendices

Appendix B: Qualitative quality appraisal

Article	**Anderson & Umberson (2001)**	**Bonomi et al. (2011)**	**Cavanagh et al. (2001)**	**Dempsey & Day (2011)**	**Dobash & Dobash (2011)**	**Goodrum et al. (2001)**	**LeCouteur & Oxlad (2011)**	**Levitt et al. (2008)**	**Mullaney (2007)**	**Radcliffe et al. (2016)**	**Reitz (1999)**	**Smith (2007)**	**Stamp & Sabourin (1995)**	**Tilley & Brackley (2005)**	**Weldon & Gilchrist (2012)**	**Weldon (2013)**	**Whiting et al. (2011)**	**Wood (2004)**	**Worley et al. (2004)**
Was there a clear statement of aims of the research?	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	Y
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P
Has the relationship between the researcher and the participant been adequately considered?	Y	N/A	N	N	N	P	N	P	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N

Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	P	P	P	Y	NA	P	Y	P	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	P
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	P	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	P	P	N	Y	Y	Y	P	P
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
How valuable is the research?	P	Y	Y	Y	P	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Total	17	17	14	16	12	17	16	18	11	19	20	17	12	16	18	20	20	17	14
%	85	94	70	80	67	85	80	90	55	95	100	85	60	80	90	100	100	85	70

Appendix C: Quantitative quality appraisal

Article	Cantos et al. (1993)	Dutton (1986)	Heckert & Gondolf (2000b)	LeJeune & Follette (1994)	Lila et al. (2013)	Panuzio et al. (2006)
Introduction						
Were the aims/objectives of the study clear?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Methods						
Was the study design appropriate for the stated aim(s)?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Was the sample size justified?	N	N	N	N	N	N
Was the target/reference population clearly defined? (Is it clear who the research was about?)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Was the sample frame taken from an appropriate population base so that it closely represented the target/reference population under investigation?	N military	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Was the selection process likely to select subjects/participants that were representative of the target/reference population under investigation?	N military	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Were measures undertaken to address and categorise non-responders?	DK	DK	N	N	DK	Y
Were the risk factor and outcome variables measured appropriate to the aims of the study?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Were the risk factor and outcome variables measured correctly using instruments/ measurements that had been trialled, piloted or published previously?	N Partially	N Interviews quantified	Y	Y	Y	Y
Is it clear what was used to determined statistical significance and/or precision estimates? (eg, p values, CIs)	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Were the methods (including statistical methods)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y

sufficiently described to enable them to be repeated?						
Results						
Were the basic data adequately described?	N DK if representative	N	N	N	N	Y
Does the response rate raise concerns about non-response bias? *	DK	DK	N	N	DK	N
If appropriate, was information about non-responders described?	DK	DK	Y	N	DK	Y
Were the results internally consistent?	DK	Y	N	DK	DK	Y
Were the results for the analyses described in the methods, presented?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Discussion						
Were the authors' discussions and conclusions justified by the results?	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Were the limitations of the study discussed?	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Other						
Were there any funding sources or conflicts of interest that may affect the authors' interpretation of the results? *	N	DK	N	N	N	N
Was ethical approval or consent of participants attained?	N	DK	DK	DK	Y	DK
Total score	22	23	29	22	32	37
%	55	58	73	55	80	93

* 'No' is a positive response for this question and so is included in the 'Yes' count

Appendix D: Mixed methods quality appraisal

Article	**Catlett et al. (2010)**	**Heckert & Gondolf (2000a)**
Screening questions (for all types)		
S1. Are there clear research questions?	Y	Y
S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	Y	Y
1. Qualitative		
1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	CAN'T TELL
1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	Y	CAN'T TELL
1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	Y	N
1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	Y	N
1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	Y	CAN'T TELL
3. Quantitative nonrandomized		
3.1. Are the participants representative of the target population?	CAN'T TELL	Y
3.2. Are measurements appropriate regarding both the outcome and intervention (or exposure)?	Not for denial	Y
3.3. Are there complete outcome data?	Y	Y
3.4. Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis?	Y	N
3.5. During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended?	Y	Y
5. Mixed methods		
5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	Y	Y
5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	Y	N
5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	Y	N
5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Y	Y
5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	CAN'T TELL	N
Total	30	19
%	88%	56%

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet

What drives some men to continue contacting (ex-)partners or breaching retraining orders when they are in prison?

Participant Information Sheet

- *Who am I?*

My name is Madeline Smyth. I work as a Senior Registered Psychologist for Forensic Psychology Services, HMPPS in Wales. I do most of my work at HMP Berwyn. I am currently studying for a Practitioner Doctorate in Psychology at Nottingham Trent University and am doing a piece of research. I am Chartered member of the British Psychological Society and a Registered Psychologist with the Health Professionals Council.

- *What is the research about?*

I want to learn more about why some men who have been convicted of offences against their (ex-)partners in the community continue to try to contact their (ex-)partners when they are in prison. The research will hopefully help us work out why people do this so that we can help men to address this behaviour and reduce their risk.

- *Why am I contacting you?*

I need to interview people who have tried to contact their ex-partner or breached a restraining order from prison. Your files indicate that in the past (on this sentence or another one) you have contacted a partner or ex-partner (either yourself or through a third party) or breached a restraining order from prison.

- *What does it involve?*

The interview will last about 1-1½ hours. You will be asked to talk about your relationship with your (ex-)partner and what happened between you when you were in prison. You will be asked about your thoughts and feelings and asked to talk through a specific incident. The interview will be recorded on an encrypted Dictaphone. Some example questions include: *What led to you not being allowed to have contact with X anymore? How did you contact X/pass messages to X? How would you feel after you had contacted X/you found out what X was doing/heard news of X?*

- *Could it be upsetting?*

You might find some of what we talk about upsetting, especially if you still have strong feelings about the situation. You might find that after the interview you start thinking about things that you haven't thought about for a while. You may feel bad about what you did or angry about how things turned out. After the interview you will be given a handout to remind you of the support services that are available.

- *Is what I tell you just between us?*

Yes and no. What we talk about in interview will not be shared with anyone else in the prison or involved in your case. Because the behaviour we are talking about is in the past and you have already been punished for it, I will not need to pass on any information about it, unless you tell me about something new or that is happening now.

However, normal prison rules also apply. If you tell me about anything that is a risk to security, yourself or others, I will have to tell someone in the prison. If you tell me about an offence you have not been convicted for, depending how much information you give me, I may need to pass that information on to the police. I will let you know if you have said anything that I will need to tell other people.

My research is supported by the prison authorities and I will have access to records. I will not share any information about you that I obtain from the records regardless of whether you take part in the interview or not.

- *What happens to my information?*

The interview will be recorded on an encrypted Dictaphone that only my supervisors and I have the password for. The interview will be typed up and labelled with a code so it does not have your name on it. As soon as the interview is typed up, the recording will be deleted. All the notes about you will be kept on a secure server that only my supervisors and I can access for a maximum of five years. Things you said in your interview might be used in the write up of the research as examples. This will be done anonymously so no one will know it came from you. That means we can guarantee no one will know who you are, but they may know what you have said.

- *Can I say no?*

Yes. If you don't want to be interviewed that's fine. It will not have any impact on your sentence, progression or access to offending behaviour programmes. Although I work for HMPPS Wales and at Berwyn, this research is separate from that role and if you don't want to participate there will not be any negative consequences. You don't need to give a reason for saying no.

- *Can I change my mind?*

Yes. You can change your mind until XX.XX.XX (a specific date will be communicated at a late date). After this your interview will have been analysed and become part of my thesis submission and I won't be able to take it out. If the research is published in a journal after this, no quotes from you would be included. There will not be any negative consequences for you if you change your mind.

- *Who can I talk to if I have more questions?*

If you have questions about the research, use the attached envelope to let me know, ask your Offender Supervisor to contact me, or if you are at Berwyn, send an app to psychology. I am happy to answer any more questions you have.

- *How can I get a copy of the research when it is done?*

There will be a summary of the research available when it is finished. During your interview, let me know you want a copy of it and I can send it to you if you are still in prison. If you have been released before the research is finished, I will unfortunately not have your address, but you can write to me at the prison address below and I will be able to send you a copy.

- *What do I do now?*

If you are at Berwyn, please respond to the message I have sent you on unilink telling me if you want to be interviewed or not.

If you are not at Berwyn, please either send back your answer in the envelope provided or ask your Offender Supervisor to let me know.

Saying yes now does not mean you have to go ahead with the interview if you change your mind.

Contact information:

Madeline Smyth, Psychology, HMP Berwyn, Wrexham Industrial Estate, LL13 9QS

What drives some men to continue contacting (ex-)partners or breaching retraining orders when they are in prison?

Please return in the envelope provided

Name:

Number:

☐ I am interested in being interviewed

☐ I am not interested in being interviewed

☐ I'm not sure and would like to talk to you about it

Appendix F: Consent form

What drives some men to continue contacting (ex-)partners or breaching retraining orders when they are in prison?

Participant consent form

I confirm the following;

- ☐ I have read the information sheet
- ☐ I have had the opportunity to ask any questions
- ☐ I understand that I can say no if I want to and there will be no negative consequences
- ☐ I understand that after XX.XX.XX my interview will be part of the thesis but it will not be included in any further publication
- ☐ I understand that my interview and any quotes from it will be kept anonymous
- ☐ I understand there are limits to confidentiality
- ☐ I understand the research will be written up as part of a doctoral thesis
- ☐ I understand the research will be submitted for publication in academic journals
- ☐ I agree to the interview being recorded on an encrypted Dictaphone
- ☐ I have been given a copy of this consent form

Signed:

Participant name:

Date:

Signed:

Interviewer name:

Date:

Appendix G: Participant debrief sheet

What drives some men to continue contacting (ex-)partners or breaching retraining orders when they are in prison?

Post interview information

Thank you for participating in the interview with me. If you have found anything we talked about today upsetting remember there are the following sources of support available to you:

- Ask for a listener
- Phone friends and family
- Talk to staff
- Phone the Samaritans line on the dedicated Samaritans phone/speed dial on your in-room phone
- Request to speak to chaplaincy or mental health

You can also do things to take care of yourself:

- Do something you find relaxing – read a book, listen to music, watch TV
- Spend time with friends on the wing
- Think about how things have changed for the better since the time we were talking about – what's different about you?
- Do something mindful – colouring, meditating, a jigsaw
- If its in your schedule, go to the gym

The things we talked about today may make you feel like you want to contact the person again. This could be because you want to apologise or because talking about these things has caused you to think about some of the unhelpful things you used to think about at that time.

Please remember that you MUST NOT contact them, even if you do not have a live restraining order.

If you feel that you want to contact them, discuss this with your Offender Supervisor or Offender Manager before you do anything.

If you change your mind or have any questions once I have left, let me know by either writing to me at Berwyn or asking your Offender Supervisor or personal officer to let me know.

Don't forget that after XX.XX.XX I won't be able to take your data out of my thesis, but I will be able to make sure none of your comments are published.

Contact details:

Madeline Smyth, Psychology, HMP Berwyn, Wrexham Industrial estate, LL13 9QS

Appendix H: Interview guide

Interview question guide

Background

- How are things going for you in establishment X at the minute?
- Tell me a bit about you to help me understand the kind of person you are
- Tell me about your relationship history
- This study is about times when men have continued to contact a partner from prison when they shouldn't have. Who is that person for you? Tell me about that relationship (timeline through to coming to prison)

General

- How did you feel about X when you came to prison?
- What did you think about X?
- How did you feel about the relationship? (was it over? did you hope you would get back together?)
- What led to you not being allowed to have contact with X anymore?
- How did you feel when you were told you shouldn't contact X anymore? (feel/think about yourself/her/others/the world)
- What led you to decide to go against the rules and contact X?
- How did you contact X/pass messages to X?
- How did you try to keep track of what X was doing?
- What was important to you about knowing what X was doing? What did you think would happen/worry about if you didn't know?
- What did you hope would happen as a result of you contacting/keeping track of X?
- How did you hope X would feel when they heard from you/knew you were keeping track of them?
- When were you more likely to want to contact/keep track of X? What was it about these times/events that made it more likely?
- How would you feel after you had contacted X/you found out what X was doing/heard news of X? (feel/think about yourself/her/others/the world)
- How much did you think or worry about the consequences of contacting/keeping track of X?

- How did you feel when you were told off for contacting/keeping track of X? (feel/think about yourself/her/others/the world)
- What did you think about people telling you your behaviour was not OK? (feel/think about yourself/her/others/the world)

Incident analysis (possibly on flipchart)

- Think of a specific time when you contacted/kept track of X from prison. Tell me briefly about the situation.
- How long had you been thinking about contacting/checking up on X?
- What was going on in your life when you started thinking about it?
- How were you generally feeling about yourself/life/other people/X?
- What were you thinking about at this time? (about yourself, others, life, X)
- How long did it take from you starting to think about it to you actually doing it?
- What did you think about when deciding you were going to do it?
- How did you decide what to do and how to do it?
- How did you feel when you were doing it?
- How did you want X to feel/respond/think?
- What risks did you have to take to do it?
- Why did you decide those risks were worth it?
- How did you feel once you had done it?
- How long did you think about it afterwards?
- What happened after it was done?
- What were the consequences for you/X?

Ending

- Are there any questions you want to go back to?
- Are there any things you think I should have asked you about that I haven't?
- What do you think is the most important thing about what we've talked about today?