Understanding young people's experiences and views of partner violence in teenage intimate relationships

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Abstract

Adolescence is a critical developmental period in the life course and a time when most young people enter into their first intimate relationships. The significance of a young person's early intimate relationships are two-fold: firstly they can impact upon a young person's development, depending upon the nature and quality of the relationship; secondly, they provide a framework for intimate relationships in adulthood. Exploration of behaviours young people think are acceptable and unacceptable within intimate relationships, including experiences and attitudes towards violence in these relationships, has been relatively limited within the UK.

Drawing upon feminist criminology and feminist qualitative psychology, this thesis explores young people's experiences and views of teenage intimate partner violence, with a focus on how young people understand, interpret and make sense of this violence. This research is a mixed methods study. A quantitative online survey was completed by 233 young people aged 16-19 and a series of eight predominantly single gender qualitative focus groups were held with young people aged 16-19.

The study addresses a significant gap in the research literature. Firstly, it provides insights into the nature and dynamics of different forms of violence in older adolescents' intimate relationships. Secondly, it provides a nuanced understanding of what intimate partner violence means to different groups of young people. Thirdly, it outlines what participants perceive young people could or should do if they are in a violent relationship in a five stage model which includes perceived barriers and enablers to recognising and doing something about experiences of partner violence. The perspectives and experiences of the young people in this research illuminate how best to respond to this problem.

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I would like to dedicate my thesis in loving memory of my Grandfather Bill (W.E) Haylett (1921-2015) who was there when I embarked on this journey but wasn't able to see me reach my destination.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

A considerable number of young people in the United Kingdom will experience violence from an intimate partner before reaching adulthood (Barter et al. 2009; Fox et al. 2013). This thesis explores young people's experiences and views of teenage intimate partner violence, with a focus on how young people understand, interpret and make sense of this phenomenon.

The emerging body of UK research on teenage intimate partner violence indicates high rates of physical, emotional and sexual violence in these relationships (Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Barter et al. 2009; McCarry, 2010; Wood et al. 2011; Fox et al. 2013). Experiencing violence has been found to have consequences for physical health, mental wellbeing, health risk behaviours, education and future victimisation and should therefore be considered a significant welfare concern (Bowen & Walker, 2015; Barter, 2011, p.103). Increasing recognition of partner violence in teenager's intimate relationships is reflected in the widening of the UK policy definition of domestic violence to include 16 and 17 year olds (Home Office, 2013). Although a positive step in the recognition of this issue, what we know about young people's experiences and understandings of violence within the UK comes from a limited research evidence base.

The way that young people view and understand teenage intimate partner violence plays a significant role in their recognition of this violence, their ability to tell someone and whether or not they decide to seek help. Gender has been found to play a key part in shaping young people's understandings of violence. Perceived normative behaviours for women and men have been found to create and reinforce acceptance and tolerance of male violence within intimate relationships (McCarry, 2009, 2010). Normative (hegemonic) constructions of masculinity and tolerance of male violence have been argued to serve to perpetuate sexist attitudes resulting in a justification of violence against women. This may reflect broader cultural and social acceptability of male violence and wider societal toleration of violence against women more generally (McCarry, 2009; 2010). The way that young people understand and conceptualise gender roles can play a significant role in how they view intimate partner violence which in turn can have implications for their own intimate relationships.

Drawing on data from an online survey, this thesis explores the experience and impact of physical, psychological/emotional and sexual partner violence in a sample of young people living in the United Kingdom. The findings from the survey informed the second, qualitative study which involved a series of focus groups with young people from a county in the eastern region of England. The qualitative study looks at the ways in which young people identify, define and contextualise different forms of violence and considers how this might impact recognising and doing something about it.

Why is this research important?

This study is important in a number of ways. Firstly, there is a limited amount of research focusing upon teenage intimate partner violence within the UK. Existing research in this area has mainly been conducted outside of the UK, primarily in the US, and focuses upon 'dating' violence. US research on dating violence has established the growing prevalence of violence in young people's intimate relationships and highlighted the negative impact that violence from a partner can have on some teenagers' wellbeing (Jackson et al. 2000; Hickman et al. 2004). However, since 'dating' involves culturally specific habits and rituals, the applicability of US research to the UK context is not clear (Barter, 2011, p. 103).

Secondly, although it is an under-recognised and under-researched area, the growing body of research evidence about peer violence in the UK has found high levels of partner violence in teenager's intimate relationships, reflecting prevalence rates found in international research (Barter et al. 2009; Wood et al. 2011; Radford et al. 2011; Fox et al. 2013). The findings of emerging research within the UK attest to the seriousness of partner violence in adolescence and reinforce that it should be considered a significant welfare concern (Barter, 2011). In order to respond to this problem and support young people effectively it is necessary to increase our knowledge and understanding of their experiences and views of teenage intimate partner violence.

Teenage intimate relationships share some of the features of adult relationships, however they also have some distinct qualities meaning that these relationships need to be situated and understood from young people's point of view. Asking young people about their perspectives and experiences is important in ensuring that their voices are heard in issues that directly affect their lives (Finkelhor, 2008; Warrington, 2010; Radford et al. 2011). As experts by experience, young people are perhaps amongst those best placed to define teenage intimate partner violence which in turn is useful in informing the recommendations for appropriate policy and practice responses (Warrington, 2010). Likewise, young people may experience different forms of partner violence in different ways to adults. Both of these issues reinforce the need to grasp the way young people experience and understand violence from their own perspective. This may provide insights which could be used to improve service provision so that it is specifically tailored and targeted to meet young people's needs.

The developmental context of teenage intimate relationships

A key issue in studying partner violence during adolescence is to recognise that young people form their first intimate relationships in a period of significant individual change. During adolescence a young person goes through considerable physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes which influence, and are influenced by their social and cultural environment (Gauvain & Cole, 2008). Adolescence is therefore a critical time in a young person's life. Within this period of significant change, young people are likely to enter into their first intimate relationships.

The formation of first intimate relationships is a normative developmental task of adolescence which can support other developmental tasks as well as pose risks to a young person's wellbeing, depending upon the nature and quality of the relationship (Collins, 2003; Furman & Simon, 1999). Young people can experience a diverse range of romantic relationships and experiences; these may be relatively transitory, short in duration or casual with no expectation of monogamy, such as 'hooking up' or 'friends with benefits' or they may be intense and all-consuming (Coleman, 2011; Chung, 2005; Hickman et al. 2004). Partner violence can be experienced in any of these diverse relationship types during adolescence.

Being in and maintaining an intimate relationship has been noted to be particularly socially significant for young women as relationships signify attractiveness to young men and are considered a rite of passage amongst female peers (Chung, 2007). As a result, young women may feel pressure to enter into and maintain an intimate relationship with a partner, which can lead them to masking or minimising inequality and violence (Chung, 2007).

There has however been a tendency by researchers to mistakenly assume that these relationships are trivial and transitory and markedly different from adult relationships (Collins, 2003). This has meant that they have been overlooked in research (Shulman & Kipnis, 2001; Collins, 2003; Madsen & Collins, 2011; Bowen & Walker, 2015).

Violence in teenage intimate relationships

A systematic study of partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships was undertaken in the UK in 2009 (Barter et al. 2009). This research examined the incidence and impact of violence in 1353 young people's intimate relationships using a survey and in-depth interviews with 13-17 year olds at schools in England, Scotland and Wales. Reflecting international research findings in this area Barter and colleagues (2009) found that girls were more likely to experience physical, sexual and emotional violence than boys. Much higher levels of adverse impact were reported by girls, and girls were more likely to experience violence repeatedly, at the same level or of worsened severity. In addition family and peer violence were linked to an increased susceptibility to experiencing violence within an intimate relationship as was a female having an older boyfriend.

In a more recent survey with 1200 younger teenagers (13-14 years) just over half of the sample (52.25%) had experienced some form of domestic violence as a victim, perpetrator or witness (Fox et al. 2013, p. 521). However, no differences were found between girls and boys in relation to experiences of physical and emotional violence, although girls were more likely than boys to report being forced or pressured into sex (Fox et al. 2013). Gender differences were more prominent in relation to witnessing violence, where girls were found to be more likely than boys to have witnessed violence between adults who cared for them. This early exposure to violence between parents/carers is significant as it has the potential to mould young people's identification and definition of violence in subtly gendered ways (Fox et al. 2013). With regards to teenage intimate partner violence, Fox and colleagues

(2013) suggest that violence may become more overtly gendered into adulthood, which is reflected in the findings of Barter et al.'s (2009) study with older teenagers (Fox et al. 2013).

Whilst generally, young people perceive violence as unacceptable, their views of violence as justifiable in certain situations and the culpability of female victims illustrates the complex, contradictory nature of their understandings of, and attitudes toward, violence (McCarry, 2010; Burman & Cartmel, 2005). Drawing on dominant characteristics of masculinity some young men have been found to legitimate the use of violence on the basis that boys are 'socialised into accepting that violence is what men do' (McCarry, 2010). Lombard (2011) found younger people aged 11 and 12 shared this view using naturalised definitions of masculinity to explain, rather than challenge, why men are violent. Indeed some young people perceive violence towards women as acceptable in certain circumstances and endorse attitudes which blame women for the violence perpetrated against them (Gadd et al. 2012; McCarry, 2010; Lombard, 2011). Perpetuation of gender stereotypes in this way means young people may be less likely to challenge male violence against women (Lombard, 2011, p.2).

It is also known that young people experiencing violence from an intimate partner are reluctant to seek help (Barter et al. 2009). Reluctance to disclose may be a result of embarrassment, fear of talking to professionals and/or a belief that they may not be believed or taken seriously by adults. Feeling that their experiences may be trivialised or minimised has also been found to deter young people from telling someone (Barter et al. 2009; Wood et al. 2011; Sears et al. 2006). In addition, awareness raising campaigns can reinforce particular ideas about victims of teenage intimate partner violence making some young people less likely to disclose their experience (Sears et al. 2006).

When young people do disclose, friends and peers are most often their confidantes (Wood et al. 2011; Ashley & Foshee, 2005). Although informal help seeking may provide the young person with emotional support, it raises further issues as friends and peers may actually offer bad or unhelpful advice which might lead to the young person remaining in the relationship for longer than they might have under other circumstances (Ocampo et al. 2007). The significance of help giving among friends and peers highlights the potential role of youth education in the prevention and early identification of teenage intimate partner violence.

Locating myself within the research

As a teenager I experienced violence from an intimate partner, however, my personal experience was not the initial motivation for the research. The topic of this thesis was refined and developed from a broad interest in researching child maltreatment to a narrower focus upon partner violence in teenage intimate relationships. Even though my own experience of partner violence is not the reason I embarked upon this research, I feel it is important that I acknowledge and explain how this adds an additional layer of complexity to my position within the research.

My own past experiences brought to the research burdens and challenges as well as benefits and insight. Before carrying out this research I spent some time recalling and reflecting upon my experiences of partner violence. This process was challenging but ultimately it enabled me to reflect upon and more fully understand my experiences. As an adult, I can identify and recognise how the violence began, continued and remained hidden over a significant period of time. At the time, I think I believed that this was the way relationships were meant to be. I remember how difficult it was to tell someone about what was happening. When I eventually did disclose, my experience was trivialised and dismissed and the violent behaviour of a male partner was talked about as something that should be tolerated. As a researcher I was curious about whether much had changed.

It is important for me to disclose my experiences at this point and to acknowledge that they have had an impact on the research. They have given me insights and a richer understanding which have guided the gathering and interpretation of data (Rowling, 1999). In keeping with the feminist approach adopted within the research, I have tried to be reflexive throughout the research process (Wilkinson, 1988).

1.2 Research questions

This thesis aims to contribute to knowledge and understanding of violence in teenage intimate relationships and consider how best to respond to this problem by asking young people directly about their experiences and perspectives. The research addresses the following overarching research question:

What are young people's experiences of, and views toward, partner violence in teenage intimate relationships?

There are two sets of research aims to explore the different aspects of this question; the first aim is to examine the nature, frequency and dynamics of different forms of violence in young people's intimate relationships and to find out how experiencing this violence makes young people feel. The second aim is to explore how young people identify, define and contextualise teenage intimate partner violence. These aims are addressed through the following research questions:

1. What are young people's experiences of intimate partner violence?

2. How does experiencing violence from an intimate partner make young people feel?

3. In what contexts does violence occur and persist?

4. Is violence occurring more often in any particular groups?

5. What behaviours do young people recognise and define as constituting partner violence?

6. How do young people talk about violence in intimate relationships?

7. Are conceptualisations of interpersonal violence linked to different gendered identities?

7a. What views of gender do young people draw on when:

- Describing instigators and victims of intimate partner violence
- Discussing different forms of violence

To explore the different aspects of the research questions a mixed methods approach was used; a quantitative online survey was administered to examine and measure experiences of violence (research questions 1-4) and a series of qualitative focus group discussions were undertaken to explore the range of young people's understandings of intimate partner violence (research questions 5-7).

1.3 Outline of thesis

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the developmental backdrop against which teenage intimate relationships form and intimate partner violence can occur. It considers the diversity, structure, content and significance of young people's intimate relationships and how the young person's wider social context can influence their intimate relationships.

Chapter 3 explores what teenage intimate partner violence is understood to be. The issue is set within the broader historical context from which it emerged and considers how domestic violence in adult relationships came to be recognised as a significant social problem. Official, research and practice definitions of violence are considered and the way that violence is conceptualised and understood by young people is examined. The chapter concludes with an outline of the definition of violence being used within this thesis.

Chapter 4 sets out what is known about the nature and extent of violence in teenage intimate relationships internationally and within the UK context. Risk and protective factors that have been identified for teenage intimate partner violence are discussed and short and long-term consequences of experiencing violence are examined.

In *Chapter 5* the research design and methods are outlined. This chapter explains and justifies the research design and provides an account of the data collection and analysis process. Ethical issues are also considered in this chapter.

Chapter 6 presents the results of the quantitative survey. It sets out the nature, extent, dynamics and impact of different forms of violence from analyses of responses to an online survey completed by young people aged between 16 and 19.

The findings from the qualitative focus groups are presented in Chapters 7 to 10. In *Chapter 7* participants' understanding of gender identities are explored and the performance of gender identities in young people's interactions with one another is examined. *Chapter 8* looks at young people's understandings of intimate relationships. Different kinds of intimate relationships that young people talked about and perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable relationship behaviours and activities are examined. *Chapter 9* outlines the range of violent behaviours that were talked about by participants. It goes on to explore how participants' understood and made sense of different forms of violence. The final

findings chapter, *Chapter 10*, looks at barriers to, and enablers of, disclosing the experience of partner violence. The perceived sources of help and support identified by participants are also explored.

Chapter 11 sets out the implications of the research for understandings of teenage intimate partner violence. The chapter begins with a discussion of the findings of the research in relation to existing literature. Next, the limitations of the research and ideas for future research are discussed. This thesis ends by considering how the findings of this research might inform how best to respond to teenage intimate partner violence.

Chapter 2: Contextualising adolescent intimate relationships

The following literature review chapters provide a context for this thesis, setting out relevant theories, research findings and debates and identifying the gaps in the research literature that this thesis seeks to address. In order to conduct a systematic search of the literature, a snowballing approach was used. To begin with, a start set of papers was identified to use for the snowballing procedure (Wohlin, 2014). Keywords from the research questions and related synonyms were used to identify papers for possible inclusion in the start set, these included teenage intimate partner violence, teenage partner abuse, intimate partner violence, domestic abuse, domestic violence, interpersonal partner violence, dating violence, teenagers, dating, violence, relationships, adolescence and young people. Once a start set was selected backward and forward snowballing was undertaken. Backward snowballing involved using the reference list of the papers in the start set to identify new papers to include, thus identifying literature going back in time. Forward snowballing works forward in time, new papers were identified by searching for articles which had cited papers included within the start set and the literature found in the backward snowballing (Wohlin, 2014).

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical time of developmental change, within which young people also begin to form their first intimate and formative relationships with their peers. It is therefore a time when the risk of violence by or against a partner first emerges (Barter et al. 2009; Hickman et al. 2004; McCoy et al. 2011). This chapter sets the scene by outlining the developmental backdrop against which teenage intimate relationships and intimate partner violence can occur. It then goes on to provide an overview of teenage intimate relationships, considering their diversity, structure and content and their significance to young people. The ways in which wider social influences are connected to these relationships are also considered.

Distinctions have been made between developmental phases that typically occur during adolescence in order to set parameters for research, policy and practice. The World Health Organisation defines adolescence as between the ages of 10 and 19, with early adolescence occurring between 10 to 14 years of age (WHO, 2014). A three phase distinction is typically used in research into this period of the life course: early adolescence (ages 10-13), middle adolescence (14-18) and late adolescence (from 18 to early 20s) (Smetana et al. 2006). Although age is a convenient way to distinguish adolescence from childhood and adulthood, it may be more relevant to the biological changes of this period and less useful in terms of psychological and social development. That being said, for clarity, throughout this thesis 'adolescence' refers to the chronological age range between 10 and 18 years which is in line with the age range used in most of the research conducted on this period of the life course (Smetana et al. 2006).

2.1 Theories of adolescent development

The adolescent stage of development, which is generally considered to start at puberty and continue through the teenage years, has been theorised as a problematic period (Coleman & Hagell, 2007). Hall (1904) conceptualised adolescence as a period of 'storm and stress' involving difficulties for the young person and the people around them (Arnett, 1999). These difficulties relate to three key elements: conflict with parents, mood disruption and risk taking behaviour. Arnett (1999) acknowledges that a certain degree of storm and stress will be experienced by some young people and that adolescence is the period of the life course when it is most likely to occur. Adolescence is still viewed as a difficult time within society, however, it seems that many adolescents are able to effectively negotiate and cope with the challenges experienced during this period and enjoy many aspects of their lives (Richter, 2006).

Adolescence has also been described as a period of transition; this refers to the experience of moving between the life-stages of childhood and adulthood (Bynner, 2001, p. 6). A range of transitional events occur during this period, such as puberty, the transition from school to university or training and entry into employment. These transitional events are markers of a young person's entry into adulthood and exit from adolescence and they define and shape their experiences (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). The transition into adulthood has become longer and more complex as more young people are staying on in education and leaving home later resulting in delayed financial independence (Hagell, 2012, p. 5). As a result of the lengthening of adolescence the adolescent transition which was once believed to be linear has become fluid and changing with multiple, non-linear pathways to adult living (Wood & Hine, 2009, p. 4; Hagell, 2012, p. 5). Transitions, or transitional events, are defining features of adolescent development as they mark key milestones on the path to adulthood.

The transition into adulthood is highly individualised, with young people varying in the timing of transitions and their responses to the internal changes and social events that provoke them. Using a turning points framework, Pickles and Rutter (1991) examined individual courses of development to explore how young people experience and negotiate transitions and what impact they have upon them. Turning points can be conceptualised as key moments, alterations or deflections in an individuals' long term pathway or trajectory initiated at an earlier period of time which result in lifelong change (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996; Sampson & Laub, 2005; Coleman, 2011; Drapeau et al. 2007). Specific events or experiences that a young person has no control over, such as puberty, and those that are within the control of the young person, such as their choice of intimate partner or career path can be considered turning points (Rutter, 1996). Their defining feature is that they result in a change in the life course which in turn changes the individual's behaviour (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). The turning points framework is useful in understanding how young people negotiate these key events and how the effects of these turning points are carried forward in development (Rutter, 1996). However, this framework is problematic in several

ways. Firstly, there is the issue of deciding which turning points are important and worthy of study (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996, p. 769). A further point made by Rutter (1996, p. 619) is that in order to understand turning points it is necessary to consider why an individual experienced particular turning points as well as what effect those life events had on their psychological functioning.

Retaining the focus upon transitions and turning points, Graber and Brooks-Gunn (1996, p. 769) integrate the notion of turning points into a perspective they term the transition-linked turning points framework. The premise underlying the integration of transitions with turning points is that it allows the study of the chains of effects or mechanisms that are set in motion during such turning points to be examined (Drapeau et al. 2007, p. 979; Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996, p. 769). In other words, the transition-linked turning points framework can illuminate how young people navigate these transitional periods and adapt to the turning points they experience. The transition-linked turning points framework therefore allows for the examination of whether behaviour changes, how it changes and the timing of such behaviour change in response to transition-linked turning points (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996, p. 769). Incorporating the key moments, or turning points, which occur during the transitional period of adolescence, is a helpful way to understand the context of development and the significance of turning points or key events to adjustment during this period (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996).

Ecological systems theory
A particularly useful model for understanding the complexities of development during adolescence is ecological systems theory (Brofenbrenner, 1979). This theory acknowledges that development is multiply determined by individual forces within the active, growing young person, the immediate setting in which the young person is developing including their family and community, and by the wider cultural context in which the individual and family are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Belsky, 1980). The process of development is affected by the relations between these multiple determinants that are nested within one another.

There are five inter-related system levels: micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono, which interact and influence one another and the individual young person as they grow up (Asmussen, 2010, p. 7). The image below provides an overview of these inter-related systems and their relationship to one another.
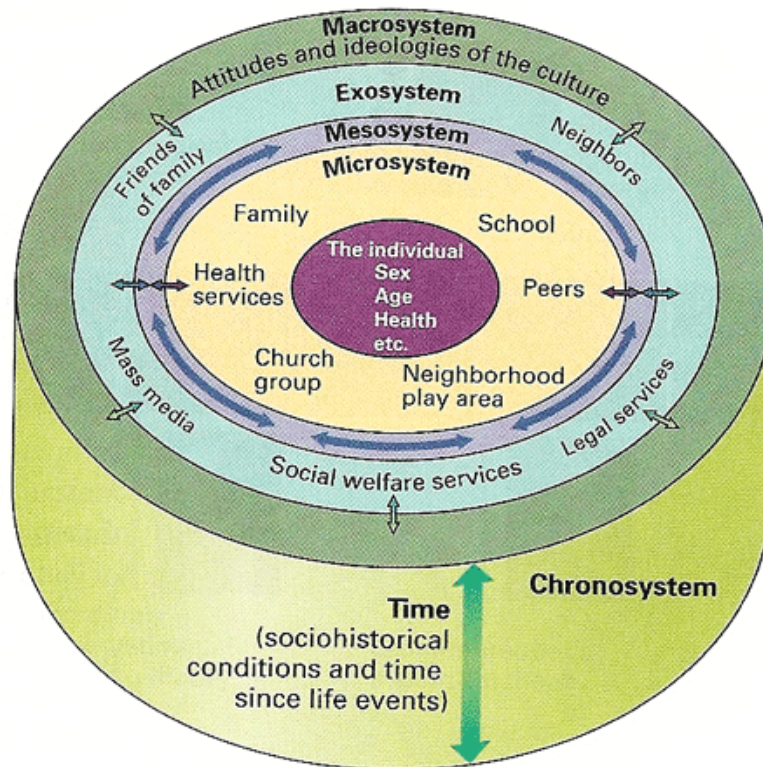
Figure 1 - Ecological Systems Theory (Source: Kopp and Krakow, 1982)

From an ecological perspective the developing young person actively influences their family and community environments while these environments simultaneously influence the young person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This perspective takes into account the complex activities and environments within which development is occurring: it acknowledges the physical, emotional, cognitive and sexual changes that the young person is undergoing at an individual level. The micro system accounts for the immediate environment in which the adolescent is developing including family relationships, friends and peer groups. The meso system describes the connection between microsystems in an individual's immediate environment and includes links to social institutions including social services, police and courts (Bowen, 2011). The exo system represents broader systems which regulate the operation of the meso and micro systems including political, economic, and cultural forces (Whiteman et al. 2011, p.133) and the macro system reflects socio-cultural influences (Bowen, 2011, p. 70). Ecological systems theory provides a framework to explore the dynamic processes through which development occurs by embedding and acknowledging the interaction between multiple family, community and cultural factors and the individual young person and their development (Belsky, 1980).

2.2 Adolescent developmental changes

This section outlines normative developmental changes that are experienced during adolescence and examines the impact these changes can have on young people on their passage into adulthood. Young people experience and negotiate a series of major physical, biological and psychological changes (Gauvain & Cole, 2008, p. 289, Coleman & Hagell, 2007,

p. 3). It is important to understand these individual developmental changes as they underpin and interconnect with a young person's intimate relationships (Hartup, 1999, p. xv).

Physical development

During adolescence sudden and rapid hormonal and physical changes occur which result in adult appearance and reproductive capabilities (Grumbach & Styne, 1998). On average, pubertal changes occur over five to six years and are influenced by the interaction of genetic, nutritional, and hormonal factors (Archibald et al. 2003, p. 25). Marshall and Tanner (1974) described the internal and external changes of puberty in five distinct stages: 1) acceleration followed by deceleration of skeletal growth, or 'growth spurt'; 2) increases in and/or redistribution of body fat and muscle tissue; 3) development of the circulatory and respiratory systems, and thus increased strength and endurance; 4) maturation of secondary sexual characteristics and reproductive organs; and 5) changes in hormonal/endocrine systems which regulate and coordinate the other pubertal events. Girls typically experience puberty earlier than boys.

The physical changes of puberty are experienced differently by girls and boys. Girls have been found to be more dissatisfied with their bodies during puberty than boys who experience normal changes in height and weight positively (Archibald et al. 2003, p. 37). Some girls may experience specific aspects of pubertal development, such as breast development, positively (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1994). However, as breast development advances these positive feelings can decline if girls experience harassment and teasing from family and peers about their changing bodies (Brooks-Gunn, 1988; Brooks-Gunn et al. 1994; Saariniemi et al. 2009; ACOG, 2006). Young people have to learn to adapt not only to the rapid and radical physical changes in shape and size that they experience during puberty but also to how other people respond to their maturing bodies (Archibald et al. 2003).

The timing of pubertal development is also significant, with early maturation associated with increased vulnerability for psychological problems, particularly for girls (Reardon et al. 2009). Early maturing girls have been found to show signs of inner turbulence, increased depression, higher levels of eating disorders and a proneness to lower levels of self-esteem (Archibald et al. 2003; Coleman, 2011). Experiencing puberty earlier than peers may also heighten social anxiety in girls. Embarrassing social interactions, such as body odour or menstrual 'accidents', can lead to fear of, and actual, ridicule or rejection (Blumenthal et al. 2009). Girls who experience puberty earlier than their peers do so in relative isolation and must negotiate peer relationships in the context of a maturity gap which can also heighten social anxiety. This maturity gap may explain why early maturing girls are more likely to associate with older peers, especially older boys, and to engage in problem/risky behaviours at earlier ages than their peers (Statin & Magnusson, 1990; Bowen & Walker, 2015). Because, in comparison to their normatively developing peers, they are viewed by

themselves and others as being old enough to try out certain behaviours such as 'dating' and drinking alcohol (Archibald et al. 2003, p. 42).

Typically, boys who mature early feel more positively about themselves and their bodies due to being stronger and having more muscle development, which can result in being better at sports, in turn heightening popularity (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006). In some cases early maturing boys may experience 'internalised distress' such as anxiety and loss of appetite although this pattern is less consistent than that identified with early maturing girls (Ge et al. 2001; Blumenthal et al. 2009).

Adolescent sexuality and sexual behaviour

The development of adolescent sexuality is intertwined with other developmental changes that occur during this period (Tolman & McClelland, 2011). Sexual maturation of the body and altered appearance are underpinned by the biological changes of puberty (Crockett et al. 2008). Young people have to adjust to these physical changes and learn to manage their sexual desires, integrating this combination of feelings, experiences and attitudes into their developing sense of self (Crockett et al. 2008). Sexual development therefore involves physiological changes and psychological processes which are also maturing during this period (Coleman, 2011).

Ideas about sexual behaviour and sexual activity generally tend to increase in this period of the life course. Young people might engage in a range of sexual behaviours from non-coital activities, which allow them to explore their sexuality, to varying forms of intercourse. Erotic fantasy is a common non-coital form of sexual behaviour which creates pleasant sexual arousal and allows for the expression of sexual needs (Crockett et al. 2008). Similarly, masturbation, which is considered a normative activity, offers a way for young people to explore their sexuality safely and privately (Katchadourian, 1990; Crockett et al. 2008). There may be some engagement in physically intimate behaviour with another young person, such as kissing and genital touching, and some young people may have sexual intercourse with one or more sexual partners. The qualities of normative adolescent sexuality development have been highlighted here, however it should be acknowledged that some young people actively choose not to engage in sexual behaviour which itself can lead to a variety of both positive and negative consequences (Tolman & McClelland, 2011, p. 245).

Children and young people are regularly exposed to sexualised messages and images in the media which may have ramifications for their understanding of their own sexuality and expectations regarding sexual behaviour. The growth in internet-enabled technology has transformed the ways that young people come into contact with, consume, create and share sexually explicit material (Owens et al. 2012; Flood, 2007; Haggstrom-Nordin et al. 2006; Wolak et al. 2007). Seeking information on the internet may provide positive insights into sexual education and sexual health; however, unmonitored access can pose significant

risks (Barak & Fisher, 2001). Young people are often unequipped to manage content and online dangers in ways that are safe and healthy (Delmonico & Griffin, 2008). Exposure to pornographic material has been found to influence the way young people think about and understand sexual behaviours and practices (Haggstrom-Nordin et al. 2006).

When examining adolescent sexual behaviour it is important to consider the social factors and context which both influence and impact upon young people's sexual development. Adolescent sexual development and behaviour takes place in the context of adult sexual behaviour and attitudes (Coleman, 2011). Consequently, young people learn about and are influenced by the attitudes and behaviours of the adults around them. Debates about the negative consequences of exposure to sexualised material feed into longstanding adult fear and anxiety about youth sex and sexual practices which are traditionally framed as 'problem behaviour' (Halpern, 2010). This conceptualisation places emphasis upon the risks of adolescent sexual behaviour such as pregnancy and disease rather than the promotion of positive sexual development and healthy sexuality (Halpern, 2010; Powell, 2010).

Cognitive and brain development

The brain is also changing during adolescence and this in turn has an impact on a young person's behaviour. One of parts of the brain which goes through the most significant and prolonged changes is the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain which controls such functions as decision making, memory, emotion regulation and long-term planning (Hazen et al. 2008). There is a decrease in grey matter in the prefrontal region of the brain, similar to synaptic pruning, eliminating unused connections between neurons enabling, ultimately, improvement in information processing. Thinking and reasoning skills also develop through increased connectivity between the prefrontal cortex and other parts of the brain. There are also changes to the limbic system which is involved in processing information related to emotions. Being overly emotional and susceptible to stress during adolescence are often attributed to the changes taking place in the limbic system (Coleman, 2011).

The growing, changing brain is particularly important when it is considered in terms of the increasing autonomy and independence which accompanies this period. In comparison to childhood and adulthood, engagement in risk-taking behaviours appears to increase during adolescence. Because their brains are still developing, young people may be less able to consider risks and benefits when making decisions which can lead to them making risky choices (Schofield et al. 2012, p. 37; Casey et al. 2008). As the adolescent brain matures the capacity for young people to control their behaviour increases and they develop the emotional and cognitive abilities that are required for independent functioning in adulthood (Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). Whilst adverse experiences during adolescence may profoundly alter the structure and function of certain regions of the brain, and it has been argued that stress-induced changes may leave young people more susceptible to the onset of psychopathologies during adolescence (Romeo & McEwen, 2006, p. 203).

Whilst there has been a rapid increase in what is known about the brain in adolescence, it is important to acknowledge there are limitations in this field of study. Little research has been able to evidence the changing images of the brain from fMRI scans to actual changes in thought or emotion, meaning that many of the claims relating to the adolescent brain are currently speculative (Coleman, 2011). Nevertheless, understanding the risks and opportunities associated with brain development during adolescence may be particularly useful when considering when young people may be most responsive to intervention (Dahl, 2004).

2.3 Identity formation

The process of identity formation, a key developmental task of adolescence, is also taking place at the same time as the developmental changes and social challenges of puberty (Erikson, 1963, 1968). Identity formation is characterised both by stability and progressive change which lead to the development of a clearer sense of self (Klimstra et al. 2010). This sense of self, how young people understand and view themselves, can have a significant effect on their reactions to future life events (Coleman, 2011).

Theoretical approaches to identity development

There are a number of theoretical approaches which are useful in understanding the complex process of identity formation in adolescence. Erikson (1963, 1968) focused on the interaction between individual biological and psychological foundations and culture within their historical context. Development was conceptualised by Erikson (1963, 1968) as a series of crises involving difficult and sometimes conflicting tasks that must be negotiated if a normative developmental trajectory is to be maintained. Identity was considered to be something an individual possessed that could be assessed on a continuum between positive and negative poles by Erikson (1963, 1968). If a young person does not form a coherent sense of self during adolescence, they may lack a consistent sense of identity into adulthood (Hazen et al. 2008). However, Marcia (1966, 1967), expanding upon Erikson's (1963, 1968) ideas, suggested that there are qualitatively different ways that young people engage in and resolve the tensions identified by Erikson.

Focusing upon Erikson's notion of identity crisis, Marcia (1966, 1967) proposed that identity formation occurs through exploration of, and commitment to, an identity in a variety of life domains. Based on their extent of exploration and commitment, a young person's identity can be classified into one of four identity statuses which are individual styles of coping with identity crisis (Marcia, 1967). The *identity diffusion* status is low in exploration of different identities and low in commitment to an identity (Cote & Schwartz, 2002). Young people who maintain a diffused identity into late adolescence have been found to be more susceptible to risky behaviours, such as drinking alcohol, smoking and drug abuse, and academic failure (Jones, 1992, 1994; Jones & Hartmann, 1988). There is some commitment to an identity in the *Identity foreclosure* status, but there may be less exploration of identity choices. Foreclosed individuals are obedient and conform to the expectations of others, particularly

parents (Marcia, 1967, Cote & Schwartz, 2002). *Identity moratorium* is high in exploration of different identities, but there is not a commitment to an identity yet. The fourth status, *identity achievement*, occurs after a period of extensive exploration of different identities and commitment to a certain identity. The basis of Marcia's (1966, 1967) identity status approach is that identity formation is determined mainly by the choices and commitments an individual makes. The role of broader socio-contextual factors in identity development are therefore lacking in this approach (Cote & Schwartz, 2002).

From a sociological perspective, the process of individualisation emphasises that individuals are increasingly required to construct their own identity as a consequence of societal changes in late modernity (Beck, 1992). As a result of the reorganisation of society, normative development involves people maturing as self-determining individuals (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Cote & Schwartz, 2002). As society changes, individuals are left to their own devices to make choices about their lives and to form and enhance their identity. People approach the individualisation process in different ways due to variation in individual capacities and preparation (Cote & Schwartz, 2002). Those who are lacking in the appropriate preparation and capacity may pursue a number of 'default options' which do not require a great deal of effort or thought (Cote & Schwartz, 2002). For example, forming a personal identity by paying attention to fashion and trends to impress peers, rather than self-improving in areas such as critical thinking and other higher order thinking skills. This is referred to by Cote (2000) as 'default individualisation', where transient cultural trends dictate the formation of identity and there is limited attempt at intellectual, occupational and psychosocial self-improvement. 'Developmental individualisation', on the other hand, involves the deliberate and continued pursuit of self- improvement (Cote, 2000).

Negotiating and renegotiating identity during adolescence is a complex process which involves synthesising a range of identity components, which are influenced by and influence relationships with family, friends and intimate partners (Marcia, 1988, p. 110). As well as an individual's personal identity developing during adolescence, their social identities, defined as collective membership to a particular social group such as ethnic and gender identities, are also developing (Allen & Aber, 2006).

Gender identity

Gender identity, which develops in childhood and into adolescence, is of particular importance in the context of this thesis. Gender identity is defined as an individual's sense and experience of being masculine or feminine in their behaviours, attitudes, roles and preferences (Feiring, 1999, p. 213). Gender development begins in childhood where, Kohlberg (1966) suggests, a child's understanding of gender progresses in stages. Through a developmental sequence where a child is able to label their own sex (gender identity) and realise that gender remains the same across time (gender stability) they reach gender constancy (Kohlberg, 1966). At this stage, children come to understand what it means to be male or female and are aware of the physical and social characteristics and behaviours that

are connected to these categories (Feiring, 1999). Whereas Kohlberg (1966) theorised maturation as the primary driver of gender development, gender schema theorists argue that a more active role is played by children in their gender development.

A schema is a cognitive framework which an individual draws on to interpret and make sense of their social world. An individual's knowledge about objects, events, personality traits and social norms, activated as and when an individual experiences things, is informed by their schemas (Mandler, 1984, p. 2-3). A gender schema is the organisation of information about how an individual should behave in relation to socially prescribed ideas of what it means to be male or female (Feiring, 1999). Gender schemas develop through cognitive and social learning. In childhood children incorporate gender schemas into their self-concept, this schema then shapes the way that they behave, including the identification of their own gender which they conform to on the basis of social expectations of what it means to be male or female (Bem, 1981, 1985, 1987). In adolescence, it is argued that strong identification with sex-role stereotypes can lead to the acquisition and expression of socially expected gender traits, behaviours and attitudes in a range of social domains (Feiring, 1999). Whilst individuals may differ in the gender schema that they hold, the schema approach is a useful explanation of how individual's become gendered in society and the ways that schemas inform traits, behaviours, appearance and interests in adolescence (Bem, 1981).

Early adolescence is recognised as a period when issues of gender identity become particularly heightened (Huston & Alvarez, 1990; Richards et al. 1991). At the onset of puberty, Hill and Lynch (1983) propose that there is an intensification of gender based expectations. This intensification occurs as a result of the changes to the physical appearance of girls and boys during puberty which prompts increasing social pressure from friends and family to conform to traditional gender roles (Hill & Lynch, 1983). Although social relationships, such as those with parents, teachers and peers, are recognised as potential agents of gender intensification, the role that intimate partners might play in gender identity development has been relatively overlooked (Hill & Lynch, 1983; Galambos, 2004; Feiring, 1999).

2.4 The social context of adolescence
The Family

The family plays a critical role in a young person's transition into adulthood (Coleman & Hagell, 2007, p. 18). Families can help young people survive and thrive but they can also put young people at increased risk of poorer outcomes.

Family circumstances and structures have changed significantly in the last three decades. There has been an increase in maternal employment which means more mothers return to work early in their child's life. Families are now smaller, child bearing tends to occur later in life, more parents cohabit and fewer marry (Gardner et al. 2012, p. 91). The extent of family

breakdown and reconstitution means that children and young people may grow up in a range of different family compositions such as lone parent families or with step-parents and step siblings or other non-traditional family forms, such as same-sex headed families. Whilst two-parent, heterosexual families are believed to be the strongest for adolescent development, non-traditional family relationships have been found to be as strong as traditional ones (Golombok et al. 2014). Although a higher rate of conduct and emotional problems have been found in young people in 'non-intact' families (separated, divorced and step families), these problems are likely to be explained by other social factors which interact with the changing family circumstances experienced by the young person (Gardner et al. 2012, p. 86).

Independence and autonomy

During adolescence the task of parenting shifts from aiding individual independence to helping and supporting young people to exercise their independence in a sensible way (Gardner et al. 2012, p. 76). As a result, there is a shift in the way that parents and young people interact as parents attempt to balance their child's need for autonomy with a need to provide structure, protection and boundaries (Gardner et al. 2012, p. 76). 'Autonomy' is widely used to refer to a set of psychosocial issues that are of particular importance during adolescence (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003, p. 176). Achieving autonomy during adolescence is a critical developmental issue – the ability to act independently of others and a desire to connect with others are thought to be associated with positive developmental outcomes, a lack of appropriate support for autonomy may lead to problematic outcomes for the young person (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003, p. 177). Parental attempts to provide structure, protection and boundaries has been affected by the elongation of adolescence, children being in the parental home for longer, significant changes in family structure and the development of new technology all of which create new monitoring challenges which have to be negotiated in order to effectively support the young person to achieve autonomy.

This section has thus far explored the role that family environments can play in shaping the experiences associated with adolescence. Significant changes in family circumstances and structure and their relationship to, and impact upon, adolescence have also been examined. Whilst the family plays an important role in the developmental experiences of adolescence, Coleman (2011, p. 190) argues that the wider peer group play an especially significant role as contributors to development during this period.

Peer relationships

Typically, making friends begins in childhood. Relationships with other children offer opportunities to learn and support the development of a range of friendship skills. These relationships are particularly significant as they shape relationships into adolescence and adulthood (Duck, 1991). As a child gets older the meaning and experience of friendship

changes and develops. Adolescence sees a growth in the understanding of friendship and increased capabilities to form friendships in different ways to how they were formed as a younger child. In childhood, friendships tend to involve children of the same sex, whereas in the teenage years there is a shift in terms of increased interaction and friendships with the opposite sex. Friendships become much more meaningful as young people develop independence and responsibility for the formation and maintenance of these relationships, which is accompanied by an understanding and appreciation of the potential longevity of their friendships (Duck, 1991).

Young people may be part of a variety of social networks such as fluid social clusters or more tight knit friendships (Cotterell, 2007). Friendships can play a significant and influential role in young people's development. For example, having a friendship group and being able to remain within the group are factors which relate to self-esteem and to the development of a coherent identity (Coleman, 2011). Those who are isolated or rejected may be at a particular disadvantage and loneliness can be difficult to deal with. A further issue relates to young people who form the sorts of friendships which can restrain their individual growth, such as involvement in gangs.

Friendship qualities

Friendships are characterised by choice, young people voluntarily choose who they want to be friends with and tend to seek out friends with similar social traits as themselves (Epstein, 1989). Broadly speaking, friendships are considered to facilitate the socio-emotional goals and needs of the participants (Fehr, 1996). Mendelson and Aboud (1999) have defined six functions of friendship: 1) companionship, 2) a reliable alliance, 3) help, 4) intimacy, 5) self-validation and 6) emotional security. These qualities are important for sustaining the friendship, providing a route for integration into a social network and reassurance of worth through validation by others of the same age (Cotterell, 2007).

During adolescence friends become a central source of companionship and intimacy. Companionship refers to the shared activities of young people such as leisure activities and adventures or inactivity, such as listening to music together (Cotterell, 2007). Enjoyment is found in the shared nature of the activity. Companionship can have positive emotional benefits, for example organisation and participation in mutually gratifying activities provides a distraction from stressful personal situations (Rook, 1987). Intimacy and closeness are also an integral and valued quality of friendship. Mutual trust, loyalty and exclusivity are intimate features that characterise close adolescent friendships (Shulman et al. 1997). This includes supporting each other emotionally and knowing each other's feelings and preferences. A secure and accepting environment allows for the sharing of personal information and discussion of feelings. Self-disclosure can support self-esteem, relational esteem and responsiveness within relationships in addition to enhancing relationship satisfaction and quality (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). However, sharing personal information and secrets demands a great deal of trust and as such involves personal risk and potential threat. The

information that has been shared might be used against that person in conflict situations, such as arguments. Gender differences have been found in relation to friendship intimacy with young women reportedly having closer friendships and proneness for self-disclosure, whereas young men's friendships are characterised by emotional separateness and participation in shared activities (Shulman et al. 1997).

The social influence of friendship

Friendships are considered as exerting a number of positive and negative influences on a range of behaviours, in multiple ways. According to Brown (2004) there are three modes of peer influence; modelling, normative regulation and structuring of opportunities. Modelling refers to young people emulating the behaviour of others and can be used in an oppositional way where young people observe behaviour of other groups and seek to do the opposite of that group (Brown, 2004). Normative regulation occurs through conversations, gossip or teasing which reinforce the norms of the group. This kind of peer influence can be extremely subtle as conversation with friends form part of a young person's daily routine. However, these exchanges can have a considerable influence on their attitudes towards many aspects of their lives including school, gender roles and social interactions (Brown, 2004; Eder at al. 1995). Structuring of opportunities occurs when peers provide opportunities or occasions which permit certain types of behaviour. For example taking drugs or engaging in sexual activity at a party where there is no adult supervision.

The influence of friends on a range of anti-social and risk taking behaviours has been widely researched. Association with a deviant peer group is considered a risk factor for participation in anti-social activities. However, it is unclear whether anti-social behaviour is more likely to take place in groups rather than individually or if peers encourage each other to partake in this kind of behaviour (Coleman, 2011). Evidence from longitudinal studies examining the nature of anti-social behaviour has identified two different trajectories for young people who are anti-social during adolescence. Life-course persistent offenders participate in anti-social behaviour from childhood which continues into adolescence and adulthood (Moffitt, 2006). Life-course persistent offenders are few in number but are persistent and pathological. More common are adolescence-limited anti-social individuals who partake in anti-social behaviour during adolescence and desist in adulthood (Moffitt, 2006). Moffitt (2006) found that the adolescence-limited trajectory is more strongly associated with having delinquent peers than the life-course persistent offender path (Moffitt, 2006). Promotion of delinquency by peers has also been found to increase anti-social behaviour for adolescence-limited offenders (Simons et al. 1994). However, peer affiliation may also be as influential for life-course persistent offenders. Young people who are anti-social during childhood can become 'magnets' for other young people who wish to 'learn delinquency' (Moffitt, 2006). Thus, affiliation with life-course persistent offenders can lead to the onset of adolescence-limited anti-social behaviour in other young people.

The extent of peer influence is complicated by several factors. Firstly, peer influence is a reciprocal process where a person both influences, and is influenced by, their peer group (Brown, 2004; Coleman, 2011). Whilst a reciprocal process, this influence may not be an equal one as some young people may be more influential than others (Hartup, 1999). A second issue relates to the range of friendships and peers in the young person's social network which mean young people experience multiple sources of peer influence from different parts of their social network (Brown, 2004). The young person may model their behaviour on that of particular friends in their peer group, which may be discouraged or disliked by other peers in their social network. What these two factors illustrate is that peer influence may not be straightforward because of the range of ways that young people can be affected by their peers.

Isolation, rejection and bullying

Shifts in young people's social networks during adolescence can leave some teenagers susceptible to loneliness, rejection and bullying which can have a detrimental effect on their wellbeing. Loneliness occurs when a discrepancy exists between the number or kind of relationships that a young person desires and the actual relationships they have in their life (Perlman & Peplau, 1982). Whilst transient feelings of loneliness may not be particularly problematic, chronic feelings of loneliness during adolescence have been linked to a number of psychological and physical health problems (Vanhalst, 2012). Coleman (2011, p. 185) notes that loneliness is most often experienced in early adolescence which is likely to be due to the increasing importance of the peer group during this period. He suggests that as the young person develops they are much more able to manage and cope with loneliness.

Bullying and being bullied have been recognised as contributing to a number of health problems in adolescents. Olweus (1993, p. 9) proposed that 'a student is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students'. Bullying is therefore an intentional attempt to inflict harm through physical and/or psychological aggression. A further distinction was made by Olweus (1993) between direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying refers to physical violence such as hitting, kicking and pushing as well as things like name calling, using insulting expressions and making verbal threats (Cowie, 2011). Indirect bullying includes the deliberate exclusion of a person from a social group, disclosing secrets and anonymous cyberbullying via text messages, telephone or online (Cowie, 2011).

In addition to distinctions in the types of bullying that may be experienced, Olweus (1993) also suggests that there are different types of victims. Passive victims are often helpless, insecure, nervous and submissive, whereas provocative victims appear to provoke aggressive behaviour by irritating and annoying others as well as being anxious and defensive. A further category of 'bully-victim' has also been identified (Egan & Perry, 1998). This type of victim experiences a cyclical rejection as they are aggressive to peers but themselves are targets for peer aggression (Cowie, 2011). Being bullied can become a

significant issue for some young people, leading to loneliness, anxiety, low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness and powerlessness (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). This form of peer relationship can be damaging for young people because it undermines emotional health and wellbeing during an important developmental stage. For some young people the support of their friends when they are being bullied can show them the true value of friendship (Dunn, 2004).

In summary, friends become much more significant in this period and can be a positive influence providing companionship, intimacy and emotional support. They can also be a source of negative influence offering opportunities to participate in anti-social and deviant behaviour which may or may not continue into adulthood. Being rejected, isolated or bullied during this important developmental period can cause problems for the young person and without assistance or support these experiences can have a serious impact on the young person's life.

2.5 The development of intimate relationships in adolescence

Teenage intimate relationships are themselves considered an important developmental milestone, however, it was not until the turn of the 21st Century that research into their formation, nature and course began to gather pace (Bowen & Walker, 2015). There is a complex interconnection between the developing adolescent and the formation of intimate relationships. The changing individual is involved in a changing and developing relationship, most likely with a partner who themselves is developing (Hartup, 1999). It is now known that by the time young people reach the end of adolescence, the majority will have engaged in at least one intimate relationship (Collins et al. 2009; Carver et al. 2003; Furman & Hand, 2006). This section outlines the social context of teenage intimate relationships and provides an overview of their formation, nature and course.

The social context of teenage intimate relationships

Forces outside of the individual young person, including close relationships with parents and peers, as well as influences from culture and society, both shape and are shaped by adolescent intimate relationships (Brown et al. 1999). These forces contribute to both the emergence of intimate relationships as well as perceptions, understandings and expectations of them.

The family

Parents may influence teenage intimate relationships in a number of ways. From an attachment perspective, an infant's ideas about, and expectations of, relationships are shaped by the primary caregiver. The nature of this initial attachment is believed to predict the individual's relationships throughout the life course (Bowlby, 1969; Hinde, 1997; Potard et al. 2014). Individuals who develop secure early attachments may be more successful in forming close friendships and romantic relationships in later life. The security and stability

provided in the relationship with a caregiver can enhance self-esteem and self-worth allowing the young person opportunities to explore subsequent relationships confidently (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Giordano, 2003). The formation of intimate relationships for individuals who do not experience secure attachment may be more difficult (Hinde, 1997). Thus, parent-child attachments may play a significant role in adolescent's choices, experiences and behaviours in their own intimate relationships (Feeney et al. 2000).

In order to explore this area further it is necessary to draw upon work that has explored the relationship between attachment styles and intimate relationships in adulthood as this work informs understanding of intimate relationships and their development in adolescence. The attachment theory of adult love provides a useful way to apply the attachment framework to how intimate relationships are formed and conducted (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Inspired by Bowlby's (1969) and Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) ideas and findings about infant attachment, Hazan and Shaver (1987) applied attachment theory to adult love to explore whether attachment determines adult romantic attachment styles. They developed a questionnaire to distinguish three categories of adult attachment types – secure, avoidant and anxious/ambivalent. Secure individuals are confident and open in love and describe their relationships as trusting and happy. Avoidant individuals view themselves as independent and unpopular and believe that romantic love is hard to find. They fear intimacy and may be jealous. Anxious/ambivalent individuals lack confidence and may fall in love easily and show inappropriate self-disclosure, jealousy and low self-esteem (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). According to this approach, attachment is pivotal to the establishment of romantic relationships.

The limited evidence base on attachment and adolescent intimate relationships focuses upon adolescent sexual experiences and beliefs. Whilst this work does not focus specifically upon attachment and the formation of intimate relationships, adolescents intimate experiences reflect those identified in the attachment theory of love (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Adolescents with a secure attachment are more likely to be involved in an intimate relationship and for this relationship to be considered fairly serious. They have positive views of themselves and their partners and their relationship provides a space for them to learn about 'intimacy, communication, compromise and reliance on a peer as an attachment figure' (Tracy et al. 2003). Secure adolescents are less likely to be sexually aggressive or to experience sexual aggression and are unlikely to use drugs or alcohol in sexual situations. Avoidant adolescents', on the other hand, are the most likely to use alcohol and drugs prior to sexual activities which may be because they are uncomfortable with intimacy and unable to form close bonds with others. In adulthood this can lead to non-intimate and non-committed sexual encounters. Anxious/ambivalent adolescents fall in love often, are more likely to have sex at a younger age but may not enjoy sexual experiences because they fear rejection or abandonment. For young adolescent girls', an anxious/ambivalent attachment may contribute to their desire to enter into a romantic relationship (Tracy et al. 2003).

Attachment styles have also been linked to romantic views and dating styles in adolescence where adolescent's self-esteem and sense of self-worth are enhanced through attentive and responsive care-giving which can have a positive impact upon their confidence in relation to romantic experiences and relationships (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Gray & Steinberg, 1999). Additionally, flexible control, cohesion and respect for privacy have also been positively related to intimacy in late-adolescent relationships and adolescent decision making in relation to who to date (Collins et al. 2009, p. 643; Adams & Bersonzky, 2005, p. 318). In contrast, unskilled parenting and 'aversive family communications' have been connected to later aggression toward romantic partners (Collins et al. 2009). Witnessing or experiencing domestic violence as a child has also been associated with an increased risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator in later life, particularly amongst males (Slovak, 2007; Daigneault, 2009; McCoy et al. 2011, p.6).

Criticism has been levelled at the individualistic nature of attachment approaches which place emphasis upon a young person's early experiences as a model for their subsequent relationships, meaning that wider social influences are not taken into account (Giordano, 2003). A young person's social context, their gender, social class, social networks and environment may all potentially influence and shape their intimate relationships.

Friends and the peer group

In adolescence a young person moves away from their parents as their primary attachment figure and come to rely more on the support and opinion of their friends (Tracy et al. 2001). Earlier, it was noted that adolescence sees a shift in interest and interaction with young people of the opposite sex. Initially, young people begin thinking about the opposite sex before they begin spending time with them (Richards et al. 1998). Young women have been found to think about both same and opposite sex peers more than young men do.

The five-stage developmental model of adolescent peer group interaction proposed by Dunphy (1963) provides an explanation of how intimate relationships develop through the peer group in adolescence. The first stage sees the emergence of uni-sexual cliques which contain four to six close friends from similar backgrounds. During the second stage these uni-sexual male cliques and female cliques begin to socialise together in a group or crowd context. The third stage sees the formation of a larger, heterosexual clique. Clique leaders begin to interact with each other one-to-one and start to 'date'. In the fourth stage the group structure is reorganised and transformed into several heterosexual cliques. These are still small, intimate groups but they now contain young people of both sexes. The final stage sees the males and females within these cliques beginning to form couple relationships. As this happens, the larger crowd context that existed in the second stage disintegrates and is replaced by loosely associated groups of couples (Dunphy, 1963).

Drawing on Dunphy's (1963) model, Connolly and Goldberg (1999) and Brown (1999) have attempted to further explain the progression of romantic experiences during adolescence.

Four distinct stages can be identified when looking at the similarities of the two approaches: initiation, affiliation, intimate, and committed. In the initiation stage, a young person may feel attraction and desire but may have limited contact with their potential partner. Like Dunphy's (1963) early stages, in the affiliation stage opposite-sex individuals interact with one another in a group setting. This provides the opportunity to learn how to interact cross-gender and to identify a potential partner. Couples begin to move away from the peer group in the intimate stage, focusing their energy on the relationship with their partner. In the committed stage, there is shared emotional and physical intimacy, individuals display care giving behaviours, serving as attachment figures.

What the stage models suggest is that the peer group play a significant role in the development of intimate relationships in adolescence. They also offer a normative trajectory for intimate relationships that fall in line with key developmental milestones that are taking place, where early adolescence is characterised by 'group dating' which sees a young person entering into a short-lived relationship. In middle adolescence relationships becoming decreasingly group focused, there is a likelihood of multiple short-lived relationships with increasing sexual and emotional intimacy. Whilst late adolescence sees a progression to a single committed, exclusive and sexual relationship that is longer in duration (Meier & Allen, 2009; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003).

The nature of teenage intimate relationships

This section considers the range of relationships that young people might experience and the features that characterise them (Brown et al. 1999). This can be particularly challenging because of the variety and range of encounters that young people can experience, ranging from fantasies to casual encounters to long-term relationships. It is also important to note that there is no single normative pattern of development in the romantic domain since individuals vary in their development of romantic interests and when they begin to participate in intimate relationships and experiences (Bouchey & Furman, 2006, p. 315).

Considering the variety of intimate encounters that can occur during adolescence Collins et al. (2009, p. 632) make a useful distinction between romantic relationships and romantic experiences. Romantic relationships can be defined as voluntary, mutual ongoing interactions, while romantic experiences are a broader category incorporating romantic relationships, brief encounters and activities that may or may not directly involve a partner. Utilising this distinction is a useful starting point to explore the range and diversity of teenage intimate relationships their characteristics and features.

Romantic relationships

A romantic relationship is as an ongoing, voluntary interdependence between two people (Hays, 1988; Brown et al. 1999). Short-term dating relationships and long-term committed

relationships have both been described as type of romantic relationships (Brown et al. 1999). Romantic relationships are distinct from other personal relationships in a number of ways. Firstly, unlike family relationships, romantic relationships involve personal choice. Individuals choose to enter into the relationship and can end it at their own discretion (Brown et al. 1999). Secondly, romantic relationships involve some form of attraction. A number of factors are involved in the process of attraction; the physical proximity or 'propinquity' of a partner can aid the establishment of a romantic relationship (Festinger et al. 1950). Proximity can be established and supported through online interactions, although these can also undermine a relationship. Familiarity is important in the process of attraction, as individuals show a preference for people who are familiar to them. Physical attractiveness, similarity and complementarity, where a partner possesses the characteristics that we lack, are also significant. In addition, there is typically a sexual aspect to attraction which can be intense and passionate and may present itself via some form of sexual behaviour (Brown et al. 2009, p. 3). However, in some cases there may not be any sexual feeling at all.

According to Collins et al. (2009) their definition of romantic relationships can be applied to same-gender, as well as mixed-gender, relationships. Romantic relationships are argued as being more common during adolescence than has been usually assumed, and, compared to other peer relationships, romantic relationships typically have a distinctive intensity. Young people, particularly girls, invest a great deal of time and emotion in the person they become involved with (Rosen, 2004, p. 8). As romantic relationships intensify, young people may engage in sexual activity as a physical expression of intimacy and commitment. Indeed, romantic relationships are noted as being the context in which the majority of adolescents' sexual behaviour occurs (Manning et al. 2000).

Romantic experiences

A 'romantic experience' refers to a range of varied romantic activities and encounters (Collins et al. 2009). These can be further distinguished between encounters that do not include a partner and those which do. Young people may interact with potential romantic partners and have fantasies and 'crushes' on 'impossible others', such as celebrities and peers higher up in the social hierarchy (Brown et al. 1999). Whilst a relationship may not transpire from these one sided attractions, they provide an opportunity for young people to explore their feelings with friends and learn about relationship expectations without actually being in a relationship (Brown et al. 1999). Romantic relationships are therefore also a form of relationship experience, meaning that they are distinct from certain intimate encounters but share similarities with others. This highlights the blurred boundaries and fluid nature of these relationships which young people begin to negotiate during adolescence.

Activities, from kissing to sexual intercourse, whilst commonly associated with romantic relationships are defined as romantic experiences when they take place in a more casual manner. There a range of different encounters which have been defined in this way; such as 'friends with benefits', defined as friends having a sexual relationship without commitment or feelings towards each other (Karlsen & Traeen, 2013) and 'hooking up', 'one night stands' and 'casual sex' which all refer to engaging in sexual activity for one night with an acquaintance or stranger (England et al. 2007; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Grello et al. 2010). In addition to being defined by their sexual nature, these experiences differ from romantic relationships because the individuals involved in them do not define the relationship as romantic or consider their partner to be their boyfriend or girlfriend (Grello et al. 2010). Early romantic experiences might include both same-sex and other-sex partners which may provide a cover for a minority sexual identity or help clarify their identity (Collins et al. 2009, p. 637).

The distinction between romantic relationships and romantic experiences provides a useful way to differentiate these various intimate experiences by their specific features. However, these distinctions may not capture the nuances of different kinds of relationships because they group together a broad range of diverse experiences on the basis of surface similarities (Diamond et al. 1999). In order to understand adolescent intimate relationships it is important to consider further distinctions that have been made which provide insight into their perceived structural and functional differences.

Typology of intimate peer relationships

A typology of four distinct varieties of adolescent relationships was put forward by Diamond et al. (1999, p. 175). The four categories - sexual relationships, dating relationships, passionate friendships, and romantic relationships - are based on the motives, characteristics and functions of these different relationships.

Sexual relationships are defined as ongoing peer relationships characterised by sexual activity, which refers to a continuum of behaviours driven by sexual desire and aimed at sexual pleasure (Diamond et al. 1999). Sexual relationships typically lack the emotional attachment found in romantic relationships, there is no expectation for the relationship to continue and it can end with little notice.

Dating relationships involve a reciprocal romantic interest which is shown publicly through participation in shared activities or 'dates' which often take place in group contexts (Diamond et al. 1999, p. 184). Dating marks a young person's entry into the adult domain of heterosexual relationships, and young people who date may be considered popular and attractive by their peers, which in itself may motivate their desire to date. One of the defining features of dating relationships is that the individuals within it have not yet

committed to a sexual or romantic relationship. This distinction is important and the authors make the point that although dating is a relationship in itself, it can form part of a transitional process where, as reciprocal intimacy and mutual validation grow, a committed romantic relationship develops (Diamond et al. 1999).

A passionate friendship is a close but non-sexual relationship between two friends, most commonly females, which is characterised by trust, dependable companionship, intimacy, understanding and acceptance (Diamond et al. 1999, Buhrmester & Furman, 1986). Physical closeness and touching, such as affectionate stroking, holding or cuddling, are also features of passionate friendships. They differ from the other types of relationships within the typology since they evolve over time, rather than being sought out. Although they share some similarities in regards to motivation, functions and characteristics, Diamond et al. (1999) argue that they are conceptually distinct.

Romantic relationships involved a mutual agreement by both participants to sustain the relationship and there is public acknowledgement of the 'couple' (Diamond et al. 1999). This is one way in which romantic relationships can be distinguished from dating relationships. Romantic relationships may be sought out by young people for the reciprocal intimacy, security and comfort that they offer and there may or may not be a sexual component to the relationship (Diamond et al. 1999). Whereas dating marks the entry into the adult domain of relationships, romantic relationships represent a clear marker of adulthood and a growing sense of maturity that is demonstrated to peers and parents through the sustained commitment shown by participants.

Defining teenage intimate relationships in this thesis

The varied terminology that is used to describe the different types of adolescent experiences, encounters and relationships is both useful and problematic. The terms and distinctions that have been made can be helpful in understanding the different motivations, characteristics and functions of the diverse range of relationships that a young person might enter into. Problems arise when trying to disentangle one relationship from another because, whilst they do have some distinct features, they also share similarities meaning that the boundaries between one relationship type and another can be unclear. This is compounded by the transitional nature of some relationship types, making the boundaries more fluid and blurred.

Drawing upon the distinctions made by Collins et al. (2009) and the typology developed by Diamond et al. (1999), in this thesis the term 'intimate relationships' is used. This term incorporates the range of young people's intimate relationships across the spectrum of purely sexual relationships, transitory relationships which are short in duration, casual or dating relationships and committed, romantic relationships. The use of one term is intended

at aiding brevity, and reflects that intimate partner violence can occur across the spectrum of adolescent relationship types.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the developmental changes that occur during the adolescent period, situating these changes within the wider social context that a young person develops. The impacts of these developmental changes have been considered and the role of family and friends during this period were explored. The range of intimate relationships and encounters that young people can experience during adolescence were discussed and the link between teenage intimate relationships and close relationships with others, such as family and peers was examined. This chapter provides a foundation for subsequent chapters as it is during the course of their development that adolescents are likely to experience their first intimate relationships, making it a time when young people may experience or engage in relationship violence.

Chapter 3: Defining teenage intimate partner violence

The previous chapter provided an overview of teenage intimate relationships within the context of developmental changes that young people experience during this period. This chapter seeks to explore what teenage intimate partner violence is understood to be. This is especially important as the way that violence is understood and measured directly impacts upon the ways that victims and perpetrators are conceptualised and intervention programmes are developed and delivered (McCarry, 2009).

In order to explore definitions, it is pertinent to place the issue within the broader historical context from which it emerged. The chapter therefore begins by examining how domestic violence came to be recognised and placed on the public and political agenda. Official, research and practice definitions and explanations of teenage intimate partner violence are considered. The way that partner violence is conceptualised and understood by young people is then explored. The chapter is concluded with an outline and justification of the definition of violence being used within this thesis.

3.1 Historical context

The timeline below illustrates some of the landmark moments in social, policy and legal recognition of domestic violence in England in Wales since the 1970s to the present day. It shows how domestic violence in adult relationships was recognised as a problem of importance and how it was placed on agendas of social and political change. Considering the historical context of partner violence allows the relationship between understandings of adult partner violence and teenage intimate partner violence to be critically examined.

1971	First women's refuge opened in Chiswick
1974	National Women's Aid Federation set up
1976	**Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act** - First piece of domestic violence specific legislation aimed at providing protection for women experiencing violence from a husband or partner. - Enabled women to obtain a court order against their husband or partner without divorce or separation proceedings. - First time that married and unmarried women were treated as equals in legislation related to their shared home or relationship (Hague & Malos, 1998).
1978	**Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates Courts Act** - Magistrates were able to grant personal protection orders and exclusion or ouster orders, victim must be married to perpetrator.
1983	**Matrimonial Homes Act** - Provided civil injunctions against domestic violence, only applies if couples are

	married.
1989	**Children Act**
	- Could be used to obtain an injunction to protect mother and child.
1993	**UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women**
	- Recognition of violence against women as a violation of women's fundamental human rights.
1994	**Criminal Justice and Public Order Act**
	- Rape in marriage becomes a criminal offence.
1996	**Family Law Act**
	- Provided a single set of remedies, consolidating previous legislation governing injunction and protection orders.
1998	**Crime and Disorder Act**
	- Duty placed on local authorities and the police (multi-agency working) to tackle crime at the local level through provision of a Community Safety Strategy.
1999	*Living without Fear* **campaign**
	- British Government renounce acceptability of intimate partner violence.
2003	*Safety and Justice* **consultation paper**
	- Described the government's strategic approach to domestic violence (Bowen, 2011).
	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).
	- Brought together local statutory and voluntary agencies to protect women at high risk of repeat domestic violence.
2004	**Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act**
	- Included a range of measures aimed to increase the safety of victims of domestic violence and linked some criminal and civil remedies.
	Children Act
	- Provided a legal underpinning for Every Child Matters: Change for Children. Established a stronger mandate for how all agencies should work together to safeguard and promote children's welfare and protect them from harm.
2005-6	**Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs)**
	- Court systems involving partnership between police, prosecutors, court staff, probation service and specialist support services for victims.
	Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)
	- Trained specialists providing independent advocacy and supporting high-risk victims (Strickland, 2012).
2010	**Call to End Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

2013	- British coalition government launch a paper outlining their ambition and guiding principles to tackle violence against women and girls (Home Office, 2010). - As part of the Call to end VAWG the policy definition of domestic violence was widened to include 16 and 17 year olds and coercive control. - The government launched the *This is Abuse* campaign aimed at preventing 13 to 18 year olds from becoming victims and perpetrators of violence in their intimate relationships. Broadcast on a range of platforms.
2014	**Clare's Law** - Gives people the right to ask police about a partner's history of domestic violence.

Table 1: Timeline of social, policy and legal changes relating to domestic violence

The timeline highlights how changes in law, policy and practice have tended to focus upon and respond to the gendered nature of domestic violence. Although there remains a debate within the literature about the degree to which adult domestic violence is gendered, increasing recognition of adult domestic violence as a gendered phenomenon over the last three decades is widely recognised as being driven by feminist research and activism (Harne & Radford, 2008: Featherstone & Trinder, 1997).

Second wave feminism/the women's movement

Prior to the 1970s, domestic violence was considered primarily a family or private matter, not something requiring public attention or state intervention (Laird McCue, 2008). The silence which surrounded the issue meant that women experiencing violence from a partner were limited in who they could turn to for help and support (Hague & Malos, 1998). The visibility of domestic violence emerged from a wider movement seeking change for women in many domains of their lives, including employment, family life, reproduction, mental health and sex (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Central to this movement was the argument that male domination and power permeated all areas of women's lives. This power and domination was considered to be historically constructed and sustained through cultural beliefs, economic segregation and institutional practices (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Feminists viewed domestic violence as arising from this broader male domination and power over women, and the resultant unequal position of women within society (Hague & Malos, 1998).

Feminism made significant contributions to domestic violence policy and practice, bringing to light different forms of violence experienced by women, identifying men as primarily the perpetrators and conceptualising domestic violence as resulting from unequal power relations between men and women (Hanmer & Saunders, 1984; Kelly, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; UNIFEM, 2006). Although a great deal of change has taken place in the last

40 years, some feminists are critical of criminal justice and policy responses which they claim do not effectively address violence against women and they argue that there is still a lack of recognition of domestic violence as a significant social problem with serious repercussions for families and relationships more broadly (Harwin & Brown, 2000). Criticism has however been levelled at feminist approaches for purportedly inflating the number of female victims of domestic violence, in response feminists have accused critics of a backlash against women experiencing violence from a partner (Young, 2005; Girard, 2009). A further limitation of feminist theorising, it has been argued, is that it does not fully explain violence perpetrated by women instead tending to focus upon female violence as self-defence and neglecting the issue of female perpetrated violence within and outside of intimate relationships (Nolet-Bos, 1999). However, feminist ideology is recognised as the single most influential theory in relation to practice and the development of intervention programmes (Bowen, 2011).

The central tenet of feminist explanations is that domestic violence arises from gender inequality; however there are a range of feminist theories which differ in explaining the role that gender plays in understanding and explaining domestic violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Yodanis, 2004). Broadly speaking, explanations tend to belong to either radical/standpoint feminism which sees domestic violence as resulting from the power men exercise over women within the context of a patriarchal society, or liberal feminist theories which focus upon role differences between men and women to explain female oppression (Featherstone & Trinder, 1997; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988). Featherstone and Trinder (1997) have provided an in depth analysis and critique of current feminist theorising. They acknowledge the contribution of feminist approaches to putting the issue on research and policy agendas but go on to suggest that dominant feminist theorising may not be engaging with the complexities of the lives of women, men and children because certain voices and perspectives are excluded from feminist understandings and analyses of violence (Featherstone & Trinder, 1997).

Taking forward feminist theorising, Featherstone and Trinder (1997) emphasise that women's voices should continue to be taken seriously. However, they suggest that in order to fully understand domestic violence, research needs to include all individuals who are involved (Featherstone & Trinder, 1997; Johnstone & Campbell, 1993). This approach, it is suggested, may help to develop more integrated understandings of the relationship between gender, class, 'race' and age which in turn could inform approaches to domestic violence and enable practitioners to make more informed decisions (Featherstone & Trinder, 1997; Johnston & Campbell, 1993). Feminist criminology provides a useful framework for taking into account the views of all parties involved. The dual focus of feminist criminology upon gender and crime provides opportunities to examine the way that gender shapes experiences and notions of domestic violence (crime) from the perspectives of those who are directly affected (Chesney-Lind, 2006).

3.2 The nature of teenage intimate partner violence

At present, there is no uniform definition of teenage intimate partner violence (Bowen & Walker, 2015). There has therefore been a tendency to rely on broad terminology and/or definitions of domestic violence in adult relationships in research, policy and practice responses to violence in teenager's intimate relationships. This section sets out the range of terminology and definitions that have been applied to understand and respond to teenage intimate partner violence. It will critically assess the applicability of current definitions by examining their usefulness in capturing the range of relationships that violence can occur within and the different types of violence that might be experienced.

Official definitions

The first statutory definition of domestic violence was introduced in the mid-1970s when the civil justice Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976 was passed (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hague & Malos, 1998). In this act, 'domestic' referred to spouses or heterosexual cohabitants (Burton, 2008). As domestic violence came to be better understood, legal definitions were broadened to include 'associated persons' such as current or former spouses, heterosexual and same sex cohabitants, civil partnerships, parents or those with parental responsibility for a child or those in a long-term relationship (Reece, 2006, p. 771). Presently, the extent to which 'associated persons' would extend to young people's intimate relationships is not entirely clear (Bowen & Walker, 2015). This issue is complicated in two ways; firstly, beyond cohabitation there is no legal definition of teenage/dating relationships. The second, related issue, is that in the UK there is no statutory offence for domestic violence or, by extension, for violence in teenagers' intimate relationships (Bowen, 2011).

In 2004 the UK government introduced a single definition of domestic violence. Although this is not a statutory definition it is used by government departments to inform policy development and by the police, Crown Prosecution Service and UK Border Agency to inform the identification of domestic violence cases (Home Office, 2011, p. 6). Domestic violence was defined as:

> Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality (Home Office, 2011).

Within this definition an adult was defined as any person aged 18 years or over, and family members included mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter and grandparents (whether directly or indirectly related). It also included so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and victims were not confined to one gender or ethnic group (Home Office, 2011, p. 6). This definition was considered to be useful as it captured the

breadth of violent behaviour that can be experienced within relationships (Bowen, 2011). The term 'domestic' was defined much more broadly and included current or former partners or family members; however, it excluded young people under the age of 18. This was potentially problematic when considering what was known about the extent of violence in teenagers' intimate relationships (Smith et al. 2011).

In 2013, following a consultation on the cross-government definition of domestic violence as part of the Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan, the definition was further amended. Two important changes were made to the earlier definition, firstly coercive behaviour was included and secondly, it was widened to include 16 and 17 year olds for the first time. Although imposing a lower age limit was recognised as a step in the right direction in acknowledging young people's experiences, the amended definition is still limited considering that many young people are likely to enter into an intimate relationship well before they reach 16, therefore the risk of violence is posed earlier than this definition accounts for. There appears to be a disconnect between legal and policy definitions of violence which exclude some or all young people and/or their relationships and the accountability of young people to face criminal sanction based on the age of legal responsibility (Bowen & Walker, 2015).

Practice definitions

Definitions used in practice are clearly important, since they have the potential to impact upon prevention and intervention strategies and the way services are designed and delivered (Bowen & Walker, 2015). Following the widening of the UK policy definition of domestic violence to include 16 and 17 year olds, the Home Office published a document providing information for local areas. The aim of this document was help local areas to identify gaps in services and consider how the extended definition may impact on existing provision (Home Office, 2013). The guidance provides further in-depth information about the forms and experience of violence and issues considered as being unique to teenagers' intimate relationships. What this guidance therefore illuminates are the limitations of the present policy definition in capturing the nuances of violence experienced by young people. Furthermore, at present there is limited evidence into how this definition is being interpreted and operationalised in practice or whether this guidance is actually being used.

One of the best known and widely used models of adult domestic violence used in practice is the Duluth model or the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project developed in Duluth, Minnesota, USA (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Central to the Duluth model is the Power and Control Wheel which is used to represent different elements of intimate partner violence (Pence & Paymar, 1993). The wheel was developed from focus groups with women about their experiences of being 'battered' by men. The most common abusive behaviours and tactics which were used against these women were documented and the wheel was devised

to capture the most experienced forms of violence (DAIP, 2011). Power and control is placed at the centre of the wheel and the pattern of actions/behaviours used to intentionally control or intimidate a partner form the spokes. The use of physical and sexual violence appears round the rim of the wheel to emphasise that this violence underpins non-physical tactics, holding it all together (DAIP, 2011; Bowen, 2011).

Recently a Teen Power and Control Wheel was adapted from the Power and Control Wheel developed by DAIP to explain the different ways that control might be experienced in teenagers intimate relationships.
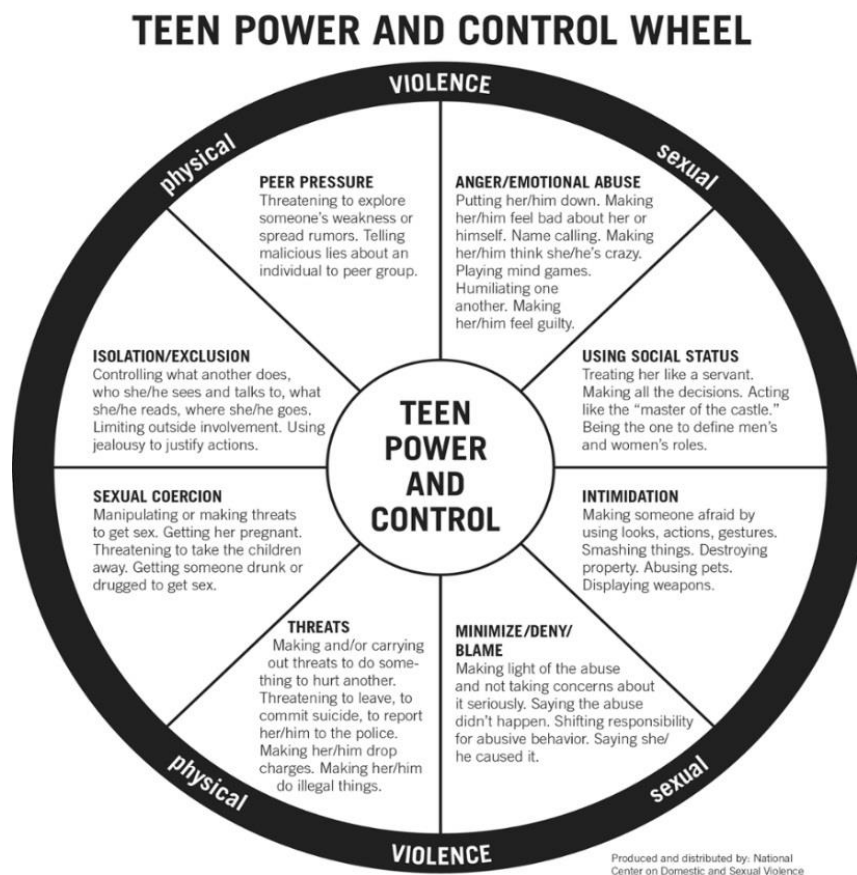
Figure 2: Teen Power and Control Wheel (National Centre for Victims of Crime, 2012).

The Teen Power and Control Wheel is set out the same as the adult wheel, however the content of the spokes differs between the two models. The first, and perhaps most significant difference, is that the Teen Wheel uses gender neutral terminology referring to both him/her whereas the adult wheel is intentionally gendered referring exclusively to women, as it is argued to represent women's lived experiences of violence from a male partner (DAIP, 2011). As such, the teen wheel refers to using social status which is a move away from 'using male privilege' which is used to refer to the same behaviours on the adult wheel. Sectors describing how 'using children' and 'using economic abuse' are characteristics of male perpetrated domestic violence appear on the adult wheel but these are either not included as distinct sectors or are incorporated into other spokes on the teen

wheel - economic abuse does not appear at all and using children appears within the sexual coercion spoke. The adult wheel refers to 'sexual abuse' which includes forcing sexual activity with a female partner, whereas the teen wheel describes sexual coercion which forced acts of a sexual nature may be a part of. A further significant distinction is the inclusion of peer pressure on the teen wheel.

The Teen Power and Control wheel may potentially capture some of the issues which are specific to young people, reflecting the extent of different behaviours that might be identified as violent in teenagers' intimate relationships. However, there is limited information about how the teen version was developed to reflect the kinds of behaviours that young people might experience (Bowen and Walker, 2015). There also appears to be little in the way of guidance as to how it can be used in practice with young people and to date there has been no critical analysis of the teen wheel's effectiveness as an educational tool. Consequently, its validity is argued to be unclear at present (Bowen & Walker, 2015).

Research definitions

In the UK, teenage intimate partner violence has only recently been recognised as a social issue; consequently it has not received the same degree of research, policy and practice attention as adult domestic violence (Barter et al. 2009). However, the issue has received considerable attention in the US and Europe where the general term 'dating violence' has been adopted to capture the range of violent behaviours that can occur in adolescents' relationships (Teten et al. 2009). This section considers the definition of 'dating violence' and its applicability to the UK context.

Dating violence

It has previously been noted that variations in terminology and definition exist and this is also the case with regards to dating violence. Synthesising a number of varied definitions, Sugarman and Hotaling (1989) defined dating violence as the perpetration or threat of physical force or restraint by at least one individual with the intent of causing injury or pain within the context of exclusive or non-exclusive same-sex or opposite sex dating or courtship relationships. This definition, they argue, captures acts or threats of violence regardless of whether they result in injury. The strength of this definition lies firstly in its focus upon the nature of the act in relation to threats of as well as actual perpetration of violence and the inclusion of the intent of the violence. Secondly, the range of intimate relationships and encounters that are encompassed within this definition captures the variation in the sorts of relationships that young people might experience violence. However, it excludes psychological and sexual violence. At the time they were writing, Sugarman and Hotaling (1989) suggest psychological abuse had not been effectively

operationalised, whereas sexual abuse was intentionally left out in order to focus their review upon a single phenomenon (physical violence).

Others have more recently delineated dating violence to describe violent behaviour within the three categories of emotional/psychological or verbal abuse, physical and sexual violence (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999; Teten et al. 2009), whilst Saltzman et al. (1999) add a fourth category of threat of physical or sexual violence to their definition. Commonly, dating violence is theorised and researched using the three forms of violent behaviour noted above. The table below provides an outline of each of these three subtypes of violence and the kinds of behaviours that have been attributed to each. This is not an exhaustive list, rather it provides an indication of the wide range of acts associated with each form of violence and captured in research into the phenomenon.

Subtype of violent behaviour	Definitions	Associated acts
Emotional, psychological or verbal	Aggressive acts that may cause emotional trauma (Saltzman et al. 2009). A form of violence in and of itself, but needs to occur within the context of an intimate relationship with other forms of violence to be defined as violence (Glass et al. 2003).	Verbal intimidation or threatened or completed acts of violence (Saltzman et al. 2009). Isolating a partner from friends or family, controlling or jealous behaviour, acts of dominance such as asserting power over decision making, put-downs and name-calling (Tolman, 1989). Threats, insults and stalking. Threats include threats to hurt a partner, damaging something that belongs to a partner, throwing objects and missing, almost hitting a partner but stopping short and holding a weapon to a partner (Draucker & Martsolf, 2010). Stalking includes spying on a partner's movements, insisting a partner can tell you where they are, when and who with. Verbal abuse such as swearing at a partner, using a hostile tone and putting partner down (Fernandez-Gonzalez et

		al. 2012).
		Spreading lies or rumours, sharing private information or images to damage a partner's relationship with friends (Leadbeater et al. 2008).

Harassing or intimidating a partner using technology. E.g texting, calling, bullying, monitoring using social networks and mobile telephone (Draucker & Martsolf, 2010). |
| Physical | Intentional use of physical force with the potential to harm or kill (Saltzman et al. 1999).

Any act which causes pain and injury (Halpern et al. 2001; Sesar et al. 2012). | Hitting, slapping, stabbing, choking, or otherwise assaulting a partner (Teten et al. 2009).

Slapping, hitting, scratching, pushing, kicking, punching, burning, beating someone up, pushing or slamming someone against a wall, hair pulling, spanking, throwing objects, assault with a weapon (Foshee et al. 2001; Foshee et al. 2007; Foshee et al. 2014; Bonomi et al. 2012; Halpern et al. 2001; Sesar et al. 2012). |
| Sexual | Nonconsensual sex or attempted sexual penetration, unwanted sexual contact or noncontact acts (Basile & Saltzman, 2002). Includes incidents where a partner is unable to consent due to age or illness or unable to refuse such as through the use of physical violence or threats (Basile & Saltzman, 2002; Bonomi et al. 2012).

Physically forced sexual acts and/or sexual contact including acts where willingness cannot be | Rape, attempted rape and other forms of sexual coercion (Rickert et al. 2004).

Unwanted sexual touching or kissing, forcing one's partner to do sexual things, stopping partner from using birth control (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2012).

Sabotaging birth control (Miller et al. 2007)

Sexting (taking and sending nude or semi-nude photos via digital media, typically mobile phones). Teenagers |

	communicated (e.g. disability) (Glass et al. 2003).	may feel pressured to send photos to a partner (Associated Press & MTV, 2011). Threats of forwarding photos can be used to control and manipulate a partner (Futures without Violence, 2009).

Table 2: Descriptions of subtypes of intimate partner violence

The table highlights that each subtype of violence covers a wide range of behaviours, illustrating the complex nature of this phenomenon. A young person might experience one type of violence or a combination, in isolation or repeatedly in a range of different relationship types. One of the problems in research into prevalence rates is that dating violence can be used to refer to physical or emotional/psychological or sexual violence or it may include all three forms of violence (Price & Byers, 1999). Herein lies one of the challenges of defining and operationalising teenage intimate partner violence – definitions need to capture the complexity of the violence and its dynamics as well as the range of intimate relationships that it can occur within.

The term dating violence has been criticised for being too general and as such concealing the nuances of violence and its causes (Teten et al. 2009). However, no alternative definition has been put forward by those who criticise its use, instead the phrase has been used to speak generally about violence and more specific terminology is used when referring to subtypes of violence (Teten et al. 2009, p. 924). The lack of alternative terms has been acknowledged by Glass et al. (2003, p. 228) who suggest that 'dating' is used in research because adults (primarily researchers) understanding and knowledge of teenagers intimate relationships is limited, and since researchers are yet to establish a more appropriate terminology, dating violence continues to be used. Indeed, Glass et al. (2003) argue that the term may also be meaningless to young people, and there is potentially support for this claim when we consider the dearth of research into how young people understand and make sense of their intimate relationships. A further issue is the extent to which dating is applicable within the UK context as it tends to be dismissed in research on the basis that it is not a term that young people use or recognise, however there is little evidence to justify or support this claim (Barter et al. 2009).

Although dating violence has typically been used to describe the range of violent behaviours that can occur in a dating relationship, other terms which vary in their comprehensiveness and applicability to teenagers intimate relationships do exist (Teten et al. 2009). In regards to adolescents, the term (teen) dating abuse has also been used in research. Abuse is sometimes used interchangeably in studies measuring dating violence, again reflecting the move between general and specific terms (Foshee et al. 2007). Explaining why some researchers use the term abuse rather than violence when referring to adult relationships,

Lombard and Mcmillan (2013) suggest that the term encapsulates the range of abuses that women may experience beyond physical violence. Less commonly used terms are domestic violence and domestic abuse which are more commonly associated with violence in adult relationships. Similarly, intimate partner violence, which refers to violence which happens in the context of intimate or romantic relationships, also tends to be used in research to refer to and describe adult violent relationships (Teten et al. 2009). The variation in terminology is problematic. Firstly, in order to meaningfully synthesise what we know about the phenomenon, clear research and policy definitions are required (Bowen & Walker, 2015). Secondly, in order for young people to recognise their experience they need to have a clear way to name it and an understanding of the connotations and meanings of the terms they use and those used in practice (Lombard & Mcmillan, 2013). The lack of universal definition therefore remains a challenge for researchers.

Taking on board the limitations of present definitions and a lack of 'appropriate terminology', in their UK project exploring young people's experiences of partner violence Barter et al. (2009) worked closely with a group of young people (all aged 14) to establish terminology that was relevant and applicable to teenagers. Barter and McCarry (2013) stress the importance of using terminology that young people consider as being accessible and appropriate and their Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) were encouraged to use their own words and terms for relationships and violence (McCarry, 2012). In collaboration with the YPAG, the term 'partner violence' was agreed as being applicable to a range of intimate relationships, capturing long-term relationships to one-off encounters (Barter & McCarry, 2013). However, there is little discussion of how their YPAG conceptualised or defined violence, rather the author's state that they drew upon Stanko's (2000) broad definition of violence which incorporates emotional, verbal, physical and sexual acts of violence (Barter et al. 2009, p. 12). Whilst young people did have some input into determining the most appropriate terminology to explore this topic, there was still an apparent tendency to rely upon subtypes of violence used in research to measure teenagers' experiences.

What is known about violence in teenagers intimate relationships indicates that young women are more likely to experience serious physical and sexual violence (Foshee 1996; Silverman et al. 2001; Ackard et al. 2003; Ariagga & Foshee, 2004; Barter et al. 2009) and for this violence to have a greater impact upon them than young men (Lavoie et al. 2000; Sears et al. 2006; Barter et al. 2009). However, the existing conceptualisations and definitions that have been outlined thus far all lack reference to the gendered nature of violence and the age-specific context within which it occurs (Firmin, 2013).

Peer victimisation/peer violence/peer-on-peer abuse

One way to more effectively capture issues that are specific to young people comes from theorising about peer victimisation/violence. This body of work is based on the premise that children and young people experience violence from other children and young people, including peers and siblings and extending to intimate partners (Finkelhor et al. 2008). It is argued that peer violence is regarded differently to violence in general on the basis of moral and philosophical presumptions abut children and young people (Finkelhor et al. 2008, p. 94). As a result, peer violence can be trivialised as less serious and its impact and/or harmfulness diminished (Barter, 2006; Barter & Berridge, 2011).

Drawing upon developmental victimology, Finkelhor (2008, p. 23) defines interpersonal victimisation as 'harm that comes to individuals because other *human actors* have behaved in ways that *violate social norms'* which results in increased potential for traumatic impact. Using this definition Finkelhor (2008) explains how victimisation changes across the developmental span of childhood, stressing that although children can experience the same victimisations as adults, they also suffer victimisation particular to their status as children and young people (Finkelhor, 2008). A characteristic of childhood, and to a certain extent adolescence, is dependency, which is partly a function of social and psychological immaturity. Whilst the peer victimisation approach is useful in regards to placing the issue of partner violence within a more age-specific context, it is a fairly broad approach which lacks specific reference to who does what to who and the acts or types of behaviours that 'violate social norms' to cause 'harm'.

A particularly useful concept which emerged from the interpersonal victimisation aspect of the peer violence approach is what Finkelhor et al. (2007; Finkelhor, 2008) call 'poly-victims'. This term refers to multiply victimised children who experience several types of victimisation in different episodes on various occasions (Finkelhor, 2008). Their victimisation can become so frequent that it becomes more of a condition then an event or act (Finkelhor, 2007). Different types of violence were found to be linked and overlapping by Swahn and colleagues (2008) where five forms of violence behaviours – dating violence perpetration, dating violence victimisation, peer violence perpetration, peer violence victimisation and suicide attempts – were associated. Of particular interest was the finding that within relationship contexts of violence (associations between dating violence perpetration and dating violence victimisation, or peer violence perpetration and peer violence victimisation) were shown to have the strongest associations (Swahn et al. 2008). These findings appear to support the claim that there is an interrelationship and overlap between violence in teenagers' intimate relationships and other kinds of victimisation (Radford, 2012). However, Swahn et al.'s (2008) has been criticised for looking at a limited set of victimisations (Hamby et al. 2012).

Results from the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV), which was undertaken in the US in 2011, looks at a much wider range of victimisation and found a clear

association between physical teen dating violence and other types of victimisation, providing further support to the polyvictimisation concept (Hamby et al. 2012). Similarly, within the UK Radford et al. (2013) found maltreated or otherwise victimised children and young people to be at increased risk of further victimisation. Findings from the NatSCEV and the prevalence study undertaken by Radford et al. (2013) are discussed in-depth within the next chapter. The poly-victims approach suggests that a more comprehensive, holistic definition and approach to measuring and assessing young people is required to take into account and capture the broader range of victimisations that a young person might experience (Finkelhor, 2007).

Exploring pre-existing conceptualisations of peer-on-peer abuse (Firmin's terminology), Firmin (2013) notes how children and young people can simultaneously perpetrate violence and be victims. She explains how children and young people exist in multiple social fields, within which relationships with peers are also navigated (Firmin, 2013). At every level, from the social field (UK society) to the social agent (peer group) to the social agent/habitus (child) broader gender and power inequalities may define the social fields within which the young person is developing, forming their sense of self and negotiating peer and intimate relationships. Looking at peer-on-peer abuse from an individual level whilst situating it within broader hierarchies of inequality and power may help us to more fully understand the behaviour of young people and the impact the social fields within which they are situated have on their experiences (Firmin, 2013). Drawing on some of the limitations of existing definitions, and the perceived importance of the social contexts within which children and young people's experiences are negotiated, Firmin (2013, p. 50) proposed the following working definition:

> Physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised within young people's relationships, characterised by inequalities of power, and influenced by gendered hierarchies, within and external to their relationships.

This definition specifically states the subtypes of violence and the age-specific relationships within which this violence can occur. Unlike other conceptualisations which focus solely on the violent act and/or violence dynamics, Firmin's (2013) definition refers to the social and gender inequalities which underpin and impact upon young people's experiences of violence as victims and perpetrators. This conceptualisation of peer violence therefore acknowledges that different forms of violence may be experienced in different ways in different stages of the life cycle, highlighting issues that are specific to young people and situating their experiences within their broader social fields (Firmin, 2013).

3.3 Young people's conceptualisations of violence

Having considered the way that violence is conceptualised in research, policy and practice it is pertinent to explore how young people themselves explain what violence is and involves.

This is important for a number of reasons, firstly it allows us to understand how young people view and make sense of violence, which in turn is significant as this understanding may enable them to recognise it is happening to them and do something about it. Secondly, it enables us to gauge the extent to which current definitions are reflected in teenager's descriptions and explanations of violence. Thirdly, it allows for critical analysis of current definitions and existing prevention and intervention strategies in light of young people's understanding and attitudes towards this phenomenon (McCarry, 2009, p. 343).

Reflecting the range of definitions used in research and practice, young people have been found to recognise and understand that domestic violence is not limited to physical violence but encompasses a range of sexual, physical and emotional/psychological violent acts and behaviours (McCarry, 2009, p. 331). It has however been recognised that young people's definitions of violence are shaped and underpinned by the specific context within which the violence occurs. McCarry (2009) explored young people's views and opinions of abuse and violence in interpersonal (heterosexual) relationships. The aim of the research was to question young people directly about their views of domestic abuse in general and what they thought were the reasons for it, with a particular focus on exploring young people's attitudes and understandings of interpersonal male violence and abuse (McCarry, 2009, p. 327-8). Thirteen focus groups were undertaken with 77 young people (43 female and 34 male) aged between 15 and 18 from ten comprehensive schools in Glasgow. The focus groups were composed of four single sex groups and nine mixed sex groups. The rationale for the focus group compositions was to allow an assessment of whether the gender composition of the groups would affect the way participants responded (McCarry, 2009). Vignettes were used to explore young people's views of controlling behaviour and abuse in intimate relationships, the vignette contained a fictional scenario of a young man dictating what clothes his girlfriend can wear (McCarry, 2009, p. 329).

A contradiction was identified in young people's views in relation to what interpersonal violence is and about who is doing what to whom. Of particular significance was the finding that whilst none of the young people agreed with the use of violence, there was an acceptance, normalisation and justification of male violence against female partners (McCarry, 2009, p. 340-1). Summarising this finding, McCarry (2009, p. 341) notes that normative masculine gender roles were used to legitimate and justify the use of violence. Totten (2003) has argued that belief in, and justification of, male violence can increase the likelihood of young men using abuse and violence in their own relationships. McCarry's (2009) research therefore highlights that whilst young people have an awareness of the range of violent behaviours that can be experienced within intimate relationships, their attitudinal and ideological views of violence are linked to an acceptance of male power and entitlement (McCarry, 2009, p. 343).

Furthering this finding, McCarry (2010) used the data from these 13 focus groups to explore and analyse young people's attitudes of gendered interpersonal abuse and violence and

young people's perceptions of gender roles and specifically 'masculinity'. McCarry (2010, p. 18) wanted to examine how young people conceptualise the role of women and men within intimate relationships because, she suggests, attitudes toward gender are critical in understanding young people's views of what intimate partner violence is, who perpetrates it and why. In each focus group participants were asked to divide into two clusters with one requested to write down words they associated with 'women' and the other to write words related to 'men'. Following this task young people were asked more direct questions about domestic violence and they were presented with the vignette described previously (McCarry, 2010, p. 21). Whilst the research highlighted that young people felt that in general violence was wrong except in some circumstances, such as self-defence, male violence was legitimised as something that men 'did' and as a normative aspect of young, adolescent and adult masculinity (McCarry, 2010, p. 25). Additionally participants linked gender norms and the use of violence to how current constructions of appropriate gender roles for women and men legitimate a hierarchical relationship, as highlighted by Sean in his discussion of the wife's duties: 'It starts at the wedding vows doesn't it? Love, honour and obey' (McCarry, 2010, p. 27). Concluding her research, McCarry (2010, p. 28) argues that young people still endorse a model of gender in which men are perceived as more dominant - a view that young men are more likely to ascribe to than young women. Whilst not specifically exploring what violence is, McCarry's (2010) research positions young people's views of adult intimate partner violence within a gender context. These findings have been reinforced in a number of other studies which have noted a link between gender and views/conceptualisations of violence (Chung, 2005; Sears et al. 2006; Bowen et al. 2013; Lombard, 2012).

More recently McCoy and colleagues (2011) undertook a qualitative study in Liverpool to consult with young people about the impact of domestic violence (abuse) in their families and their formative relationships. Fourteen focus groups were undertaken with 93 young people (51 male, 42 female) aged between 14 and 23, with the majority of participants aged 16 and 17. Young people were asked to define what they thought domestic abuse was, the different types of violence incorporated within the term and who they thought it could happen to. McCoy et al. (2011, p. 15) found that the young people within their sample provided a broad definition of domestic abuse as 'couples arguing, something that happens in a relationship, child abuse and family related'. Young people stated different types of abuse and who they thought it could happen to. Primarily, physical abuse was listed first and included behaviours such as assault, aggression, hitting someone, pushing someone and punching. Participants thought that domestic abuse could be both physical and psychological, with bullying suggested as the main form of psychological abuse. Bullying included bullying partners, bullying within the household, emotional bullying, cyber bullying and bullying within the local community (McCoy et al. 2011, p. 5).

In addition to bullying, mental abuse, patronising people, mind control, making people feel useless, playing with people's minds, using guilt, not allowing people to leave the house,

undermining confidence and emotional abuse were also listed by participants within the study (McCoy et al. 2011, p. 15). Sexual abuse, in particular rape by a partner, and verbal abuse were discussed but less frequently. Other forms of abuse described included financially stealing from a partner, destroying the house or personal objects, intimidating a partner, using things they know the partner is afraid of, abuse and threats via social networking/mobile phones and stalking (McCoy et al. 2011, p. 15). This study highlights some of the specific behaviours that young people associate with 'domestic violence', providing insight into the meanings of violence for particular young people in Liverpool. Significantly, McCoy et al.'s (2011) research also highlights a lack of awareness of more subtle aspects of violence such as controlling behaviour, for some young people they did not see controlling behaviour as being violent (McCoy et al. 2011, p. 38).

3.4 Definition of violence being used in this thesis

This section has set out how violence is a contested term that is used to denote a range of acts, consequences and practices and shown that its meaning and impact vary for different people (Burman et al. 2003, p. 73). Renold and Barter (2003, p. 93) suggest that violence needs to be situated within a continuum that recognises 'its multifaceted and often contested status if young people's accounts are to be taken seriously'. Drawing upon Kelly's (1987) inclusive framework of violence as a continuum of harm they suggest that a whole range of interactions and actions can be positioned according to participants' own evaluations and interpretations. Defining violence for the purpose of this research poses a number of challenges due to the contested nature of the term and multiplicity of behaviours that constitute intimate partner violence. The definition of violence being used within this thesis therefore needs to strike a balance between research definitions, to enable comparisons, and young people's conceptualisations to ensure that definitions are meaningful to them.

In this thesis violence is defined as including sexual, emotional/psychological and physical acts or behaviours of violence. It is recognised that these can be unique forms of behaviour which may be experienced in isolation or co-occur. The use of physical and sexual violence to reinforce the power of other non-physical control tactics including emotional abuse, intimidation, isolation, coercion and threats, use of children, economic abuse, use of male privilege, and abuse minimisation, denial and victim blaming are also incorporated within this definition. Using a wide definition of violence that includes emotional/psychological, physical and sexual forms of violence which acknowledges the dynamics underpinning this violence will allow an in depth exploration of young people's experiences of these behaviours both in isolation and as they co-occur. It is intentionally broad to enable young people's own views and conceptualisations of violence to be understood from their perspective.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the ways that adult domestic violence and peer violence have been defined in law, policy, practice and research and the extent to which these definitions effectively capture different types of violence and the range of intimate relationships within which it can occur. The variation in terminology which is used to describe this phenomenon within a range of fields is problematic, and remains an ongoing issue which is yet to be resolved. This in itself is a matter requiring urgent attention as appropriate, universal definitions are required in order to ensure the safety and protection of young people. It was also identified that the way young people themselves conceptualise and understand violence needs to feed into discussions about, and changes to, definitions. In turn, this may serve to maximise the success of policy development and practice intervention. Drawing upon the strengths and limitations of existing terminology, the chapter set out the justification of the definition of violence being used in this thesis.

Chapter 4: Taking stock of violence in teenage intimate relationships

The previous chapter explored how violence is theorised and the limitations of current definitions in relation to violence that occurs within teenagers intimate relationships. The chapter concluded with an outline of the definition of violence being used within this thesis. Having explored the ways that violence in adolescent relationships can be theorised, this chapter serves to provide an overview of what is known about the nature and extent of violence within these relationships. The contexts within which violence has been found to occur and persist and the risk and protective factors associated with teenage intimate partner violence will be examined. The chapter concludes with an exploration of help-seeking behaviours and factors which enable or inhibit getting help. Although issues of definition have been discussed, these will be addressed and critically evaluated in conjunction with issues related to measuring teenage intimate partner violence (Bowen & Walker, 2015).

4.1 Measuring teenage intimate partner violence

At this stage it is useful to set out the range of issues inherent in estimating prevalence rates. Firstly, definitions of what constitutes partner violence can differ markedly across research into the topic. This means that measures may not adequately encompass the range of violent behaviours that a young person might experience (Vezina & Hebert, 2007; Johnson & Dawson, 2011; Bowen, 2011). Secondly, there are no standardised ways of measuring the phenomenon (Vezina & Hebert, 2007). The consequence is research which tends to focus upon one particular subtype of violence, usually physical violence, which is most commonly measured using the Conflict Tactic Scales (CTS; Straus, 1979; CTS2; Straus et al. 1996). The CTS measures the use of aggression to deal with conflict in the previous 12 months. Criticism has been levelled at the inability of act scales, such as the CTS, to capture the nature of violence including the context in which it develops, the way the context is interpreted and the consequences and meaning attached to the violence (Hird, 2000; Foshee et al. 2007). Furthermore, all acts of violence are treated as equivalent to one another, which is problematic if we consider the distinction between being hit or kicked in the face or mild kicks which may/may not be defensive in nature (Foshee et al. 2007, p. 499). Since quantitative measures do not tend to allow an individual to elaborate on the outcome of the violence, the recorded severity can be inaccurate. Varied methodological and data collection techniques also complicate ascertaining exact prevalence rates (Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011; Foshee et al. 2007).

A third issue relates to the sample used within the research. Typically, convenience samples are sought meaning that prevalence rates are rarely based on nationally representative samples, although several nationally representative studies have been undertaken in the US (Ackard et al. 2007; Halpern et al. 2001, 2004; Howard & Wang, 2003; Wolitsky-Taylor et al.

2008). This is especially an issue in the UK where the topic has only recently gained recognition as an area requiring investigation and intervention. Sampling frames may also yield different prevalence rates as young people may be within a particular age range, of a certain gender, the sample may include only those involved in a certain type of intimate relationship, or be focused exclusively upon victims or young people considered as being especially vulnerable such as young people in care or those living in areas of high deprivation (Vezina & Hebert, 2007; Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011).

Differing prevalence rates may also be attributed to variations in the time frames which young people are asked to report their experiences. For example, young people may be asked to report lifetime prevalence or experiences within a more restricted time frame such as within the previous year. Measuring exact prevalence rates is therefore complex due to the variability in definitions that are adopted, the differences in methods and data collection techniques and the varied sampling frames that are used all of which make meaningful comparisons difficult (Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011; Bowen & Walker, 2015).

4.2 Incidence and prevalence of teenage intimate partner violence

In order to examine this phenomenon it is important to take stock of what is known about young people's experiences of partner violence internationally and within the UK, whilst keeping in mind and further exploring the differences and discrepancies outlined above (Barter, 2009).

International incidence and prevalence

Much of the research evidence on teenager intimate partner violence comes from studies undertaken in the US. One body of work looks at the co-occurrence of teenage dating violence with other types of victimisation (Hamby et al. 2012). The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) was undertaken in the US in 2011, using a cross-sectional sample, the NatSCEV surveyed 4503 children and young people aged 1 month to 17[1] years via telephone interview about their exposure to violence. Focusing upon the experiences of 1,680 young people aged 12 to 17 within this sample, a total of 6.4% had experienced physical teenage dating violence (Hamby et al. 2012). More young men (8.3%) than young women (4.5%) reported physical violence victimisation, however girls reported much higher fear ratings: 'very afraid' (47%) than boys (0%) who indicated they were 'not afraid' (89%) during the incident.

Hamby et al. (2012, p. 118) found physical teen dating violence to be significantly associated with a wide range of victimisations, with every victim reporting at least one other form of victimisation. Significant overlaps were found between physical teen dating violence and sexual victimisation (59.8%), with 50% reporting statutory rape or sexual misconduct

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[1] If the child was younger than 10 the interview was conducted with caregivers, if the individual was 10-17 years old the interview was conducted with the young person (Finkelhor et al. 2013).

(between a young person under the age of 16) perpetrated by someone 5 or more years older (Hamby et al. 2012, p. 118). Over half the sample had been maltreated by a caregiver and at least one other type of physical assault was experienced by all teen dating violence victims (6.4%). In sum, this study indicates that young people will not experience physical teen dating violence in isolation, rather, there appears to be a close interrelationship between physical dating violence and a wide variety of victimisations within and across multiple relationships with peers, dating partners, adults and family members (Hamby et al. 2012, p. 119).

A useful review of the international literature on dating violence in teenage relationships was recently undertaken by Leen et al. (2013). Drawing on Saltzman et al.'s (2002) uniform definitions of intimate partner violence, Leen et al. (2013) synthesised and collated prevalence rates for the delineated categories of physical, sexual and psychological/emotional violence in Europe, the US and Canada. Within their review prevalence was defined as 'the frequency of violent incidents in dating relationships' (Leen et al. 2013, p. 160). A standardised approach was used to compile studies reporting prevalence rates and four criteria were used to ascertain whether a study should be included. Firstly, studies had to include data on participants aged between 12 and 18. Secondly, the language of the research had to be known by the authors of the review (English, German, Dutch, French or Swedish). Thirdly, the study had to be published in a peer-reviewed journal, and, fourthly, data had to be published between 2000 and 2011 (Leen et al. 2013).

Recognising the varied range of terms used in research into this phenomenon, Leen and colleagues (2013, p. 161) standardised research terms by using a range of synonyms so that relevant data was not omitted. Terms were included, but not limited to, 'adolescent', 'teenage', 'teen', 'youth', 'dating', 'romantic', 'relationship', 'violence', 'aggression', 'conflict' and 'abuse'. Prevalence data were compiled from reported rates within the three domains of male and female victimisation combined, female victimisation and male victimisation. This was done to allow for variation in the way trends were reported which was due in part to the methods and sample used across the studies (Leen et al. 2013, p. 161). The review includes studies undertaken within the UK which are discussed in more detail in the following section. For the purposes of comparison, the results of these studies are included within the following prevalence rates. There were interesting gender differences across the different subtypes of violence experienced, these are summarised at the end of this section.

Physical violence

Rates of physical partner violence ranged between 10 and 20% of the general population samples. Similar rates were found for young men and young women, although across studies which reported both male and female victimisation slightly higher levels of male victimisation were found (Leen et al. 2013). Rates ranged between 2%-45.2% for young

women in comparison to 2.6%-59% for young men (Leen et al. 2013, p. 162). The authors note that prevalence rates of physical violence are likely to be up to four times higher for adolescents in care (Collin-Vezina et al. 2006) or young people with previous experience of sexual abuse (Cyr et al. 2006), indicating that vulnerable adolescents may be at increased risk.

Substantially higher rates of male victimisation were found in a study of Swedish adolescents, particularly in regard to more serious forms of violence which included threats to the young person's life by a partner trying to strangle them or showing a weapon (Danielsson et al. 2009, p. 529). Although the negative impact of this violence was found to be more severe for young women than young men (Danielsson et al. 2009). In contrast, low rates of violence were reported by Ackard and Neumark-Sztainer (2002), 9% of girls and 6% of boys, in their survey of 81, 247 young people aged 14-17 in the US. Although this could reflect variation in young people's experiences, it is likely that the wording of their questions on violence may have impacted their results. Participants were asked to respond to two questions - whether they had ever been the victim of violence on a date and whether they had been the victim of date rape – to ascertain prevalence rates for violence (Ackard & Neumark-Sztainer, 2002). The lack of differentiation between different types of violence and the specific reference to 'dates' and not other relationship types and contexts means it is difficult to tell which types of violence young people had experienced and how severe it was.

It is suggested within Leen et al.'s (2013) review that the severity of the violence that is measured can shape prevalence, and, perhaps not surprisingly, generally lower rates were reported for the most serious incidences. This is evident in a German study where more adolescents reported that their partner had pushed them (44%) in comparison to the considerably smaller number (2%) who had been burned or threatened with a knife or gun (Krahe & Berger, 2005). Studies focusing solely on serious violence also reported low rates of physical violence (3.3-5.5%) (Coker et al. 2000; Krahe & Berger, 2005). However, in Coker et al.'s (2000) study, severe physical violence was measured using a question adapted from the CTS which asked young people if they had ever been beaten up by a partner whereas Krahe and Berger (2005, p. 832) used the revised CTS (CTS2) and aggregated scores for severe aggression on 5 items asking participants if they had been choked, beaten up or thrown against a wall by a partner as well as a partner using a knife or gun or burning them on purpose. This again illustrates the issues that can arise from the use of specific measures and the variation in what is considered to constitute severe violence.

Sexual violence

With regards to sexual violence, there was great variability in reported prevalence rates making this a particularly difficult type of violence to provide clear rates of victimisation. That being said, prevalence rates were found to be higher for girls than for boys across almost all the reported research. For young women rates ranged from 1.2% (Ackard &

Neumark-Sztainer, 2002) to 32% (Collins-Vezina et al. 2006). Whereas rates for boys ranged from 1.0% (Ackard & Neumark-Sztainer, 2002) to 16% (de Brujin et al. 2006). Leen et al.'s (2013) review indicated inconsistencies across the rates reported in European studies. Very high rates of sexual violence were reported in a study from the Netherlands (de Brujin et al. 2006) which was attributed to the research instrument that was used. This included items asking about experiences of verbal sexual violence, such as using sexual swear words or making sexual gestures, which formed part of the overall category of 'sexual violence'. Responses to this item were an equal 75% for girls and 75% for boys, which are much higher than prevalence rates found in North America or the remainder of Europe (Leen et al. 2013). Severity was again related to prevalence, with much lower rates (1.6%) of severe sexual violence, such as forced sex, being reported by young people in de Brujin et al's (2006) study. Sexual acts that ranged between severe sexual violence and verbal sexual abuse fell between these two poles, with 23% of girls and 16% of boys reporting sexual victimisation (de Brujin et al. 2006). These prevalence rates were found to be closer to those reported in other studies (Daniellson et al. 2009). Although higher rates of sexual victimisation were found in studies from around Europe in comparison to American and German data, across all geographical areas the prevalence of sexual violence was generally lower than physical violence victimisation (Leen et al. 2013).

Psychological/emotional violence

In comparison to physical and sexual violence, limited information was available on prevalence of emotional/psychological violence (Leen et al. 2013). Wide variation in reported rates therefore makes determining percentile prevalence rates difficult. Leen and colleagues (2013) comment that unique methods used in each study, such as the specific measures, sample populations, or country, make comparisons challenging. Where similar measures were used with similar populations, wide variation in reported rates was found. This is evident in two comparable studies undertaken in the US, where 29% of young women and 28% of young men reported experiencing psychological/emotional violence in Halpern et al.'s (2001) study in comparison to rates of 88% for girls and 85% for boys found by O'Leary et al. (2008). The authors do however put forward some tentative general trends from the data, namely that prevalence of psychological/emotional violence is almost always higher than the prevalence of physical and sexual violence (Leen et al. 2013). Even when exact prevalence rates differed between studies, psychological/emotional violence was always reported as the most frequently experienced and reported rates were similar for both girls and boys within each study (Leen et al. 2013).

Gender and prevalence rates

With regards to gender, the international literature indicates a clear gender difference with regards to sexual victimisation, with prevalence rates consistently higher for girls than for

boys. Across all geographic regions the highest rates of violence were reported in relation to emotional/psychological violence, and rates were found to be similar for girls and boys (Leen et al. 2013). An interesting gender difference was identified in relation to physical violence with higher numbers of young men (2.6%-59%) than young women (2%-45.2%) reporting physical violence victimisation. When considered in light of the adult domestic violence literature this finding is perhaps surprising, and it is not completely clear what is happening between boys and girls. It is important, however, to bear in mind that physical violence may be used in different ways and for different reasons by young men and young women (Watson et al. 2001). In addition, physical violence has been found to be experienced differently by girls and boys, with young women reporting it having a more significant impact upon them than young men (Danielsson et al. 2009; Barter et al. 2009). These issues are considered in further detail later on in this chapter.

Although some of the methodological limitations of the studies included within Leen et al.'s (2013) review have already been discussed, it is useful to summarise the nature and scope of the key methodological issues identified in this review. The first issue relates to the range of definitions of dating violence which can be used to study teenagers' intimate relationships. Consequently, some research instruments distinguish the subtypes of physical, sexual and psychological/emotional violence whereas others measure dating violence more generally (Leen et al. 2013). Disparity in the definitions and terminology applied by researchers were also considered to lead to inconsistencies in reporting. A second issue relates to the severity and frequency of violence, which they found to be distinguished in some studies and not others. Thirdly, the use of qualitative methods to gather information regarding prevalence was recognised as being problematic since participants might not feel able or willing to speak truthfully. Although the use of quantitative self-report measures might address this issue to an extent, the authors note that there may also be reporting problems with this approach (Leen et al. 2013). For instance, distinctions between different levels of severity are not addressed in self-report measures and acts based scales are not sensitive to the context of violence. The limitations of the studies compiled by Leen et al. (2013) go some way to explaining why they found no agreement on prevalence rates for physical, sexual and physical/emotional violence in teenagers' intimate relationships. However, the general trends reported in their review give a sense of the extent of violence experienced by young people in their intimate relationships.

European prevalence rates

The European evidence base has been argued to be limited, however, it is slowly developing (Bowen et al. 2013; Barter, 2009). Early findings from a research project documenting the incidence and impact of online and face-to-face forms of interpersonal violence in five European countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, England, Italy and Norway) provide a useful

comparison to the data collated in Leen et al.'s (2013) review (Barter et al. 2015). One stage of this mixed-method project involved a school based survey of 4,564 young people aged 14-17 years. Four types of interpersonal violence and abuse were measured in the survey: online emotional violence, face-to-face emotional violence, physical violence and sexual violence. Young people were also asked about sending and receiving sexual messages. The following incidence rates refer only to the 3277 young people who reported they had been in a relationship. Combining all responses into one category, rates of between 53% and 66% of young women and 32%-69% of young men reported experiencing at least one form of violence from a partner (Barter et al. 2015).

Emotional violence – online and offline

Six questions were used to measure online emotional violence (Barter et al. 2015). An overall rate of 40% of both young men and young women reported experiencing some form of online emotional violence. Much lower levels were reported by young men in England and Norway (23%) in comparison to participants from other countries. The most commonly experienced forms of online emotional violence for both young men and young women were controlling behaviour and surveillance (Barter et al. 2015, p. 4). In comparison, much more variation was found in reports of face-to-face emotional forms of violence. Between 31%-59% of young women and 19%-41% of young men across the five countries reported experiencing this form of violence from a partner. Like with online forms of this type of violence, young men in Norway and England reported the lowest levels of face-to-face emotional violence. Highest levels were indicated by both males and females in Italy.

Physical and sexual violence

Rates of between 9%-22% of young women and 8% to 15% of young men had experienced some form of physical violence (Barter et al. 2015). The highest levels were reported by young women in England and Norway where almost one in five girls had experienced physical violence in comparison to 1 in 10 young women in other countries. With regards to sexual violence higher rates were reported by girls (17%-41%) than boys (9%-25%). Consistent with the international literature which found lower rates of more severe forms of violence, young people in Barter et al.'s (2015) study were more likely to report experiencing sexual pressure than physically forced sexual activities.

The findings from Barter et al.'s (2015) study appear to reflect to a certain extent what has been found within the international literature. Consistent with Leen et al.'s (2013) review the highest rates of victimisation were reported for emotional violence by the young people in Barter et al.'s (2015) study. The higher numbers of females reporting experiences of sexual violence than males in this study also reflect the gender difference in prevalence rates found in the body of research from North America, Canada and Europe (Leen et al.

2013). Prevalence rates for physical violence contrast with the international evidence base reviewed by Leen et al. (2013) as higher numbers of females than males reported experiencing physical violence in Barter et al.'s (2013) research. Discussing their study, Barter et al. (2015) remark that the way partner violence is viewed in different countries may impact upon on an individual's willingness to report their experiences. This might have a knock on effect on reported prevalence rates since countries with high levels of awareness of domestic violence have often been found to report higher rates in comparison to lower rates reported in countries where there is less awareness of the phenomenon (Barter et al. 2015).

4.3 UK incidence and prevalence rates

This section outlines what is currently know about young people's experiences of violence from an intimate partner within the UK. It is important to note that whilst the research evidence base in the UK is growing, it is somewhat patchy at present (Fox et al. 2013).

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

In the UK estimates of the number of incidents of domestic violence in England and Wales are gathered through the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), formerly known as the British Crime Survey (BCS). Households are randomly selected from the Royal Mail's list of addresses in England and Wales and notified that they have been selected to participate in the CSEW (ONS, 2015). Adults, aged 16-59, from these sample households are interviewed face-to-face and asked to self-complete modules on a range of questions, including their experiences of intimate personal violence and sexual offences. It has been argued that the CSEW picks up more crime than official police recorded figures, as not all crimes are reported to the police or recorded by them (Dar, 2013). This is particularly an issue with regards to domestic violence which is known to be under-reported by victims for a range of reasons including violence not being considered a matter for the police, victims considering their experiences as trivial and fear of repercussions/reprisal (Dar, 2013). Although it is cautioned that statistics from the CSEW describing the level of domestic violence should be interpreted with care, the survey provides insights into which groups may be most at risk of experiencing violence from a partner (Dar, 2013).

Previous crime surveys have found that women are more likely than men to be victims of domestic abuse[2] (Smith et al. 2011). This finding was reflected in data from the most recent CSEW (2013/2014) where lifetime prevalence rates indicated that 28.3% of women and 14.7% of men had experienced any domestic abuse since the age of 16, which equates to 4.6 million female victims and 2.4 million male victims (ONS, 2014). Data looking at prevalence in the previous year indicated 8.5% of women and 4.5% of men had experienced

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[2] This category combines partner abuse (non-sexual), family abuse (non-sexual), and sexual assault or stalking carried out by a current or former partner or other family member (ONS, 2015).

any type of domestic abuse, which is estimated to equate to 1.4 million women and 700,000 men per year (ONS, 2014). When looking specifically at partner abuse in the last year, 6.8% of women and 3% of men reported experiencing any form of partner abuse, which is estimated as 1.1 million women and 500,000 men (ONS, 2015). However, it should be noted that longstanding evidence from the CSEW has found that overall young men are more likely to experience violence than any other group (ONS, 2015).

With regards to data from the CSEW on young people's experiences, prevalence rates among both men and women were found to be highest in younger age groups. Young men aged between 16 to 19 years old (7.5%) and 20 to 24 year olds (6.5%) were more likely than older men (45-54, 3.5%; 55-59, 2.4%) to have experienced domestic abuse in the previous year (ONS, 2015). Higher rates of victimisation were found in young women between 16 and 19 (13.1%) and 20 to 24 (10.1%) who were more likely to have experienced any form of domestic abuse in comparison to women aged between 45 and 54 (7.1%) and 55 to 59 (5.9%) (ONS, 2015). Young women between 16 and 19 were also more likely to be victims of any sexual abuse in the previous year (6.7%) and to be victims of stalking (7.5%) as were females aged between 20 and 24 (7.8%) in comparison to all other age groups (ONS, 2015).

There are several methodological limitations of the CSEW, firstly it is subject to non-response error which has implications for the measurement of crime (ONS, 2013). Secondly, when completing the CSEW individuals are asked to recall their experiences in the previous 12 months, meaning that the survey relies upon their ability to accurately remember when and what happened to them within that specific time frame. A third issue, which may be especially relevant to those experiencing domestic violence, involves the collection of sensitive information which some people may be reluctant to disclose particularly in the face-to-face interview. This has been confirmed with higher rates of violence being reported in the self-completion module in comparison to interviews. Finally, the way that individuals define and understand what constitutes particular types of incidents may impact upon their likelihood of responding and/or the way that they respond (ONS, 2013). Whilst exact prevalence rates are difficult to ascertain from the CSEW, the key issue it highlights is that young people aged between 16 and 24 are most likely to experience domestic violence than any other age range, and that females are more likely to experience a wider range of violence than males (Smith et al. 2011).

Prevalence and incidence rates – research evidence

One of the first empirical studies of adolescent dating aggression in Britain was undertaken by Hird (2000). Participants were drawn from two mixed-sex comprehensive schools in the south Midlands of England. Four hundred and eighty seven students (245 female and 242 male) aged between 13 and 19 years were asked to report their own behaviours and those of their opposite-sex partners by completing the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). The CTS

measures the use of aggressive tactics to deal with conflict in the previous 12 months (Hird, 2000). Approximately half of all adolescents within the study reported experiencing psychological, physical and/or sexual aggression in their heterosexual dating relationships (Hird, 2000). Somewhat more females (54%) than males (49%) reported that they had experienced psychological aggression within the previous 12 months. Rates of physical aggression were fairly similar for both genders, with slightly more males (15%) reporting experiencing one or more forms of physical aggression than females (14%) (Hird, 2000, p. 72). Just under 18% of young women reported experiencing sexual aggression within the previous 12 months, no males reported experiencing this type of aggression (Hird, 2000). Hird (2000) acknowledges that using a questionnaire method has a number of limitations. Firstly, since this method relies upon self-reporting of aggression, 'true' or actual levels of aggression cannot be measured (Hird, 2000, p. 75). Secondly, using the CTS as the sole measure of violence can impact upon the data that are gathered and the conclusions that are drawn since they lack information regarding the multidimensional nature of violence (Smith, 1994; Hird, 2000). To address this issue, Hird (2000) also undertook focus groups and interviews to explore the meaning and context of adolescent dating aggression (Hird, 2000, p. 73).

In Scotland, Burman and Cartmel (2005) conducted a questionnaire-based survey with young people from ten secondary schools. A sample of 1,395 young people (55% female and 45% male) aged between 14 and 18 were asked to self-complete a questionnaire which was adapted from a range of studies undertaken in Britain, Australia and the US (Burman & Cartmel, 2005). The questionnaire contained 35 questions divided into six sections which asked participants views and attitudes about different kinds of violent, abusive and coercive acts. The data reported here relate to the questions which focused upon young people's experiences within their own intimate relationships.

Looking firstly at physical violence, similar rates of males (15%) and females (14%) reported that their partner had hit, kicked or smashed an object (Burman & Cartmel, 2005, p. 17). Sixteen percent of girls reported being pushed, grabbed or shoved compared to 25% of boys. A considerably higher number of young men (31%) reported having been slapped in comparison to young women (7%). Nine percent of girls reported being kicked, bitten or hit this compares to 19% of boys. Six percent of young women and 11% of young men reported that a partner had tried to hit them and 10% of girls and 11% of boys said their partner had tried to hold or restrain them. Threats of physical violence were also higher amongst boys at 20% compared to 8% of girls. These findings are in keeping with the higher rates of male physical violence victimisation found in Leen et al.'s (2013) international review.

Two questions asked about emotional/psychological violence and verbal abuse. Thirty-two percent of young women and 28% of young men reported that a partner had put them down or humiliated them. Males (51%) reported experiencing higher rates of being yelled

loudly at than females (40%). With regards to sexual violence 10% of girls and 8% of boys who participated in the study indicated that their partner had tried to force them to have sex, and 6% of boys and 3% of girls reported that they had been forced to have sex. The prevalence rates for sexual victimisation are therefore in contrast to the international and European literature which found higher rates of female victimisation in comparison to males (Leen et al. 2013; Barter et al. 2015). Although this study provides some useful insights into the prevalence of violence within teenagers intimate relationships, a number of limitations should be kept in mind. The information was gathered as part of a larger study looking more broadly at young people's attitudes towards domestic violence. There were therefore a limited number of questions aimed at ascertaining prevalence rates, those which were included tended to focus upon experiences of physical violence.

To respond to the significant gaps in knowledge and understanding of teenage intimate partner violence in the UK context, a more systematic study of prevalence rates was undertaken by Barter and colleagues (2009). A self-report survey was administered to 1353 young people (669 male and 680 female) aged 13-17 at secondary schools in England, Wales and Scotland. The survey captured whether participants had ever experienced a range of violent behaviours from their partner and whether they had themselves acted this way (Barter et al. 2009). Eighty eight percent of the sample reported having at least one relationship experience; it is this 88% to which the following data refers. Two questions gauged incidence rates of physical partner violence. The first asked about the use of physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting or being held down. A quarter of girls reported experiencing this form of violence in comparison to slightly fewer boys (18%). The second question asked young people if their partner had ever used more severe physical force including punching, strangling, beating them up or hitting them with an object. More girls (11%) than boys (8%) reported experiencing this type of violence, although Barter et al. (2009) add the caveat that the way young people determine what constitutes 'severe' physical violence is open to interpretation.

High rates of emotional violence were found and reported by Barter et al. (2009). Combining responses to eight questions an overall incidence rate indicated that almost three quarters of the young women (72%) and half of the young men (51%) experienced some kind of emotional violence from their partner, with the majority reporting experiencing more than one form (Barter et al. 2009, p. 58). These results are in contrast to the international literature which found that girls and boys reported similar rates of emotional violence (Leen et al. 2013). The most common form of emotional violence was being made fun of which was reported by half of girls and a third of boys. Constantly being checked up on by a partner was the second most frequently reported behaviour and this was experienced by more young women (42%) than young men (29%). More girls (30%) than boys (13%) stated that their partner had told them who they could see and where they could go. Overt forms of emotional violence also indicated a distinct gender divide. Slightly more than a third of

young women (36%) in comparison to 21% of young men reported that a partner had shouted at them, screamed in their face or called them hurtful names (Barter et al. 2009, p. 57). Thirty-six percent of girls and 15% of boys' partners had said negative things about their appearance/body/friends/family. The threat of physical violence was reported by 11% of females and 4% of males. The use of technology such as mobile phones or the internet to threaten or humiliate a partner was experienced by 12% of young women and 3% of young men, this form of violence was experienced by the least number of young men. The form of emotional violence with the lowest rate reported by girls (9%) was the use of private information to make them do something, this was also experienced by 5% of boys.

Within their study Barter and colleagues (2009) used four questions to measure incidence rates of sexual violence in teenagers' intimate relationships. When all reported incidents were combined, 31% of girls and 16% of boys had experienced sexual violence from their partner. Looking at the specific questions that were asked, more than a quarter of young women (27%) and 15% of young men stated that they had been pressured to do something sexual such as kissing or touching by a partner. Six percent of young men reported that they had been physically forced to do something sexual, this is in comparison to 13% of young women. Being pressured into sexual intercourse, was reported by more girls (16%) than boys (6%) as was forced sex (rape) which had been experienced by 6% of young women and 3% of young men.

One of the limitations of Barter et al.'s (2009) study, and one that is also found in Hird's (2000) research, was the use of only a school based sample. This means that the experience of certain groups of young people, such as young people no longer in mainstream education and/or other groups of disadvantaged teenagers such as those living in foster or residential care, may not be adequately represented in these studies (Wood et al. 2011). To address this limitation, in parallel to Barter and colleagues (2009) research, an entirely qualitative study was undertaken to specifically examine intimate partner violence in disadvantaged teenagers relationships (Wood et al. 2011). The research involved semi-structured interviews with 82 young people (44 males and 38 females) aged between 13 and 18, the majority of whom were 15 years or over (80%). Participants were recruited from a range of agencies and organisations working with disadvantaged young people in the South of England. Disadvantage was defined in this study as 'any young person who had experienced a particularly complex or disrupted childhood which may have disadvantaged their welfare' (Wood et al. 2011, p. 15).

More than half the girls and a quarter of boys in Wood et al.'s (2011) study reported experiencing physical violence in at least one of their intimate relationships. Young women from disadvantaged backgrounds were found to be nearly twice as likely to experience physical partner violence when compared to rates of slightly under a quarter found in Barter et al.'s (2009) school based study. For young men, little overall difference was found,

although higher number of boys in Wood et al.'s (2011) study (1 in 7) reported experiencing severe physical violence in comparison to 1 in 25 found by Barter et al. (2009). Two-thirds of girls and a third of boys reported experiencing emotional violence, most often controlling behaviour (Wood et al. 2011, p. 8). 'Some form' of sexual violence (sexual force or pressure) was experienced by half of young women (20), with a quarter (9) stating that this also included physical sexual violence. In comparison to the school based sample (Barter et al. 2009), disadvantaged young women were more likely to report sexual violence. A small minority of young men reported experiencing this kind of violence, which reflects the trends found in international research and some other studies from the UK (Leen et al. 2013; Barter et al. 2009). Although this was a small scale study undertaken in a single city, the findings strengthen the evidence base regarding the nature and extent of teenage intimate partner violence in the UK.

More recently, a large scale survey of younger adolescent's experiences of partner violence was undertaken by Fox et al. (2013) as part of a larger multi-method project. The aim of the survey was to assess the experiences of younger teenagers aged between 13 and 14, the rationale for which was the small percentage of this age group (25%) in Barter et al.'s (2013) study. Participants were drawn from 13 schools across Staffordshire, seven of which were receiving a domestic abuse prevention programme and six which did not. In total, 1143 pupils (541 males and 568 females) aged 13 to 14 took part in the study. The survey contained questions similar to those used in Barter et al.'s study which were developed and modified in consultation with young people and practitioners (Fox et al. 2013, p. 513).

An overall prevalence rate of 45% was reported by Fox et al. (2013), with similar overall rates between girls (46%) and boys (44%). Consistent with the international and national literature, emotional abuse and controlling behaviours were the most commonly reported forms of violence (38%). Physical abuse was the next most common at 17%, and the lowest rates were reported for sexual victimisation (14%) (Fox et al. 2013, p. 515). Analysis of gender differences for experiences of physical, sexual and emotional abuse indicated that girls reported significantly more sexual victimisation in comparison to boys (Fox et al. 2013, p. 516). No differences were found between young men and young women for other forms of severe victimisation. The authors also examined combinations of experiences and found small numbers of girls and boys had experienced physical abuse only (3.9%) this compares to 21% experiencing emotional abuse only. Almost 18% reported experiencing both physical and emotional abuse. The results of this research, like Barter et al. (2009) and Hird (2000), are on a school-based sample, meaning that the experiences of certain groups of young people may therefore be missing. Although generally lower than prevalence rates reported in other studies, a significant number of younger teenagers are experiencing violence within their intimate relationships by the age of 13-14. The study provides a useful starting point to begin to explore and better understand how partner violence changes over the life course (Fox et al. 2013).

Other UK research provides further insights into the prevalence and impact of teenage intimate partner violence. The prevalence study undertaken by Radford and colleagues (2013) sought not only to measure the prevalence of maltreatment but also other types of victimisation among children, young people and adults in the UK. This included experiences of victimisation by intimate partners in young people over the age of 11. The research involved completion of a computer-assisted self-interview by a random UK representative sample of 2,160 parents and caregivers, 2,275 children and young people and 1,761 young adults. In this study intimate partner victimisation referred to any physical violence, sexual victimisation or emotional abuse experienced by a young person aged over 11 by their adult or peer intimate partner and was measured using a modified version of the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ; Hamby et al. 2004).

Total lifetime prevalence rates for intimate partner violence in 11-17 year olds was 7.9%, and was experienced by a higher percentage of females (8.9%) than males (7%) (Radford et al. 2013, p. 806). Experiences within the last year for 11-17 year olds also showed a gender distinction with lower numbers of boys (4.2%) than girls (5.8%) reporting victimisation. Looking at lifetime prevalence rates for older young people aged 18-24, a total of 13.4% (254) had experienced intimate partner victimisation. There was a much more pronounced difference by gender with 10.7% of young men compared to 16.2% of young women reporting intimate partner victimisation (Radford et al. 2013, p. 806). With regards to impact, victims of sexual or intimate partner violence were found to have significantly higher trauma scores (Radford et al. 2013, p. 807).

Although Radford et al.'s (2013) study provides further support to the notion that intimate partner violence is gendered, it crucially highlights how this may be part of a wider pattern of victimisation. Radford et al. (2013) found that there is an accumulation of the number and range of victimisations young people experience with age, suggesting that maltreated or otherwise victimised children and young people are at increased risk of further victimisation. Furthermore, the impact of multiple victimisation was found to be significant for those over the age of 11 who showed elevated trauma symptom scores (Radford et al. 2013). The interrelationship and overlap between violence in teenagers' intimate relationships and other kinds of victimisation provides support to the poly-victims approach and reinforces the need for a holistic approach to definition and measurement to capture the nature and extent of young people's victimisation in a range of domains (Radford et al. 2013).

Across the research studies discussed here, there is variation in prevalence and incidence rates of violence in teenagers' intimate relationships. The different methods used to capture rates of violence make comparisons between studies difficult, and complicate attempts to provide exact prevalence rates. That being said, several important key points can be gleaned from these data. Firstly, as a body of evidence, these studies indicate that significant numbers of young people in the UK have experienced violence from an intimate partner and

that this violence can be experienced by young people from as young as 13 years old (Hird, 2000; Burman & Cartmel, 2005; Barter et al. 2009; Wood et al. 2011; Fox et al. 2013). Secondly, they provide insights into the extent to which teenager intimate partner violence is gendered. Aside from Burman and Cartmel's (2005) study which reported higher levels of male victimisation in comparison to female victimisation, clear gender divisions emerged with more young women found to experience a wider range of violence than young men. When compared to the international literature, the UK evidence base supports the trend that the highest prevalence rates are observed for psychological/emotional violence. Variation between reported prevalence rates in UK studies with regards to gender, does not support the similar rates found between girls and boys in international studies. Although Fox et al.'s (2013) work did not find any significant differences between male and female victimisation, except in relation to sexual violence, which is consistent with the international research. It may be that gender differences in experience become more pronounced as young people move through the adolescent stage of development.

4.4 Who does what to whom and why

In the previous chapter it was noted that there is a debate within the literature regarding the extent to which adult domestic violence is gendered (Johnson, 2006). This debate extends to violence within teenagers intimate relationships where, as we have already seen, it is unclear from the current evidence base how overtly gendered the phenomenon is. Some authors assert that teenage partner violence shows much more gender symmetry than adult domestic violence, with research primarily from the US finding that girls and boys use similar levels of physical and emotional violence towards their partners (Foshee, 1996; Ariagga & Foshee, 2004; Roberts et al. 2005).

In the UK, Barter et al. (2009) found overall lower rates of perpetration when compared to rates of victimisation for all three forms of violence, regardless of gender. With regards to physical violence, more girls (24%) reported using this form of violence against a partner than did boys (8%). Most of the young women perpetrating less severe physical violence did so once or a few times (89%) which was similar for boys (83%). Fewer numbers reported using severe physical violence, but this was reported by more girls (5%) than boys (2%). This type of violence tended to be used infrequently by both genders. More young women (59%) than young men (50%) reported perpetrating emotional violence making this the most prevalent form of partner violence used by young people (Barter et al. 2013). Barter et al. (2013) identified gender specific patterns across the types of emotional violence, with girls more likely to use each form and reported using it infrequently (once or few times). Similar perpetration rates for males and females were found with regards to threats to use personal information and using technology to humiliate or threaten. The largest gender gap was found in relation to shouting and/or screaming at a partner, with 31% of girls using this behaviour in comparison to 14% of boys. Perpetration of sexual violence was higher for young men (12%) than young women (3%). The highest rates of sexual violence perpetration related to pressuring a partner into sexual behaviour, 11% of boys and 2% of girls. With

regards to pressuring a partner into sex (4% of boys and 1% of girls) and forcing a partner into sex was indicated by twelve boys and four girls.

Similar rates of male and female perpetration were also found by Fox et al. (2013) in their study of younger teenagers where 25% of young men and 24% of young women had carried out at least one violent act towards a partner. An interesting point to note, is that 92% of those who reported perpetrating violence had also experienced violence from an intimate partner (Fox et al. 2013, p. 522). The results from Barter et al.'s (2009) and Fox et al.'s (2013) research support the findings of studies from the US which indicate similar levels of perpetration for males and females for emotional and physical violence. However, Barter et al. (2009) stress when considered in light of the reasons for perpetrating violence and the impact such violence has on a young person, the issue of gender symmetry is much more complex.

Within their questionnaire, Barter and colleagues (2009, p. 75) asked young people who had perpetrated violence towards a partner to say why they had behaved in this way. Reasons for violence were grouped into the following three categories: Negative reasons – to hurt them, due to their behaviour, jealousy, to impress others, to get what they wanted, anger, to humiliate them and drinking/drugs; Messing around, or; Other. An additional question asking if violence was perpetrated in 'self-defence' was asked with regards only to physical violence. It is important to highlight that participants were able to provide multiple responses to the reasons for their behaviour.

In relation to physical violence, negative reasons for behaving this way were reported by 45% of girls and a third of boys (Barter et al. 2009). Messing around accounted for 56% of boys and 43% of girls reasons for physical violence. More girls (44%) reported using physical violence for self-defence than boys (30%). The different reasons for using physical violence highlight how when exploring the extent to which gender symmetry exists within teenage intimate partner violence, the nature of the violence should be considered. Moving on to look at emotional/psychological violence, slightly more young women (45%) than young men (38%) said negative reasons had caused them to behave this way (Barter et al. 2013, p. 79). Like perpetration of physical violence, more boys (45%) claimed they were messing around than did girls (39%). Around half of those perpetrating sexual violence said they had done it for negative reasons, with a third claiming it was due to messing around and a small minority (14 participants) stating it was for some 'other' reason.

Context/risk factors

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model provides a useful framework for identifying potential risk and protective factors for violence that operate and interplay at different levels. Ecological explanations suggest that each of the levels interact with one another, to varying degrees. At the broadest level, or macrosystem, are sociocultural influences which serve to maintain gender inequality, gender role norms and societal norms

which support violence (Bowen & Walker, 2015). Media consumption, for example, has been found to influence development of pro-aggression attitudes (Connolly et al. 2010).

The link between the family, broader culture and the community are features of the exosystem. Risk and protective factors may result from a young person's socio-demographic characteristics, such as their ethnicity as member of a particular ethnic group, or their socioeconomic status/disadvantage. Hird (2000) found class to be a risk factor for violence perpetration and Wood et al. (2011) suggest that disadvantaged young people, such as those in care, may be at heightened risk of experiencing violence.

The microsystem involves the ways the developing young person interacts in a face to face setting and the associated pattern of activities and social roles (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Risk and protective factors in this system arise from the individual characteristics of the young person and their immediate social network (family and friends) (Bowen et al. 2015). Research has found that better quality friendships can act as protective factors, whereas bullying and relational aggression have been identified as potential risk factors (Foshee et al. 2013). Family relationships also offer both risk and protective opportunities, with violence at home increasing a young person's risk of involvement in teenage partner violence (Makin-Byrd & Bierman, 2013).

4.6 Help-seeking behaviours

Young people experiencing violence from an intimate partner are reluctant to seek help; however when young people do disclose, friends and peers are most often the confidantes (Wood et el. 2011; Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Bowen et al. 2013). However, informal help seeking may primarily be limited to emotional support and friends and peers can offer bad or unhelpful advice which might lead to the young person remaining in the relationship for longer than they might have under other circumstances (Ocampo et al. 2007). Being embarrassed, feeling that they may not be believed or that their experiences may be minimised and fear of talking to professionals have also been found to deter young people from telling someone about their experiences (Wood et al. 2011; Sears et al. 2006). In addition, awareness raising campaigns can reinforce ideas about victims of teenage intimate partner violence making some young people less likely to disclose their experience (Sears et al. 2006). The differing responses of young men and young women and the significance of help giving among friends and peers highlights the potentially significant role of youth education in the prevention and early identification of teenage intimate partner violence.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has set out what is currently known about the nature and extent of violence in teenagers' intimate relationships. The international research literature, which is more comprehensive than the UK evidence base, has indicated that significant numbers of young people experience violence from an intimate partner (Leen et al. 2013). Emotional violence was found to be the most commonly experienced form of violence and this was reflected in

the growing research literature from the UK (Barter et al. 2009). There were some disparities with regards to gender in the international prevalence rates, however a much clearer gender divide was apparent with regards to older adolescents in the UK. Discussions about the issues surrounding measuring violence provided possible explanations as to why different rates of victimisation may be reported by young men and young women. What is known about who uses violent behaviour was also discussed and provided further insights into gender differences with regards to why young people are violent towards a partner. A brief overview of the risk and protective factors found to be associated with violence indicated which young people may be most at risk of violence. The chapter concluded with a brief consideration of what is known about who a young person might turn to for help.

This literature review has set out theories, research findings and debates relevant to this thesis. In the first literature review chapter it was identified from the small but growing evidence base that teenage intimate relationships have been conceptualised in a number of ways. This is useful but also problematic since variation in terminology makes it difficult for researchers to set parameters around the phenomenon being studied and subsequently affects their ability to make comparisons between studies. A further, perhaps more significant issue is the dearth of research into what actually happens within teenagers' intimate relationships – the behaviours and activities that young people engage in as well as their expectations and what these relationships mean to them. This thesis therefore seeks to address the gaps in what we know about how teenage intimate relationships are understood, what activities and behaviours are associated with them and what they mean to young people.

The second literature review chapter set out the ways that domestic violence and peer violence have been defined in law, policy, practice and research. It was noted how understanding of teenage intimate partner violence has been framed within the context of adult domestic violence which means that definitions and understanding may not adequately capture the dynamics of violence which occurs within young people's intimate relationships. Within research into this phenomenon, there has been a tendency to use the term dating violence which is used to mean different things and can include or exclude different forms of violence making meaningful comparisons difficult. A further issue is the over reliance on this term and the lack of alternative terminology which is problematic since we know little about whether young people in the UK actually recognise or use the term dating. By asking young people to discuss what teenage intimate relationships are and what violence within these relationships might look like this thesis aims to go some way to addressing this gap as the applicability of legal and research definitions can be explored. It was identified that definitions tend to lack reference to the gendered and age specific context of teenage intimate partner violence which is concerning when considered in light of the link made to gender in young people's own conceptualisations of violence. Definitions of peer violence/peer-on-peer abuse appear to provide a valuable way to conceptualise teenage intimate partner violence, however the usefulness of this approach is not fully

understood at present. This thesis therefore sets out to examine the applicability of the definition of peer-on-peer violence to teenage intimate partner violence.

The final literature review chapter identified the problems that arise in attempting to ascertain prevalence rates due to the lack of universal definition of teenage intimate partner violence. Although disparities in international prevalence rates may be explained to an extent by the variation in terminology, it makes it difficult to know whether certain types of violence are occurring more within particular groups, meaning that issues of age and gender may be obscured. The UK literature appears to indicate a much clearer gender divide which seems to become more pronounced with age. However, there is still significant variation in reported rates of violence within the UK and it is not clear from the modest evidence base how overtly gendered teenage intimate partner violence is. This thesis seeks to take a fresh look at young people's experiences of intimate partner violence and particularly its impact on older adolescents to explore whether and it what ways this phenomenon is gendered and changes across the life course.

In sum, there are three gaps in the literature that this thesis seeks to advance:

1. Firstly, to gauge older young people's experiences of teenage intimate partner violence and its impact on their wellbeing.
2. Secondly, to explore young people's understanding of teenage intimate relationships. Their definitions and terminology, the behaviours and activities that are considered to take place within them and their meaning to the young people involved in them.
3. Thirdly, to understand the ways young people view, understand and conceptualise teenage intimate partner violence and assess the applicability of current legal, policy and research definitions of teenage intimate partner violence.

In order to investigate the three areas outlined above, a mixed methodological approach is most appropriate in providing a more detailed understanding of this phenomenon than could be obtained from using a single method. The following chapter outlines the mixed methodology and sets the foundation for the primary qualitative and quantitative research.

Chapter 5: Methodology

This chapter provides an account of my experience of conducting the research. It is useful at this point to restate the purpose of the research, which was to explore in depth young peoples' experience of intimate partner violence and their understandings of such violence. The chapter begins by setting out the overall aims of the research. The rationale for undertaking a mixed methods approach will be outlined, and the background to, and motivation for, undertaking the research will be discussed. Each element of the study will then be set out and I will reflect on the planning, design and implementation of the research process. In keeping with the reflexive nature of a feminist approach, my experience of designing, conducting and analysing the research is written in the first person. Every name used within this thesis is a pseudonym.

5.1 Research aims and research questions

This thesis aims to contribute to knowledge and understanding of violence in teenage intimate relationships and consider how best to respond to this problem. The research is guided by the following overarching research question:

What are young people's experiences of, and views toward, partner violence in teenage intimate relationships?

There are two sets of research aims to explore the different aspects of this question; the first aim is to examine the nature, frequency and dynamics of different forms of violence in young people's intimate relationships and to find out how experiencing this violence makes young people feel. The second aim is to explore how young people identify, define and contextualise teenage intimate partner violence. These aims are addressed through the following research questions:

1. What are young people's experiences of intimate partner violence?

2. How does experiencing violence from an intimate partner make young people feel?

3. In what contexts does violence occur and persist?

4. Is violence occurring more often in any particular groups?

5. What behaviours do young people recognise and define as constituting partner violence?

6. How do young people talk about violence in intimate relationships?

7. Are conceptualisations of interpersonal violence linked to different gendered identities?

       7a. What views of gender do young people draw on when:

- Describing instigators and victims of intimate partner violence
- Discussing different forms of violence

To explore the different aspects of the research questions a mixed methods approach was used; a quantitative online survey was administered to examine and measure experiences of violence (research questions 1-4) and a series of qualitative focus group discussions were undertaken to explore the range of young people's understandings of intimate partner violence (research questions 5-7).

5.2 Mixed methods approach

The key feature of mixed methods research is that it involves the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, with the ultimate goal of drawing strengths from each approach and minimising their weaknesses (Creswell, 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Quantitative research seeks to measure experiences, attitudes and activities via the collection of numerical data which is analysed using mathematically based methods, particularly statistics (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2000). Measuring a particular phenomenon makes it easier to examine and discuss (Olsen, 2012). Qualitative research, on the other hand, seeks to understand the meanings people attach to particular phenomena within their social worlds (Kitthananan, 2006, p. 133). Qualitative research methods are therefore used to explore how people 'understand and interpret their social environment' (Kitthananan, 2006, p. 135). Mixing two approaches can enable researchers to gain a better, fuller understanding of an issue or problem than a single method alone could provide (Creswell, 2006). Within this study, using mixed methods may also provide a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon and opportunities to unpick and address some of the issues and gaps identified within the literature. Because mixed methods enable viewpoints to be combined, a much more complete account of social reality can develop (Bryman, 1988; Testa et al. 2011).

To attempt to measure young people's experiences of a range of violent and abusive behaviours; I used a quantitative online survey to gauge the nature, frequency and dynamics of different forms of violence in young people's intimate relationships. My research is also concerned with the production of meaning through social interaction, for this reason I used a qualitative method to explore how young people understand, interpret and make sense of violence in teenage intimate relationships. I decided to use focus groups as they can reveal insights into individual and collective meaning attached to a particular topic by participants, illuminating how individuals define their own categories and labels within the context of a group (Green & Thorogood, 2004, p. 336; Bagnoli & Clark, 2010, p. 104). Within this research these two methods were integrated and combined for, what Bryman (2006, p. 106) defines as, 'completeness'. This means the two methods were brought together to gain a more comprehensive account of the area under investigation (Bryman, 2006, p. 106). This was achieved through the quantitative data indicating the extent of violence within young people's intimate relationships and the qualitative data illuminating the ways that this violence is understood.

Feminist approach

Multiple feminist perspectives informed the research and how it was undertaken (Mason & Stubbs, 2010, p. 6). Feminist perspectives are typically characterised by a 'concern with social relations as organised by reference to sex/gender' and a commitment to gendered analysis (Mason & Stubbs, 2010, p. 1; Ritchie & Barker, 2005). Feminist research is 'primarily for and about women' (Gray et al. 2013, p. 2) and is underpinned by 'the motives, concerns and knowledge brought to the research process' (Brayton, 1997, p.1). Accordingly, feminist research seeks to understand women's experiences, to improve women's lives and equalise or reduce power imbalances in the researcher-participant relationship (Gray et al. 2013). These principles were relevant to different aspects of the research process.

Since feminist research seeks to understand women's experiences, Kelly et al. (1994) stress that there is a need to exercise our powers as researchers to access the full range of women's experiences. By combining and comparing methods a more complete understanding of these experiences can be gathered and the limitations and possibilities of the two approaches discovered (Kelly et al. 1994).

Feminist research methodologies are based on reflexivity. Later in this chapter I will explore my role within the research, the impact of the research process on me as a researcher and reflect on my experience of conducting the research (Sampson et al. 2008). Throughout the research I kept a detailed record of the research process as it unfolded in a research diary. These notes included descriptions of the recruitment process, people I met and notes from discussions or useful conversations. I would also write down any problems I encountered and ideas that stood out from the focus groups. Extracts from my research diary will be used to reflect upon my experiences of doing the research.

5.3 Quantitative study

The quantitative element of the study addressed the first aim of this research: to explore the nature, frequency and dynamics of different forms of violence and to find out how experiencing violence from an intimate partner made young people feel. The research aims were explored through four of the seven research questions:

1. What are young people's experiences of intimate partner violence?
2. How does experiencing violence from an intimate partner make young people feel?
3. In what contexts does violence occur and persist? (Associated factors)
4. Is violence occurring more often in any particular groups?

Since these research questions seek to measure how much violence occurs within young people's relationships as well as the impact of this behaviour on their wellbeing a quantitative method was best suited to gathering this information. One of the strengths of quantitative research is that it can be used to gauge prevalence rates and the distribution of

particular social issues from a larger population sample than typically found in qualitative research (Westmarland, 2001; Reinharz, 1992; Bryman, 2008). As structured instruments are used to gather information in quantitative research, these tools can be used to replicate or repeat a study which can be valuable for comparisons and to assess changes over time (Bryman, 2008). The numerical data collected in quantitative research can specifically help feminist researchers in the identification of patterns and processes through which gender inequalities change or persist over time (Scott, 2010).

Method

An online survey was considered the most appropriate method for gathering the quantitative data. There are a number of reasons that I decided to gather information in this way. Surveys are a useful, fast and convenient way of collecting information from a large number of participants (Bryman, 2008). However, there are some limitations to using paper versions of surveys when sensitive information is being sought. Participants may provide inaccurate information; the presence of peers or a researcher can lead to under reporting as individuals may fear being judged negatively or feel too embarrassed to disclose experiences that depart from social norms or feel that their privacy is being invaded (Knapp & Kirk, 2003). Collecting this information via an online survey may alleviate this issue as it offers participants enhanced privacy and greater freedom to withdraw if they feel discomfort in comparison to the pressures to continue that can be found in face-to-face studies (Kraut et al. 2004; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006).

A second issue found with paper surveys is potential mistrust regarding confidentiality which can lead to participants deliberately providing inaccurate information and/or sanitizing their responses if they think that these will be disclosed to agencies or individuals not related to the survey (Knapp & Kirk, 2003, p. 118). Online data collection may reduce the fear of disclosure to formal agencies because the survey is completed in private rather than face-to-face which in turn may encourage young people to report their experiences more honestly (Kays et al. 2012; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Web based surveys are particularly suited to research with young people allowing them to actively exercise their own freedom and agency in choosing to complete the survey and express their experiences (Carini et al. 2003; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). An online survey also allows participants to complete and submit the survey from wherever they are via a computer or other technologies, which are known to be particularly attractive to this age group (Knapp & Kirk, 2003; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). This means that the participant is in control of their participation and the pace with which they complete the survey which in turn can improve the quality of answers that are provided as they are able to pause, reread or think about an answer and do so at a time and place they feel comfortable with (de Leeuw et al. 2003; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006).

The survey was adapted from a number of previous studies, but particularly questions relating to young people's experiences of violence developed and used in research by Barter et al. (2009). Some of the challenges faced by Barter et al. (2009) in their study also informed the decision to collect data online. Barter and her team went into schools and asked young people aged between 13 and 16 to complete a paper questionnaire about their experience and perpetration of partner violence. They noted that when administering their paper questionnaires in one school to a group of Asian boys there was 'a great deal of laughing and talking' between these young men (Barter et al. 2009, p. 72). It was speculated that this group of boys may not have completed the questionnaire 'truthfully' and, as a result, Barter et al. (2009, p.71) acknowledge that there may be anomalies in their data in regards to boys' experiences of sexual violence which may call into question the validity of some of their findings.

To summarise, online surveys offer increased flexibility for research participants (Kraut et al. 2004). Computers and similar technologies are known to be attractive to young people, which in turn may encourage and increase participation. As young people choose when and where to complete the survey, they are able to consider questions for as long as they require and complete the survey at their own pace (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Online surveys offer greater freedom for individuals to withdraw from the study because the pressure to continue that is found in face-to-face data collection is absent (Kraut et al. 2004). Online surveys are particularly suited to research on sensitive topics and may elicit more accurate responses to sensitive questions than paper versions due to the enhanced privacy and assured anonymity they offer (Fricker & Schonlau, 2002; Kraut et al. 2004; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Nevertheless, online surveys are not without their drawbacks. These will be discussed later within this chapter.

Measures

Questions used in Barter et al.'s (2009, p. 26) landmark UK study of partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships were adapted and used in my survey. Specifically, it included questions about young people's experience of family and peer violence, their intimate relationships, their experience of physical, emotional and sexual violence from an intimate partner and the impact of partner violence on their wellbeing. A young people's advisory group worked closely with Barter and colleagues (2009, p. 11) to design, develop and refine their data collection tools. The questions were rephrased by the young people's advisory group and the questionnaire was administered to a large sample of participants aged 13-16. Using existing questions allowed me to compare the findings from my study with the findings of Barter et al.'s (2009) school based sample.

Young people in my study were asked to provide information about their current intimate relationship, including their partners' age and the length of the relationship. The different

kinds of intimate relationships that the questionnaire related to were explained on the information sheet and this included long term boyfriends or girlfriends as well as more casual partners and one off encounters (Barter et al. 2009).

Using questions from Barter et al.'s (2009) study, my survey documented:

- The demographic characteristics of participants
- Incidence rates of physical, emotional and sexual violence
- The frequency and impact of violence on young people
- Experience of violence at home and peer aggression

My survey did not include questions about participants instigation of violence, this is in contrast to Barter et al.'s (2009) study where young people were asked to report this. A further difference from Barter and colleagues (2009) study was the inclusion of a free text box at the end of the questionnaire allowing participants to comment and provide a context to their responses. Using a free text box counters some of the restrictions of closed questions and the limitations of 'counting' the experience of violent and abusive behaviours (Sears et al. 2006, p. 1201; Hird, 2000, p. 75).

Procedure

The survey was uploaded to the online survey software tool, Survey Monkey. I created a URL (Universal Resource Locator) web link which would take users to the survey when they clicked the link. The URL link was provided on all recruitment materials.

Participants were invited to complete the survey in a number of ways. I distributed recruitment materials (posters and leaflets) to groups and services which support young people and vocational and sixth form colleges and higher education institutions in East Anglia. At one sixth form college the link to the survey was emailed to all registered students and I was able to visit the college to hand out project leaflets and talk to young people about the research. On Twitter I periodically tweeted the URL link and I did the same thing on Facebook using the publisher box. Due to the method of recruitment for the online survey I was not able to gauge the number of young people who were contacted to participate via social media, email or by leaflet/poster (LaRose & Tsai, 2014). It is therefore not possible to provide completion rates for the online survey.

When participants clicked the link to the survey they were taken to the first 'page' of the survey which contained information about the research. Participants were informed that the questions were of a sensitive nature and may upset them. They were provided with information about what their participation would involve, how long the survey would take to complete and what would happen to the information they provided. Confidentiality and

anonymity were assured. Participants were informed that they could exit the survey at any point. They were also told that once they clicked the submit button their responses could not be withdrawn, this was reiterated on the final page of the survey where the submit button was located. Participants were instructed how to submit the completed survey, which is especially important in ensuring that participants' time and effort is not wasted and that data are not lost.

Upon completing the survey, participants were thanked for taking part and provided with a debrief 'page' containing the information of local and national support services. They were also provided with instructions on how to wipe their internet viewing history in order to protect themselves from any potential repercussions from their partner for completing the survey.

Participants

Survey responses were submitted by 354 participants via snowball sampling whereby upon completing the survey the young person would often share the survey link on social media (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). Through this process the sample 'snowballed' as other young people either repeated this process or just shared the link to the online survey. This sampling technique was fairly effective in accessing young people's experiences, which may have been more challenging had I conducted the survey on paper and sought entry into settings populated by young people. In total 233 (49 males, 182 females) of these surveys were completed by young people in the specified 16-19 year old age range.

Considering the gendered nature of intimate partner violence, with men typically reported as perpetrators of violence and young women as the victims, a higher number of self-report questionnaires from females was anticipated (McCarry, 2009; Burman & Cartmel, 2005). Whilst it has been argued that in order to understand and respond to gender-based violence it is critical to include and engage men (Carmona et al., 2012), young men are, in general, more difficult to engage in research particularly young men aged between 16 and 25. It is acknowledged that this group is especially difficult to reach (O'Neill, 2009; O'Neill & Williams, 2004) so I anticipated a smaller number of responses from men/boys.

Methodological challenges and limitations

The quantitative element of the study was intended to enable the examination of the extent and impact of intimate partner violence within young people's relationships. In addition, the use of measures from Barter et al.'s (2009) study allowed for comparisons to be made. There are however a number of limitations associated with the use of this method.

There are ongoing feminist debates with regards to the effectiveness of quantitative methods in capturing the complexity of social issues affecting women's lives. Some feminists have previously argued that data from surveys are a construction of social reality since the information has been separated from the context in which it occurred and is understood by the person involved (Farran, 1990; Pugh, 1990). Further criticism has been levelled at the subjectivity involved when devising questions to measure specific phenomenon, like violence. Using particular terminology may be meaningless to some individuals, and people may not define their experiences in the same way as terms that are used within a survey or questionnaire (Kelly et al. 1992; Graham, 1983). This issue was addressed to a certain extent with the use of questions from Barter et al.'s (2009) previous study which were created with the input of young people who identified terms that made sense and were meaningful to them.

A large number of young people were invited to participate in the research using traditional and online methods of recruitment and they were informed about the survey and what it was about meaning the decision to participate was left entirely with the young person. However, young people who self-select to participate in the study are likely to differ from those who do not take part meaning that the findings cannot be generalised (Wright, 2005). A significant limitation of collecting data online is the increased likelihood of sampling bias (Stanton, 1998; Thompson et al. 2003; Wittmer et al. 1999; Wright, 2005). With an online method, researchers lose control over who participates. This may have created self-selecting bias in the resulting data as the topic of the survey might have attracted young people who had been, or were, experiencing violence (Kraut et al. 2004; Nulty, 2008). This issue may have been further compounded by gender focused (towards women) and/or specific interest groups (with an emphasis on intimate partner violence/domestic abuse, such as domestic violence charities) sharing or retweeting the survey on social networking sites. The sample is therefore unlikely to be representative (Fricker & Schonlau, 2002).

The online survey potentially offered participants greater flexibility and enhanced privacy because they could complete it wherever and whenever they wanted to, however this may itself be considered a drawback. As noted, I had no control over who completed the survey, this meant that I did not know whether the survey was being filled in by young people nor did I know how truthful participants were with regards to the information they provided (Kraut et al. 2004). I also lost control of the administration and collection of the survey, meaning that individuals may have participated in the study multiple times (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). With face-to-face data collection I would have been able to ensure participants were only able to submit one survey. Similarly, because I was not present when young people were filling in the survey I do not know how much of an issue the presence of peers may have been in the answers participants gave, something Barter et al. (2009) identified as being a particular issue when they collected the same information face-to-face with young people.

A further limitation relates to access - participants needed access to the internet to complete the survey. In 2009, when the survey was conducted, it was known that four out of five 5 to 15 year olds in the UK had access to a computer at home and in 2012, the time the survey was conducted, 82% of 16-24 year olds used a computer every day (Hagell et al., 2012, p. 61; ONS, 2012, p. 10). Equipment and access costs are barriers to having a home internet connection for some people and young people with limited access to the internet may not have been able to complete the survey (ONS, 2012). A young person's ability to participate in the research may also have been affected by their knowledge and ability to use computers and related technology (Vehovar & Manfreda, 2008, p. 183). However, increasing use of laptops, tablets, mobile telephones with web access and the widespread use of social network applications or apps (software that can be downloaded directly to a mobile phone or tablet) may minimise these issues.

The results of the online survey need to be considered in light of the limitations outlined here. The lack of control over who completed the survey, the self-selecting bias of the sample and the potential for dishonesty in the answers participants provided means there may be significant limitations to conclusions that can be drawn from the survey data.

Ethical issues

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of East Anglia School of Social Work and Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

Anonymity and confidentiality
Participants were assured that any personal information that was collected about them would be kept private and that no identifying information would be used in the write up of the data. However, collecting surveys online poses additional ethical issues in regards to anonymity. The default option on Survey Monkey is to collect the computer IP addresses (the unique identifier for a computer) of participants who complete the survey. To assure participant anonymity, before I finalised the survey I configured the settings so that IP addresses were not being collected.

Only I had access to the Survey Monkey account. The data were downloaded from Survey Monkey and stored in a password protected document on a password protected computer.

Informed consent
All the relevant information about the research and the young person's participation was provided on the first 'page' of the survey. A warning was given about the sensitive nature of the questions and sources of further support were provided at the end of the survey. Consent was considered carefully and was addressed with the inclusion of items normally

found on a paper-based consent form. These items had to be agreed to before the next page of the survey could be opened.

Reflections on the quantitative study

When each survey was submitted I would look through the responses and summarise them. In my research diary I would reflect on each response. This reflective process was useful in documenting how I felt/reacted, for noting ideas to follow up and for identifying methodological issues and points to take forward for further exploration in the qualitative study.

I experienced a range of emotional responses when reflecting upon the surveys. There were times when I felt frustrated because participants had submitted incomplete surveys. I questioned this in my diary:

> *WHY? I wonder whether it may have been due to a realisation that they were experiencing violence? They submitted what they had filled in so they obviously wanted to share it.*

I made numerous comments like this and perhaps part of the frustration was because I could not find out why someone had chosen to leave certain questions blank or submit an incomplete survey. Unfortunately this is a problem inherent in quantitative research. I was, at other times, surprised by the extent of violence in some young people's intimate relationships when I looked through the responses. The extent of the violence experienced by some young people raised further questions that I noted down and took forward for further exploration in the qualitative study. They focused around the context of the violence and the ways that young people view and understand intimate relationships generally as well as that violence was viewed. Below are some of the questions that I noted in my research diary which arose from the quantitative study which informed the second qualitative study:

> *How does the young person view this relationship? Do they perceive it as healthy or unhealthy? Do they think they can do anything about it?*

> *Are certain forms of violence considered acceptable? As signs of love?*

Summary

The information that was gathered in the quantitative study provided insights into the nature, frequency and dynamics of different forms of violence in teenage intimate relationships. The planning, design, implementation and results of the survey informed and

underpinned the development of the qualitative study. I was able to identify possible sources for recruitment and note issues that I wanted to examine in greater depth.

5.4. Qualitative study

The overarching aim of the qualitative element of the study was to explore how young people identify, define and contextualise intimate partner violence. The research aim was explored through three of the seven research questions:

5. What behaviours do young people recognise and define as constituting partner violence?

6. How do young people talk about violence in intimate relationships?

7. Are conceptualisations of interpersonal violence linked to different gendered identities?

   a. What views of gender do young people draw on when:

      i. Describing instigators and victims of intimate partner violence

      ii. Discussing different forms of violence

Since these research questions seek to gain a deeper insight into young people's views and opinions a qualitative method was best suited to gathering this information. Qualitative methods provide a way to unpick the ways that young people construct their social worlds. They enable researchers to access experiences and interactions as they are made, taking into account their particularities (Flick, 2007). Focus group data are generated through group interaction capturing potentially rich, detailed and complex data which are dynamic and interactive. The collective nature of focus groups reveals the ways in which meaning is negotiated among people through dialogue and debate (Krueger, 1994; Bagnoli & Clark, 2010, p. 104; Barbour, 2007, p. 31; Kitzinger, 1994; Acocella, 2011). Other authors have found them to be amenable to the study of sensitive issues, such as sexual behaviour and sexual abuse, which may not often be openly discussed (Kitzinger, 2004; Frith, 2000; Ekstrand et al. 2005).

Focus groups are particularly suited to research with young people as they provide a useful space to discuss and define ideas and concepts in young people's own words (Shaw et al. 2011; Gibson, 2007). As adults, researchers are unfamiliar with the realities experienced by teenagers within their social worlds. Focus groups recognise young people as social agents in their own social worlds and allow an exploration of the way that young people themselves talk about and understand teenage intimate partner violence. It is through the communicative dialogue between participants that a fuller understanding of this phenomenon can develop from their perspective, which in turn may prevent the imposition of adult discourses (Aubert et al. 2011).

As focus groups involve dialogue and discussion between a group of individuals, they can help illuminate not just what participants think about a particular topic but importantly why

they think as they do (Barbour, 2005). Through discussion, areas of disagreement, confusion and contradiction can be studied, highlighting where there are deviations from normative discourses providing insights which can help researchers to piece together why this might be (Smithson, 2000). These differences in opinions and subtleties only emerge through the discussion of topics and issues in a group context which affords participants the opportunity to put forward their own priorities and perspectives, justify and expand on their views and develop ideas collectively (Smithson, 2000; Barbour, 2005).

Active involvement in a group discussion can empower group members to share their views, and explore issues as a unit rather than as individuals (Lichtenstein & Nanset, 2000; Sagoe, 2012; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). The collective nature of focus groups makes them particularly suited to research with marginalised groups because they provide a sense of collective power to individuals participating within them (Liamputtong, 2010; Barbour, 2005). Additionally, being in a group means other members of the group can offer peer support, mutual comfort and reassurance (Kitzinger, 2000; Wilkinson, 2004). This may be particularly beneficial where young people are asked to talk about sensitive topics. Focus groups can dilute the controlling influence of the group moderator through group interaction, offering a potentially safe environment to share views, making them a more egalitarian method of discussion (Hyde et al. 2005; Owen, 2001; Barbour, 2005; Smithson, 2000).

Feminist approach

The way the qualitative research was designed, conducted and analysed was informed by different aspects of feminist theory. These are outlined in the table below.

PERSPECTIVE	RELEVANT TENETS	APPLICATION/USE
Feminist qualitative psychology (constructivist perspective)	Influence of social context, construction of meaning and knowledge through interaction (Wilkinson, 1998)	• Participants explore issues that are relevant to them within their own social context • Exploration of co-construction of meaning through analysis of group interactions
Feminist criminology	Gender as a key force that shapes crime and social control (female victimisation, male perpetration)	• Single gender focus groups • Gendered analysis

Table 3: Feminist theories used in the research

Fieldwork process

This section outlines the qualitative fieldwork which took place between September 2012 and March 2013.

Pre-entry to the field – negotiating access

Before entering into the field careful planning, preparation and relationship building was required. I had established relationships with several college and youth project gatekeepers during the quantitative element of the research with whom I maintained contact in order to explore access to potential research participants. I also contacted a number of organisations, projects and colleges by email and telephone to discuss potential involvement in the research. My communication went unanswered by fourteen different educational settings and youth projects. I received emails from three politely declining involvement in the research for a number of reasons. One charity felt that other commitments such as college or family issues might make organising a discussion with their young people difficult. They also felt concerned about the sensitivity of the topic and taking young people out of their comfort zones. The decision that this was not a project they wanted to get involved with came from the child protection office at one college and another said the frequency of requests like mine meant they couldn't say yes to being involved with my study. In other cases positive responses to emails led to telephone calls and meetings where access to participants was agreed. In some instances this led to several focus groups being set up and undertaken and in others communication went silent. This issue highlighted the importance of building and maintaining relationships and also being flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances.

Pilot focus group discussion

A pilot focus group discussion was undertaken in early September 2012 at a vocational college in East Anglia. I negotiated access to this group initially via the college Student Welfare Advisor. In August 2012 I met with the Advisor at the college to discuss the feasibility of accessing students to participate in focus groups. During this meeting we discussed the safeguarding protocols for disclosure of violence that I had devised. This was a useful activity as the Advisor felt the protocols were appropriate and met the needs of the college and students. It also ensured that all parties understood the circumstances under which confidentiality would be breached and their role in such circumstances. Also present during this meeting was a Construction tutor. During this meeting the tutor agreed to set up two all-male focus groups with Carpentry and Joinery students. When the meeting ended he took me to meet a Health and Social Care tutor. I explained what I was doing to this tutor and she agreed for me to access one of her classes to conduct the pilot focus group discussion. The pilot focus group was undertaken with an

all-female group of 11 students aged 16-20 studying for a BTEC in Health and Social Care. The discussion took place in a classroom at the college.

Lessons learnt from the pilot focus group

Conducting the pilot focus group served a number of important functions. I reflected upon the feasibility of the study design, the adequacy of research tools and identified practical issues arising in the course of the discussion (Thabane et al. 2010). I was also able to assess the adequacy of steps taken to minimise potential risks by testing out ethical issues such as participant discomfort, distress and disclosures of violence. Reflecting upon what I learnt from doing the pilot focus group discussion informed how I undertook subsequent discussions.

Acting as a moderator

As participants arrived for the discussion I welcomed them and thanked them for attending. When the group had all arrived and were settled I introduced myself, explained the purpose of the discussion and briefly outlined the focus group process. I provided fruit juice and chocolates and encouraged the young women to help themselves. Providing refreshments was intended to set a relaxed and comfortable environment to put participants at ease. When transcribing the discussion I found the rustling of sweet wrappers annoying, however in terms of warming up the atmosphere the refreshments built rapport as participants talked to one another about what chocolate or drink they wanted and they also acted as a 'break' from what was being talked about. Participants were all given information sheets and consent forms to complete, one to keep and one which they returned to me. I then introduced basic ground-rules to encourage positive participation (see focus group topic guide in the appendix). At this point I asked participants if they had any questions. As they did not, I started the digital recorder and the focus group began.

The focus group began with an icebreaker where each person was asked to say their name and their favourite television programme. I chose this icebreaker as I was going to be showing clips from TV programmes and because this was a fairly 'light' activity to warm up the group. Starting the discussion with short introductions meant participants had already begun to actively participate and it also introduced turn-taking into the discussion. From the initial introductions I felt I had an idea of who the dominant characters in the group might be through the tone of their voice and the way they introduced themselves and my initial instincts proved to be right. During the discussion participants did take turns to put their views across. However broadly speaking I encountered two different types of participants that made running the discussion challenging (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The 'dominant talker' (Alexis) had a lot to say and would interrupt others in order to put her opinion across. At

one point in the discussion she almost spat chocolate across the table by shouting out with her mouth full. This meant there was not always opportunity for other participants to contribute to the discussion, or when they did speak up they were drowned out by loud, dominant talkers like Alexis. I also encountered the 'shy or quiet' participant who would remain silent or speak quietly meaning their contribution would go unheard if others were speaking or I did not hear what they had said. Encountering these different types of participants in the pilot discussion made me aware of the different ways that young people may contribute and the challenges of facilitating. In future discussions I tried to encourage quieter young people to participate, however I was also aware that for some participants silence was a form of participation in itself (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

At the end of the discussion participants were all asked to complete a short questionnaire about themselves (demographic information).

Group size and Power dynamics

The pilot focus group discussion took place with 11 young women. The large group size was problematic in a number of ways. Firstly there was the issue of 'crowd control' as the young women continued to talk to each other when I tried to start the discussion. The notion that 'participants have more control over the interaction than does the researcher' due to numbers appeared to be reinforced in a group of this size (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 114). I reflected upon this in my research diary:

> *At the start of the focus group they kept messing about and wouldn't listen to me. I started to panic that they weren't taking it seriously and that I wouldn't get anything from them. I loudly said that if they didn't want to listen to me they should leave. They quietened down and started listening to me.*

At this point I had taken control of the discussion, shifting the balance of power from participants to myself. I felt I had to adopt a teacher-like stance to focus their attention and to establish some kind of order. Whilst this worked insofar as the young women were quiet and listened to me this raised the issue of shifting power dynamics. However the participants soon took back control when the discussion began, regaining the balance of power by steering discussion onto topics that they wanted to talk about (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 114). In my role as facilitator I tried to interject to follow up or seek clarification and tried to steer participants when they diverged from topics that I thought were relevant to keep them on target. Sometimes this would have my desired effect and the discussion would return to issues that I wanted them to talk about. However, there were a number of occasions when I lost the group's attention and they stopped listening to me, returning the discussion to what they wanted to talk about. This made me feel frustrated and uncomfortable because it seemed that participants were trying to avoid the

issues I asked them to talk about. When this happened I panicked, worried that I wouldn't have any useable material. In that moment I became focused upon what I needed for my research and perceived what they were talking about to be irrelevant.

I met with my supervisor to discuss how the pilot focus group went and to discuss a transcript of the discussion. This meeting was useful in identifying that letting participants set the research agenda by taking the discussions into areas that were important to them could provide unexpected insights. I learnt through this pilot focus group discussion that conversations that seemed to me to be 'off-topic', which caused me to panic, actually provided rich, complex insights by participants connecting ideas in ways that that made sense to them but which I had not necessarily anticipated (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 71-2). In future discussions I felt more confident in giving groups more free rein.

A third issue inherent in larger focus group discussions is cross-talk where participants talk over one another. Cross-talk in the pilot group made it difficult to ensure all voices were heard and made transcribing the discussion difficult (Raby, 2010, p. 10). Taken together these issues led me to conclude that smaller groups of 5-8 young people would be a better number of participants in subsequent focus groups.

Research tools

I prepared a focus group guide containing topics I wanted to cover and questions I wanted to ask, this can be found in Appendix 5. The guide was informed by the focus group schedule of Bowen et al. (2013). To counteract some of the problems identified by Bowen et al. (2013) with their schedule, such as questions resulting in an emphasis on negative aspects of gender identity, I developed my guide so that questions were fairly open ended so participants could take the discussion into areas they felt were relevant to them. The focus group guide was structured to mark different stages of the discussion using the types of questions outlined by Krueger (1998); I used an Opening question to get participants to introduce themselves; Introductory questions were asked about what relationships are and the kinds of things that the young people think are and are not acceptable in these relationships; broad, Key questions were asked after participants watched visual clips to explore their views of a range of violent scenarios, and; after providing a summary of the discussion to participants, Ending questions were used to ask young people to identify what they thought the most important issue was that was raised in the discussion and to give them an opportunity to discuss anything that they thought was important to the discussion but which was not brought up. The focus group guide provided a structure which helped me to navigate through the discussion.

I showed participants a number of video clips containing a range of violent behaviours to prompt discussion. The pilot group discussion included one video clip from television

programme *Waterloo Road*, two clips from a short film called *Crush* and five clips from the UK Government's *This is Abuse* social marketing campaign (Home Office, 2010). I felt that the visual material was effective in facilitating discussion as young people identified specific things within the clips that they wanted to draw attention to and discuss. Upon reflection I think I used too many visual clips within the pilot group discussion which meant there was a lack of depth to some of the discussions and views that were put forward. After a few minutes of discussing a clip I got a sense that participants were waiting for me to put the next clip on because the discussion would peter out. I decided that in subsequent discussions I would use two clips from the short film *Crush.* These were slightly longer than the other clips and contained a variety of violent and abusive behaviour.

Methodological challenges and limitations

The qualitative study was intended to explore and gather insights into the ways young people identify, define and contextualise teenage intimate partner violence. There are however a number of potential limitations associated with the use of this method.

Focus group discussions involve individuals sharing their views and opinions in a group of their peers. This can be problematic in several ways. Thinking that their view will be considered incorrect or naïve or putting forward a perspective which goes against the normative views of the group may have deterred some participants from sharing their thoughts (Smithson, 2000). This issue can be heightened in focus groups with young people who may fear peer group disapproval or ridicule (Smithson, 2000). However, this is not an issue limited to this method. Participating in surveys, questionnaires and interviews can also result in participants giving answers or accounts that they perceive as acceptable and which do not deviate from normative discourses (Bryman, 1988). Alternative views might also go unheard if one or several members of a group dominate the discussion. This can mean that the views of the dominating group members are the only ones which are clearly articulated whilst other opinions or dissenting voices are silenced (Hollander, 2004; Vicsek, 2010; Smithson, 2000). However, as was noted earlier, the pilot focus group discussion made me aware of the different ways young people might contribute and enabled me to encourage quieter young people to participate in subsequent focus groups (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Gibson, 2007).

My gender, as a female researcher, may have led participants to make assumptions about how I expected them to portray themselves and their perspectives in the discussions (Sallee & Harris, 2011). As most of the groups involved participants of the same gender and parts of the discussions involved talking specifically about gender, this may have heightened the way that young people performed their gender within the focus groups (Sallee & Harris, 2011). This may have led some young people to emphasise some aspects of themselves or gender identities more broadly, whilst downplaying others. A potential consequence of this is that

some participants may have adopted gendered behaviours or shared views which reduced the likelihood of them having their gender identities challenged or questioned by their peers (Sallee & Harris, 2011). This issue may have been heightened for young men who were performing their gender identity to me, as an older female researcher. Their perceptions of my gender performance and expectations may have meant some participants held back or were less forthcoming in sharing certain perspectives, i.e. stereotypical or sexist views (Sallee & Harris, 2011).

Due to the number of participants that are sought for focus groups, they can be more costly and time consuming to organise, plan and run in comparison to other methods such as questionnaires (Lam et al. 2001). This issue may be exacerbated when the research is seeking views on topics that young people may find difficult to talk about, such as intimate partner violence as the topic may discourage individuals from taking part. The logistical aspect of focus group organisation might also have been compounded by the fact I was seeking single gender group composition. A practical limitation of this method therefore is that it places considerable demands on my time as the researcher due the labour intensive nature of planning, organising, setting up and running the discussions. However, I spent a lot of time and investment at the planning stage to smooth out any issues with the research tools, to build relationships with potential sources of recruitment and identify potential logistical issue. Through regular contact and attendance at colleges and youth charities/projects, telephone calls and emails dealing with logistics I was able to use my time more effectively (Barbour, 2007). Although additional costs can be incurred through travel, room hire and purchase of refreshments, this was all taken into account during the initial planning stages to ensure it did not have a detrimental impact on the study (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999).

Personal strengths and limitations

It is important to acknowledge my own personal limitations and consider their impact upon conducting the focus groups. I have moderate to severe hearing loss which can sometimes make it difficult for me to hear and understand other people when they are speaking. When I reflected upon my experience of doing the first discussion I thought about whether I may have missed some of the things that participants said. This is an issue which is compounded in focus groups because there are a group of people involved in the interaction which can lead to overlapping talk. Because I have had impaired hearing for some time I have developed strategies to enhance my ability to 'hear' what people are saying, for example lip reading and using long pauses and silences so that I have time to process what people say. I am also more attuned to people's body language and facial expressions which can help me to understand what is being communicated and enables me to respond in the most appropriate way. As I knew and understood the potential issues that may arise during the focus group because of my hearing loss I felt comfortable asking

participants to repeat what they had said if I did not hear them. Even so, when I transcribed the first discussion I discovered that sometimes I misheard or did not hear, particularly when people talked over one another. This is a problem that can occur in any focus group whether facilitated by someone who has hearing loss or not. Reflecting on how I initially perceived my hearing loss as a limitation within the research, I now think it was particularly beneficial. I felt that my use of silence and awareness of body language and facial expressions helped to encourage participation and generate interactive data (Braun & Clark, 2013).

The data collected from the pilot focus group discussion were discussed in detail with my first and second supervisor and considered to be of value and included within the data analysis in the main study.

Main fieldwork

The main fieldwork took place during college term-time and commenced in September 2012. Participants were recruited from a Vocational College, a Sixth Form College and an Entry to Employment project.

Main fieldwork sample

My qualitative study was informed by the survey I undertook to explore young people's experiences of violence from an intimate partner. I decided that the age range I was interested in recruiting were 16-19 year olds who lived in one county in East Anglia. I chose this age range for a number of reasons. Firstly, I wanted the age range to reflect the characteristics of the sample from the survey. Secondly I anticipated that older adolescents were more likely to have had an intimate relationship, and even if they had not I thought that relationships would be in their minds and they would have views about them. Finally, teenagers as young as 13 may have already experienced abuse within their own relationships or witnessed violence at home (Fox et al., 2013). Whilst I did not ask young people to discuss their own experiences I was aware that these experiences may have impacted on their views and understandings of violence in intimate relationships.

Where possible I tried to undertake focus groups with pre-existing groups as I wanted participants to feel comfortable and thought that if they already knew each other they might be more open and relaxed (Kitzinger, 2000). Because I recruited participants from three different educational settings the research includes the views of young people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Recruitment Source	Females	Males	Total
Vocational college			
Group 1	11		11
Group 2	8		8
Group 3		8	8
Group 4		7	7
Group 5	10	2	12
Sixth Form College			
Group 6	4		4
Group 7		2	2
Entry to Employment Project			
Group 8	3	7	10
TOTAL	36	26	62

Table 4 - Composition of qualitative research sample

Fieldwork at vocational college

As noted previously access to participants at the vocational college was negotiated through discussions with the college Student Welfare Advisor. Initially I emailed him outlining the study and what students' involvement would entail. Following this email a meeting was organised to further discuss the research. Also present at this meeting was the Construction tutor who was responsible for organising student tutorials on subjects unrelated to what they were studying. In this meeting I went into more detail about the study and outlined to the Advisor and the tutor the safeguarding procedures for potential disclosures of violence. I assured them that the study had received appropriate ethical permission and provided copies of the participant information sheet and consent form for both members of college staff. Two all-male groups were then arranged with the tutor's carpentry and joinery students. The tutor also played an important role in organising the pilot focus group and a further all-female focus group by introducing me to the health and social care tutor. After I had conducted six focus groups I contacted the construction tutor to see whether there were any other groups that he thought might like to take part in the research. This led to two further focus groups, meaning that the majority of focus groups (5) were from one establishment.

The focus groups at the vocational college took place in classrooms which were equipped with facilities to show video clips. A laptop was provided by the construction tutor in order to play the visual clips. The equipment was quite slow and meant that the clip would freeze and the group would have to wait for it to load. When this happened I would start it again

from the beginning. A further issue that I encountered at the vocational college was background noise that interfered with the discussion. The car park where students parked motorbikes and scooters was direct outside the building and the noise when students left could be heard during the discussion. The last discussion took place in a different building to the others and the room we were in was next door to the music room. Throughout the discussion the sound of a guitar being played could be heard.

Four of the five focus groups (including the pilot study) undertaken at the vocational college were single gender; however the final group discussion was a mixed gender group. Additionally the male participants in the mixed group were outside of my target age range being 29 and 44 respectively. Although this had not been planned I felt that their presence was beneficial in some respects as they both drew on their own past experiences of violence from a partner within the discussion. However, I also think that possibly because they were older than the young women in the group, they sometimes took control of the discussion which might have silenced other participants. To counteract this I did try to encourage quieter young women to participate by turning towards them and asking questions in their direction. This did work to a degree but I sensed through some participants body language that they were uncomfortable so did not try to press them further.

Fieldwork at Entry to Employment project

Access to young people attending the Entry to Employment project was negotiated through a Youth and Community Worker at a project providing advice, counselling and youth work to young people in Norfolk. I had previously met the Youth worker when I was publicising the survey that was undertaken to explore young people's experiences of intimate partner violence. I had mentioned the focus group discussions in this initial meeting and the Youth worker had been keen to discuss this further when I reached that stage of the research. I met with her again when I had begun to set up focus group discussions and explained what I wanted to do. The Youth worker said that she would have to justify using her time to help with the research and would have to speak to her manager before she could agree to recruit any young people to the study. The safeguarding protocols were discussed and I left copies of the participant information sheet and consent form. Following this meeting the Youth worker contacted me by telephone to let me know she had arranged an all-male focus group at the Entry to Employment project.

The focus group took place in a large classroom style room in a community building where the young people attended the project. Just before I entered the room to set up and begin the focus group I found out that it was a mixed gender group and not an all-male group. The project manager said she would take the young women out if I wanted her to, however I did not want to exclude anyone from the discussion who wanted to take part so I undertook the

focus group with a mixed gender group. Having a mixed gender group arguably allowed me to compare how ideas are discussed and developed in single gender groups and in what ways this differed in a mixed gender group. Two youth workers in addition to the first Youth worker were present throughout the discussion.

I encountered several issues in this discussion. Firstly, the *Crush* visual clips would not load on the computer at this venue. This caused disruption to the discussion as the manager of the project had to bring in a laptop for me to try the clips on. The clips would not work on this either so I had to revert to using the *Waterloo Road* clip which I had with me on a DVD. This clip did facilitate discussion and this was the longest focus group lasting for almost an hour. Secondly, the evening before the focus group I had spoken to the Youth worker a Brown and we had discussed and agreed that her role within the focus group was to introduce me, to help me manage the group and for her to pass out refreshments. I reiterated this to her before the focus group. However, during the discussion she did interject a few times and at one point began a conversation with one of the youth workers. Towards the end of the discussion when I asked the young people if there was anything they thought we had not discussed that they wanted to cover I think the Youth worker panicked that they had not talked about everything I wanted them to. She interjected to ask the group 'what about control in relationships?' This meant that participants were responding to a question that the Youth worker thought was important to the discussion, rather than participants identifying and exploring what was important to them. Even with some of the panic inducing technical issues I particularly enjoyed this focus group. The young people seemed keen to share their views and were funny and friendly. When I was packing away my things at the end of the discussion one young man showed me his tattoo and asked if I liked it and two others waved from where they were playing table tennis as I left.

Fieldwork at Sixth Form College

I negotiated access to young people at the sixth form college through the Student Welfare Advisor. I had previously met her when I was undertaking the survey and mentioned the focus group discussions in this initial meeting. I kept in contact with the advisor via email. She invited me to set up a stand at a college wellbeing event in October 2012. At this event I put up posters and provided leaflets about the research. I had a box where students could leave their contact details if they were interested in taking part in the research. During the wellbeing fair I gave a female student a leaflet about the research and she said 'you wouldn't want me in a focus group I think bullying is alright'. I encouraged her to think about taking part in a discussion telling her that I was interested in hearing her views. At the wellbeing fair four students left their contact details. The Welfare advisor organised a date and time for the focus groups to take place and I contacted the students who had given me their contact details, two of these participated in a focus group. I provided the advisor with a paragraph containing information about the research and what young people's

participation would involve. She sent this via email to every student at the college. Two focus groups were set up, an all-female group attended by four young women and an all-male group in which two young men participated.

Both focus groups took place in a media studies classroom which had up-to-date computer facilities. Because the room was quite stuffy a door which opened onto a path at the side of the college had been propped open. Whilst this let fresh air in there was some background noise from outside which interfered with the discussion. In the all-female group at the sixth form college participants did not know each other. I found this focus group the most challenging because it was difficult to get the discussion going. In addition to not knowing each other two of the young women were quiet and reserved. This meant that I had to direct questions towards them in order for them to contribute to the discussion. Unlike the other discussions, in this focus group participants initially responded directly to me rather than talking among themselves. They also tended not to disagree or challenge one another. In the context of my research it appears that participating in a focus group discussion with people they know creates an easier context to discuss and debate the issues.

Data management and analysis

Recordings of group discussions were transferred to a password protected computer after each focus group. Once transferred to the computer recordings were deleted from the digital recorder. I fully transcribed each focus group after the discussion which ensured consistency in format and staying as true to the conversation as possible (Bazeley, 2013, p. 73). The transcription process allowed me to build familiarity with the data and became an early form of analysis as I began to formulate ideas and identify potential themes (Bazeley, 2013, p. 73; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 18). Transcripts were anonymised by changing the names of colleges, projects, participants, tutors and youth workers. Throughout the coding process I met with my supervisor for regular discussions. These discussions were instrumental in the development of the coding process as we independently coded two transcripts and met to compare codes and discuss their definitions. This helped to refine codes and provided checks and balances (Bazeley, 2013, p. 155; Berends & Johnston, 2005). I listened to the recordings throughout the analysis process which kept me close to the data helping to identify new areas for investigation and aiding the development/solidification of ideas. I kept an analysis diary to record thoughts as they arose and for doodling diagrams and tables around concepts and ideas.

Using the guidelines suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis was undertaken to identify themes and patterns across the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 8). Coding was driven by the data using an inductive 'bottom-up' approach whereby I identified all possible codes within the corpus of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial exploration of the data was undertaken using a semantic approach where codes/themes

were identified from the surface meanings of the words used (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13). The semantic approach progressed ideas from description to interpretation leading to theorisation of broader meanings and implications. Some themes developed beyond the semantic content into latent themes which examined underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations of teenage intimate relationships and intimate partner violence (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13; Bowen et al. 2013).

Initial line-by-line coding was undertaken on paper copies of focus group transcripts. Passages rather than small segments of data were coded in order to maintain sufficient context without diluting the meaning of the codes within the text (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 72). Data were coded for as many potential themes as possible meaning that passages would have multiple codes applied to them to capture all aspects of what was going on (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 19; Bazeley, 2013, p. 144-5). The initial coding of the data revealed that multiple levels of interpretation, coding and analysis needed to be undertaken. Transcripts were therefore coded in two ways; firstly the literal content of what was said was coded and then data were coded for group dynamics/interactions between participants.

Once all paper transcripts had been coded I collated codes together into broad topics in two separate tables, one for content and another for interactions. At this stage transcripts were uploaded to NVivo 10. NVivo was particularly beneficial in managing data, organising ideas and providing quick access to the data and useful analysis functions/tools (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 3). Using NVivo allowed me to develop a systematic and methodical approach to data management, coding and analysis. Case nodes were created for each participant to record attribute values for each case (participant). Case nodes contained demographic information (including gender, age, children, education etc.) which was used to compare subgroups within the sample. At each stage of analysis I kept multiple digital copies of files labelled by date so that I could track, review and revise ideas.

Analysis in NVivo began with line-by-line coding of the focus group transcripts using the coding tables collated from the coded paper transcripts as a guide. Coding all data sources generated 251 codes. The next stage of analysis involved rereading the entire dataset to review and revise codes. I examined each code and recoded data into new themes or merged similar codes. I then sorted the different codes into potential themes by creating a structured, hierarchical coding system organising categories into conceptual groups and subgroups. This process became a 'fine-tuning' of the coding frame which helped in identifying subthemes and in understanding how themes fitted together (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 21). At this stage overarching themes were already becoming apparent and 'tree nodes' relating to the themes of 'relationships', 'gender', 'violence' and 'telling/seeking help' were created to group together and organise connected nodes. A 'miscellaneous' tree

node was created to store nodes that did not appear to fit within the main themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 20).

The final phase of analysis involved defining and naming the themes and sub-themes that would be presented in the analysis. I reviewed the data for each theme to check that the extracts captured the meaning of the data, considering the themes individually and in relation to each other. I did not make any changes to my overarching themes because I felt that they captured the content of the data within them. I developed further sub-themes within each theme which helped me to organise and structure each overarching theme.
The description of the data analysis process outlined here is linear; however the analysis was a recursive process (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 16). At each stage of the analysis I went back and forth between stages checking, reviewing and revising my themes.

Ethical issues
Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of East Anglia School of Social Work and Psychology Research Ethics Committee which applies the ethical guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society and the Joint University Council: Social Work Education Committee.

Informed consent was sought verbally and via a signed consent form which outlined the purpose of the research and what participants were being asked to do. My role as a researcher was explained and I informed participants how their responses would be used in the research. I also explained the circumstances under which confidentiality would be broken and what would happen. The information sheet and protocol for disclosure can be found in Appendix 1 and 4. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the discussion at any time and were able to leave before the focus group commenced. Young people were given the opportunity to ask any additional questions they might have about their consent or the research in general before the discussion began. At the end of the focus group young people were verbally debriefed and provided with a debrief sheet containing information about relevant local and national support services, groups and centres. Participants were also signposted to relevant people and/or services within their setting who could offer them support and advice.

Participants were informed that the focus group data would be anonymised. All names, places and events have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect participants' identities. Young people were assured that any personal information that they shared would remain confidential. Questionnaires containing demographic information were stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in a locked room. Research data was password protected and stored on a password protected computer. Only I had access to research data and participants personal information.

Focus groups are comprised of multiple participants which makes assuring confidentiality problematic. Participants were asked to keep the views of other focus group members private on the participant information sheet and verbally at the start of the focus group. I also verbally reiterated this when I went through the ground rules for the discussion. The ground rules can be found in the focus group schedule in Appendix 3. I explained to participants that if they did want to talk about the discussion outside of the focus group it was ok to do so generally without identifying other young people who had taken part in any way.

Gatekeepers – perceptions, privacy and disclosure

I noticed upon reflection a number of things related to my experiences with gatekeepers. Firstly, their own perceptions of what constitutes violence in a relationship. Comments from the welfare advisors at the vocational and sixth form colleges minimised the experience of victims of violence who had been to see them. At the sixth form college the welfare advisor told me that a female student would regularly go to see her about her abusive boyfriend telling her that he had hit her. She commented that she felt this young woman interpreted a 'tap on the arm' from her partner as constituting violence, regardless of the young woman's own belief that this was violent behaviour. The welfare advisors comment draws on her own understandings of violence to minimise this young woman's experience and highlight how her interpretation of violence relates to the act itself rather than the impact that such violence may have on the young person, who sought out her help.

Secondly, some gatekeepers' views of victims of partner violence demonstrated a lack of understanding. During a meeting at a charity that supports young people, a senior support worker described how a young gay man 'on their books' had experienced severe violence in an intimate relationship that had profoundly affected him. At the vocational college the welfare advisor explained how she thought that some young people who had one violent relationship after another were 'addicted to crisis'. In her view some young people experiencing partner violence seek out and are dependent on these kinds of relationships. Both these comments highlight a limited understanding of this issue as it is experienced by young people.

This leads on to the second issue, the willingness of gatekeepers to disclose information about themselves and about students who had sought their help. A welfare advisor disclosed their own experience of violence in an intimate relationship and the youth worker talked about witnessing violence within her family when she was growing up. Both welfare advisors disclosed to me examples of violent relationships experienced by specific students. My reflection on this experience is that gatekeepers were prone to over-disclosure, which could have been because they thought that as I was studying the topic it

was ok to tell me these things. They did not consider that what they told me might have an emotional impact on me or their duty of confidentiality to the students. The disclosure of students' experiences raises the issue of privacy. The welfare advisors' role is to provide support, information and advice within the parameters of safeguarding and data protection policies.

These experiences raised questions for me about what gatekeepers' views and perceptions might mean in terms of how they work with young people and whether they disclosed information to me because they did not have another outlet to discuss and talk through these issues. The professional roles of the gatekeepers require emotional labour where they 'produce an emotional state in another person while at the same time managing their own emotions' (Dickson-Swift et al. 2009, p. 63).

Reflections

Locating the self in the research process

Feminist research emphasises understanding our own experiences as researchers as well as women's experiences (Gray et al., 2013). Considering 'who I am' – my characteristics, roles and experiences - and how this influences data collection and analysis is an important aspect of the research. My position as a female researcher placed me in a dual, shifting role where at different times I was powerful/powerless. This position shifted depending on the group of participants that I was interacting with. As a woman I share common ground with the young women in the research and I thought that this would help me to gather their personal views. However, I found that my position as a slightly older woman, created resistance towards me from some of the young women. Whilst I was in the position of female researcher, young women also positioned themselves within the context of gendered power relations. Ideas about what it means to be female are internalised and, as a result, young women police and assess the appearance and behaviour of other women who they believe are policing them (Fine, 1994).

At the start of this thesis I acknowledged that I experienced violence and abuse from an intimate partner as a teenager. Inevitably, in undertaking this research I have revisited and reflected upon what happened to me. I had not really thought about what happened to me for a number of years so revisiting these memories was, at times, difficult and perhaps more painful than I thought it would be. I wrote an account of my experiences, by doing this I was able to acknowledge my own experiences and distance myself. This research is personal and important to me and I believe that my experiences enhance the depth and breadth of my understanding of this topic.

5.5 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design and processes that were undertaken in conducting this research. I have discussed and reflected upon each stage of the research. In the following chapters the findings of the research are presented. The findings chapters begin with the results of the online survey which examined the nature, frequency, dynamics and impact of different forms of teenage intimate partner violence.

Chapter 6: Quantitative study findings

This chapter reports the results of the quantitative online survey which aimed to explore the nature, extent, dynamics and impact of different forms of teenage intimate partner violence on a sample of young people aged 16-19. This chapter addresses this aim and is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are young people's experiences of intimate partner violence?

2. How does experiencing violence from an intimate partner make young people feel?

3. In what contexts does violence occur and persist? (Associated factors)

4. Is violence occurring more often in any particular groups?

The chapter begins with an outline of the characteristics of the survey sample. Young people's experiences of intimate partner violence and the dynamics and impact of this violence are considered. Experiences of family and peer violence (associated factors) are then described and their interrelationship to intimate partner violence is examined. The chapter concludes with a discussion and summary of the results of the survey.

6.1 Survey sample

In total, 354 participants submitted responses to the online survey. Two thirds of young people who completed the survey stated that they were between the specified 16-19 years age range. A small number of respondents were younger (aged 15) and there were 9 responses from older young people (aged 20, 21 and 26). Almost a third (31%) of the sample (110) did not state their age. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of the overall sample by age.
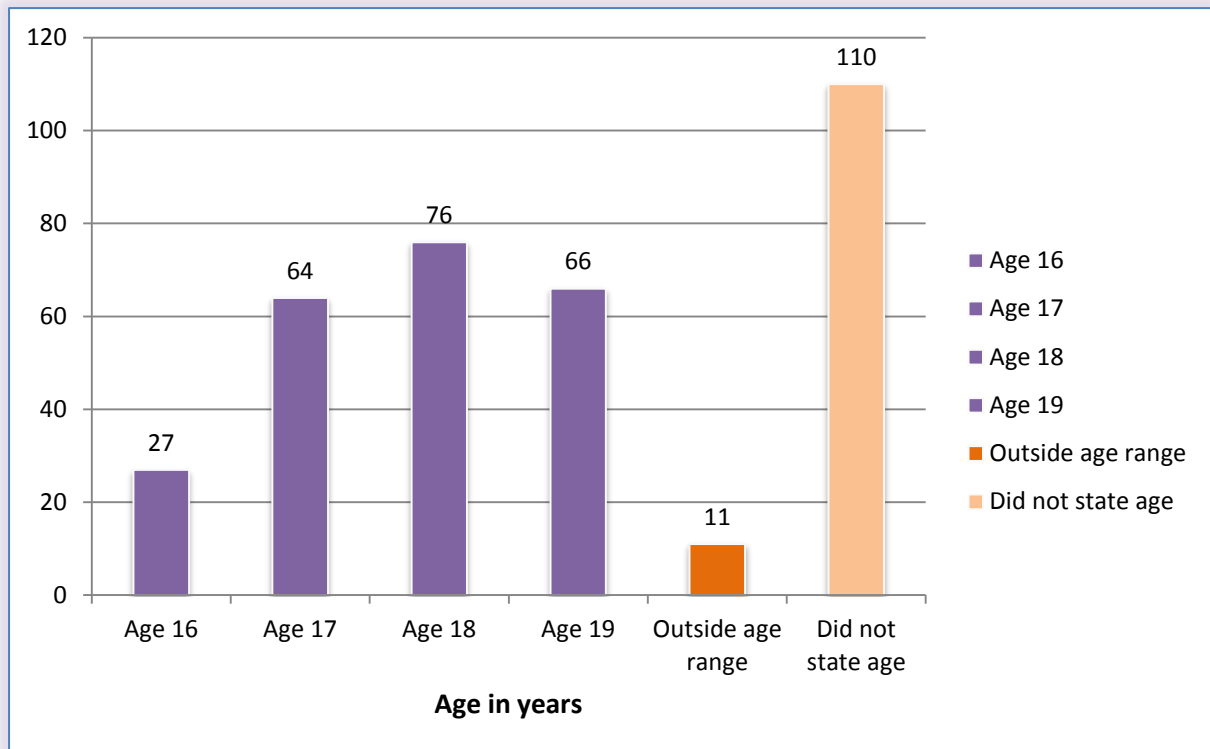
Figure 3 Age of young people (overall survey sample)

Overall the survey was successful in reaching the target age group, and there was a large enough sample of responses from 16-19 year olds to analyse. The following description and analysis is of the 233 surveys where age was stated as being between 16-19 years.

Age and gender and age of the sample

A third (33%) of the sample were 18 years of age. Participants aged 17 and 19 made up 27% and 28% of the sample respectively and 16 year olds made up the lowest proportion at 12%. Slightly more than three quarters (78%, n=182) of the sample were female and 21% (n=49) were male (two participants omitted gender). A higher number of responses from females were anticipated for two reasons. Firstly, men are typically reported and understood as perpetrators of violence and young women as the victims. The fact that participants were self-selecting coupled with the survey being predominantly advertised and shared online by organisations which take a gendered view of partner violence, meant that certain groups of people were more likely to complete it. Secondly, young men are, in general, more difficult to engage in research particularly young men aged between 16 and 25 making it especially difficult to reach this group (O'Neill, 2009; O'Neill & Williams, 2004). In light of these potential limitations the number of young men (around a fifth) who participated within this study are considered a good size. Figure 4 presents a breakdown of survey participants by age and gender.

Figure 4 Age and gender of survey participants
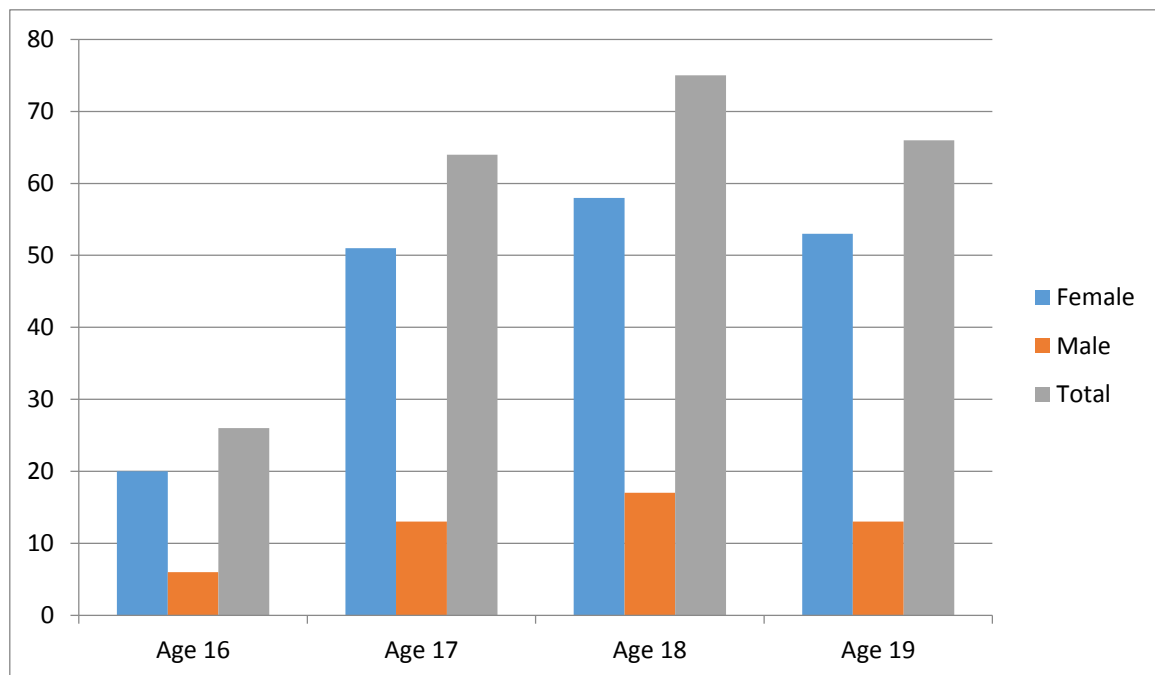
Ethnicity of the sample

Most participants (91%, n=213) described themselves as White (n=197 White British, n=13 White other, n=3 White Irish). It was expected that the sample would be constituted of a high number of white participants, as White is the majority ethnic group in England and Wales making up 86% of the resident population (ONS, 2012, p.1). Additionally, the study was intended to be a case study of a shire county in the eastern region of England. It is estimated that 90% of the population in the East of England are white which is slightly higher than the national average (ONS, 2012). This is reflected in the ethnicities reported by young people completing the survey. A small number of participants were Asian (n=7), of mixed ethnicities (n=7), Chinese (n=1), or either did not state (n=2) or reported 'other' as their ethnicity (n=3).

Disability

Six young people reported some form of disability: 5 girls and 1 boy. Young people were not asked to state what their disability was.

Location of the sample

Participants were asked to provide their postcodes and these were used to identify the geographic location of the sample. While thirty per cent (n=71) of the sample resided in the East of England, 43% of responses were from outside this region and 27% (n=62) of participants did not state their location. By collecting data online it was impossible to control the geographical distribution of the survey, this may also have been exacerbated by the survey being publicised on social networking sites. Whilst it was intended for the survey

to be a case study of young people residing in a shire county in the East of England, the map below in figure 5 highlights the distribution of participants from across the UK.

27% (n=62) did not state their location

2% (n=4) were from outside the UK

5%, 11 young people

2%, 5 young people

4%, 10 young people

4%, 10 young people

6%, 15 young people

1%, 2 young people

30%, 71 young people

5%, 12 young people

3%, 8 young people

7%, 16 young people

3%, 7 young people

Scotland

North East

North West

Northern Ireland

Yorkshire & Humberside

East Midlands

West Midlands

Wales

East Anglia

London

South East

South West

Figure 5. Location of survey sample

Although gathering data via an online survey increased the potential of accessing a larger sample, this method was therefore not without drawbacks (Lefever et al. 2007). It is therefore worth re-emphasising that there are additional practical issues that need to be addressed when using online methods to collect data from individuals. In particular, consideration needs to be paid to controlling access to the online instrument so only appropriate participants can complete it (Best & Krueger, 2005, p. 221).

Deprivation

The postcodes provided by participants were also used to capture the percentage of the sample living in areas of high and low deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is used to calculate an overall measure of multiple deprivation for every Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) in England[3]. The IMD is used widely to analyse patterns of deprivation

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[3] The IMD measure of multiple deprivation made up of seven LSOA level domain indices. These are Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Other Services, Crime and Living Environment. The indicators are combined into a single deprivation score for each LSOA; these

and to identify areas that might benefit from specific funding for special initiatives or programmes. Table 5 provides an indication of the regional patterns of deprivation within England.

Region	Level of deprivation			
	1% most deprived	5% most deprived	10% most deprived	20% most deprived
North East	12%	10%	9%	8%
North West	52%	35%	28%	22%
Yorkshire & The Humber	17%	18%	17%	14%
East Midlands	5%	5%	6%	7%
West Midlands	9%	17%	17%	15%
East of England	2%	2%	3%	4%
London	0%	7%	12%	19%
South East	3%	4%	4%	6%
South West	2%	3%	4%	4%

Table 5 Regional breakdown of LSOAs at various levels of deprivation (DCLG, 2011)

Within the present study 46% of the sample provided only a partial postcode, no postcode at all or lived outside of the UK. One hundred and twenty participants living in England provided their full postcodes. As a percentage of this four per cent (n=5) live in the 10% most deprived locations and 8% (n=9) live in the 20% most deprived locations. In comparison 13% (n=15) and 14% (n=17) respectively lived in the 20% and 10% least deprived areas. Therefore whilst just over a quarter of the sample live in the least deprived areas in England, slightly under a third of the sample live in areas of deprivation between the 20% most and least deprived. The remainder fell somewhere between these two poles.

Family and household composition

Two thirds of participants in the present study lived with both their parents (64%) the remaining third lived in a single parent family (13%), a reconstituted family (9%) or some other setting including with extended family, siblings, foster parents or a partner (31%). With the transition into adulthood extending and becoming more complex, with reduced

scores are ranked from 1 to 32482, where a rank of 1 indicates the most deprived LSOA in England and 32482 indicates the least deprived.

welfare support and increasing labour market insecurity, it is not surprising that the majority of participants within the study currently live within the parental home (Stone et al. 2011). Young adults are more likely to experience shared living in their twenties and to live alone in their thirties (Heath, 2008; Stone et al. 2011).

A particularly interesting aspect of family and household composition is the number of cohabiting couples[4] (7%) and young people with children of their own (3%)[5]. Having children or living with a partner has been found to increase the risk of violence from a partner when compared to those without children and who live within the parental home (Abramsky et al. 2011).

Employment/education status

The majority of young people (87%, n=202) were currently in full time education with 1% (n=2) of young people in part time education. Eight per cent (n=19) of participants were either employed full or part time or undertaking voluntary work. Four young people (2%) were unemployed and available for work, 1% (n=2) were on a Government supported training scheme, one participant was permanently sick or disabled and one looked after the children or home and a further 1% (n=2) were doing 'something else'. The high number of young people completing the survey who were currently in full time education may be linked to who publicised the survey link both on and offline.

Young people's intimate relationships

Overall, almost all participants reported having had a partner (n=230, 99%), with 221 young people identifying their partner as a boyfriend or girlfriend. The majority of young people (87%, n=202) had partners of the opposite sex. Sixteen participants, (12 females and 4 males), reported same sex partners. Fifteen participants (6%) did not state their partners' gender.

At the time of the study, just over half of male participants (n=25, 52%) and sixty two per cent of female participants (n=112) had a partner. In comparison to young men who reported having opposite sex partners of the same age (57%)[6] or between 1 and 3 years younger (29%), young women were more likely to report having an older opposite sex partner (52%) than a partner the same age as them (39%) or younger by one year (9%). Looking in more detail at the reported age difference between young women and their partners, just over a third were a year older (n=20, 36%), 24% (n=13) were 2 years older and 15% (n=8) were 3 years older. The remaining quarter (n=14) of females' current partners were older by between 4 and 13 years. Large age gaps between some of the young women and their partners may be concerning as age differentials in teenage relationships have

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[4] Cohabiting either in their own household (n=8), with friends (n=3) or with one partner's parents (n=5).
[5] Living either with both parents (n=3) or in some other setting (n=3).
[6] Half of male participants' current opposite sex partners were the same age as them (n=12, 57%), a quarter were younger by between 1 and 3 years (n=6, 29%) and 14% (n=3) had a partner who was older by one year.

been noted to increase inequalities between partners in a relationship, increasing young women's risk of experiencing multiple forms of violence and being coerced into sexual exploitation (Barter et al. 2009, p. 189).

With regards to same sex relationships, three male participants had a partner a year younger than them and two had partners who were much older by between 5 and 7 years. Whilst of the six female participants in same sex relationships one had a partner who was younger by one year, two had partners the same age as them and three had partners who were older than them by 1 and 5 years.

6.2 Older teenager's experience of violence in their intimate relationships

This section reports the results of the survey with regards to young people's experiences of physical, emotional and sexual violence in their intimate relationships. It discusses the dynamics of the violence with regards to how many of the young person's relationships had contained violence, whether the violence changed in severity after the first incident and what impact their experience of violence had on them.

The perceived impact of the violence is also outlined and this was measured by young people selecting from a list of options about how the violence made them feel (Barter et al. 2009, p. 46). To aid analysis responses were grouped into two categories: 'negative impact' and 'no impact'. 'Negative impact' responses included scared/frightened, angry/annoyed, humiliated and upset/unhappy. No impact responses included loved/protected, no effect and thought it was funny.

The following figures refer only to those young people who reported a relationship experience.

Physical violence

Participants were firstly asked whether any of their partners had ever used physical force such as pushing, slapping, hitting or holding them down. Thirty four per cent (n=78) of participants had experienced some form of physical violence from a partner. Around a third (37%, n=68) of young women reported experiencing some form of physical force from a partner. In comparison this was almost halved for young men with 18% (n=9) stating their partner had been physically violent towards them.

Secondly, young people were also asked whether a partner had ever used more severe physical force such as punching, strangling, beating them up or hitting them with an object. Fewer young people reported (11%, n=25) experiencing more severe physical force. In keeping with the findings from the previous question, girls (11%, n=20) reported experiencing more severe physical force than boys (6%, n=3). In addition more young women reported experiencing repeated physical force (19%, n=35) and severe physical force (6%) than young men (12%, 4%). As in Barter et al.'s study (2009, p. 44), it is not

known 'how young people determined if their experiences constituted severe violence'. Table 6 presents young people's experiences of physical violence.

Have any partners…	Used physical force such as pushing, slapping, hitting or holding you down?		Used any more severe physical force such as punching, strangling, beating you up, hitting you with an object?	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Once	33 (18%)	3 (7%)	9 (5%)	2 (4%)
A few times	29 (16%)	5 (11%)	10 (6%)	1 (2%)
Often	6 (3%)	-	1 (0.6%)	-
All the time	-	1 (2%)	-	1 (2%)

Table 6 – Young people's experiences of physical violence

Just under a quarter of participants (23%, n= 54) had experienced physical force only and two participants had experienced only severe physical force. Ten per cent of participants (n=23) had experienced both physical force and severe physical force, this was experienced by more females (n=19) than males (n=2).

To aid statistical analysis the range of answers to each question were reduced to 'had' or 'had not' experienced physical partner violence, both categories of physical violence and severe physical violence were then combined into one mutually exclusive category. A significant association was found between gender and being a recipient of physical violence from a partner ($x^2(1) = 4.365$, $p < .05$), meaning that young women are significantly more likely than young men to experience physical violence from a partner.

Physical violence dynamics

Seventeen per cent (n=7) of males stated that physical violence had occurred in only one relationship, this was almost double for young women with 31% (n=54) stating that physical violence had happened in one relationship. A minority of female (n=7) and male participants (n=1) stated that physical violence had occurred in several of their relationships. For the majority of participants (53%, n=42) the physical violence stopped, however it is not known whether this was as a result of the end of the relationship or a discontinuation of the violent behaviour (Barter et al., 2009, p. 47). Forty one per cent of participants (n=33) stated that the violence stayed the same and 6% (n=5) stated that the violence escalated. For the majority of young men (n=6, 60%) the violence stopped, this was slightly lower at 52% for young women (n=36). Forty per cent of males (n=4) and a similar per cent of females (n=28, 41%) stated that the violence stayed the same and for a minority of young women the violence got worse (n=5).

Impact of physical violence

Almost a third of participants (n=63, 29%) stated that the physical violence they experienced had a solely negative impact on their wellbeing, (57 young women, 5 young men). Eleven participants stated that the physical violence had no impact upon them (3 young men and 8 young women). There were five participants who stated that the violence had both a negative impact and no impact upon them, 2 male participants (both age 17) stated they felt angry/annoyed and one said it the physical violence he experienced had no effect upon him and the other said he thought it was funny. The participant who said they thought it was funny had experienced continued physical force a few times at the same severity in one relationship. For two of the three female participants the violence they experienced had occurred once and stopped. These two young women felt angry/annoyed but also said there was no effect, with one also finding it funny. The third female participant (age 16) had experienced physical force a few times and after the first time the behaviour got worse. This had made her feel scared/frightened and humiliated but also loved/protected.

Sexual violence

Participants were asked four questions in the survey which gauged the incidence of sexual violence within their relationships. Two levels of sexual violence were examined; young people were firstly asked if they had been pressured or physically forced into something sexual such as 'kissing, touching or something else' (Barter et al. 2009, p. 65). Following this young people were asked questions with a more 'restricted definition' focusing on their experience of being pressured or forced into having sexual intercourse (Barter et al. 2009, p. 65).

Just under half of female participants (47 per cent, n=83) reported being pressured into sexual activity and for the majority this had occurred once or a few times. Just under a third (n=52) of young women had been physically forced into doing something sexual, for most (n=23) this had happened once. However, 11% (n=19) of females experienced forced sexual activity regularly. Being pressured into sexual intercourse was reported by 38% (n=66) of females. For the majority of young women being pressured into sex was an isolated incident (n=36, 21%), however 17% had experienced physical pressure on more than one occasion. Thirteen per cent (n=22) of young women reported being physically forced into sexual intercourse, for the majority this had occurred on one occasion (8%). However, 5% of female participants reported regularly experiencing physically forced sexual intercourse.

In contrast much lower levels of sexual violence were reported by young men. Nine per cent (n=4) of males stated that they had been pressured into sexual activity and 7% (n=3) stated that physical force had been used. In relation to sexual intercourse 4% (n=2) of male participants had been pressured into sexual intercourse by a partner and one male participant had been physically forced. Physically forced sexual intercourse was experienced by this participant on more than one occasion. Being pressured into sexual intercourse

occurred in isolation for one male and regularly for another. Table 7 presents young people's experiences of sexual violence.

Have any partners…	Pressured you into kissing, touching or something else?		Physically forced you into kissing, touching or something else?		Pressured you into sexual intercourse?		Physically forced you into sexual intercourse?	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Once	33 (19%)	4 (9%)	23 (13%)	2 (4%)	36 (21%)	1 (2%)	14 (8%)	-
A few times	41 (23%)	-	12 (7%)	-	22 (13%)	-	5 (3%)	1 (2%)
Often	5 (3%)	-	6 (3%)	1 (2%)	6 (3%)	1 (2%)	2 (1%)	-
All the time	4 (2%)	-	1 (0.6%)	-	2 (1%)	-	1 (0.6%)	-

Table 7 – Young people's experiences of sexual violence

Using a mutually exclusive category of sexual violence where responses were collapsed into 'had' or 'had not' experienced sexual violence a significant association between gender and experience of sexual violence ($x^2(1) = 20.149, \ p < .05$) was found. Thus, as with physical violence, females are significantly more likely to report experiencing sexual violence from a partner than males.

Sexual violence dynamics

For the majority of participants sexual violence had occurred in one relationship (n=65), however 8% (n=13) of young women and one young man had experienced this form of violence in several relationships. For slightly under half of the young women (n=40) after the first time they experienced sexual violence the behaviour stopped, however, for the same number of young women (n=40) the sexual violence persisted at the same severity and for five female participants the sexual violence became worse. In contrast no young men reported a worsening of sexual violence after the first occurrence, rather for four young men the violence stopped and for two the sexual violence remained at remained at the same severity.

Impact of sexual violence

More than a third of participants reported that their experience of sexual violence had a negative impact upon them (n=82), young women (n=79) accounted for 95% of this with young men (n=3) the remainder. Seven young people, three per cent of the total sample, reported that the sexual violence had no impact (2 young men and 5 young women) and two participants, one male and one female, reported both negative and no impact.

Emotional violence

Eight questions were devised by Barter et al. (2009) 'to assess a particular aspect of emotional violence: from harming a young person's self-esteem through ridiculing them, making negative remarks and surveillance, to controlling behaviour, including using threats of violence' (Barter et al. 2009, p. 55).

Overall, 86% of young women and three quarters of young men (76%) experienced some form of emotional violence from a partner. For each of the eight questions a higher proportion of young women reported victimisation than young men. Looking at each of the eight questions individually 'being made fun of' was the most commonly experienced form of emotional violence (n=158, 71%) with almost three quarters of females (74%) and just under two thirds of males (62%) reporting this. For the majority of participants being made fun of happened on more than one occasion (n=144). Being 'constantly checked up on' by a partner was the second most frequently reported form of emotional violence and was experienced by almost half of participants (n=106, 48%) this was also experienced by more young women (52%) than young men (31%). Being checked up on occurred regularly for the majority of participants (n=72).

Similarly, just under half of participants (n=104, 47%) stated that their partner said negative things about their appearance, body, friends or family. This was experienced by more young women (n=74) than young men (n=8). A partner shouting at them, screaming in their face or calling them hurtful was reported by 41% (n=91) of participants and was experienced by half of young women (n=83) and 18% of young men (n=8). Both these forms of emotional abuse were experienced repeatedly (n=65) than as an isolated incident (n=26).

Overt forms of control, such as being told where they could go and who they could see, were reported by 27% of the sample. There was a pronounced gender divide in reports of overt forms of control with just under a third of young women (31%) and 13% of young men being told by a partner where they could go and who they could see. A gender divide also existed in relation to the use of private information being used to make partners do something, with 17% of young women (n=30) and 9% of young men (n=3) reporting this. Overall 15% (n=34) of the sample had experienced partners using personal information to get them to do something. As with other forms of emotional abuse these behaviours were experienced repeatedly rather than in isolation.

Verbal threats and threats received via mobile phones or the internet were two of the three least reported forms of emotional violence. The use of mobile phones and the internet to threaten or humiliate a partner were experienced by 15% (n=33) of the sample, with considerably more young women (n=30) reporting this than young men (n=4). This gender divide was also apparent in reports of threats of physical violence which was experienced by 15% of female participants (n=16) and one male participant. In keeping with reports across

the other forms of emotional violence, both verbal threats and threats of physical violence happened repeatedly. Table 8 presents young people's experiences of emotional violence.

Have any partners…	Made fun of you?		Shouted at you/screamed in your face/called you hurtful names?		Said negative things about your appearance/ body/friends/family?		Threatened to hurt you physically unless you did what they wanted?	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Once	14 (8%)	1 (2%)	25 (14%)	1 (2%)	16 (9%)	6 (13%)	10 (6%)	1 (2%)
A few times	81 (46%)	16 (36%)	35 (20%)	6 (13%)	41 (23%)	6 (13%)	8 (5%)	-
Often	43 (25%)	7 (16%)	20 (11%)	1 (2%)	28 (16%)	1 (2%)	5 (3%)	-
All the time	20 (11%)	4 (9%)	3 (2%)	-	5 (3%)	1 (2%)	3 (2%)	-

Have any partners…	Told you who you could see and where you could go?		Constantly checked up on what you were doing e.g. by phone or texts?		Used private information to make you do something?		Used mobile phones or the internet to humiliate or threaten you?	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Once	13 (7%)	3 (7%)	30 (17%)	5 (11%)	14 (8%)	1 (2%)	13 (7%)	2 (4%)
A few times	25 (14%)	2 (4%)	29 (16%)	7 (15%)	7 (4%)	3 (7%)	7 (4%)	1 (2%)
Often	9 (5%)	1 (2%)	19 (11%)	2 (4%)	7 (4%)	-	8 (5%)	-
All the time	8 (5%)	-	14 (8%)	-	2 (1%)	-	2 (1%)	-

Table 8 – Young people's experiences of emotional violence

To summarise, more young women than young men reported experiencing emotional violence and more frequently experienced more than one form of emotional violence. Young people reported higher frequencies of repeat victimisation across all forms of emotional violence. Repeat victimisation was more pronounced for young women who reported repeated emotional violence at a higher percentage across all categories. For young men rates of repeat victimisation were considerably lower. Using a mutually exclusive category of emotional violence (where responses were collapsed into 'had' or 'had not' experienced emotional violence) a Chi-Square test (with Yates continuity correction)

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indicated no significant association between gender and experience of emotional violence ($x^2(1) = 3.653$, p = .056). However, this result is almost significant suggesting that young women may be more likely to experience emotional violence from a partner than young men.

Emotional violence dynamics

Consistent with reporting on the other forms of violence, the majority of young people had experienced emotional violence in one relationship (102 young women, 20 young men). However, in comparison to physical and sexual violence a higher number (n=30) of young people reported emotional violence occurring in several relationships and for one young woman emotional violence had occurred in all of her relationships. Unlike the other forms of violence, emotional violence continued at the same severity for most young people (n=94, 77 females, 17 males). For a third of participants (n=53) emotional violence stopped after the first incident. Eight per cent (n=13) experienced a worsening in severity, this was the case for young women (n=12) than young men (n=1).

Impact of emotional violence

More than half of the entire sample (52%, n=120) reported that experiencing emotional violence had a negative impact upon them. As a proportion of this 120 young women accounted for 88% (n=106) and young men 12% (n=14). Twelve per cent (n=29) of participants reported that emotional violence had not impacted upon them (12 males and 17 females) and four per cent (n=9) reported it had both a negative impact and no impact.

Contextualising young people's experiences

Young people were given an opportunity to provide further information about the responses they gave through the inclusion of a free text box at the end of the survey. This went some way to addressing the lack of context for which quantitative measures of violence are often criticised. The comments some participants made provide insights into the way that young people completing the survey understood and made sense of their experiences and/or teenage intimate partner violence more broadly.

Some young people tried to explain or, to a certain extent, justify their responses highlighting the significance of the meaning and context of behaviours in understanding young people's experiences:

> In previous questions where it was asked if any partner has ever made fun of me, it has happened but only in a joking rather than derogatory manner (Female, 18)

> Just, I know the feelings mentioned sound conflicting, how can you feel scared and protected at the same time? But they persuade you they're doing it to help you, and you get stuck in a huge mindwarp (Female, 16)

Whilst the first remark provides further clarification of a response to one of the questions, the second young woman describes the contradictory feelings that can accompany experiencing violence from an intimate partner. A comment from one young man showed some recognition and awareness of the dynamics of violence. He suggests why some young people with a violent partner might remain in the relationship and what factors he considers might make a young person more susceptible to experiencing violence:

> People I know that have been in abusive or controlling relationships are often subject to the delusion that their partner loves them, despite what has happened, and so they forgive them. I feel that this may be as a result of low self-esteem, and possible negative views of what relationships are like (based on what they've seen with their parents/carers) (Male, 19)

Other comments showed that certain behaviours may not be perceived as violent or abusive. In the following extract this 18 year old young woman suggests that for her male partner to perceive an act to be violent, it has to involve specific forms of physical attack. It also appears that this young woman's partner is using controlling and coercive tactics in order to dispel her from challenging his behaviour:

> My boyfriend has a massive double standard. He gropes me in public and in private when I tell him to stop it and seems to think I'm joking. When I get angry he tells me not to because it's 'just a joke'. I did it to him the other day, genuinely thinking it was all just a laugh. He bit down hard on my arm and made me cry and then told me I shouldn't have been annoying him. The bruise is black and yellow now. He's previously bitten my face thinking it was so funny, but when I was angry about it said 'it isn't like I hit you' (Female, 18)

Likewise, a seventeen year old young woman also equated violence with physical attack. She suggests that physical violence would be a reason to end an intimate relationship:

> I feel as though if I experience physical violence such as that mentioned in this questionnaire that I would know how to seek help and exit the relationship though this has not as yet happened to me (Female, 17)

However, this young person had reported repeatedly experiencing a range of emotionally abusive behaviours which had a negative impact on her wellbeing making her feel upset/unhappy and scared/frightened. This suggests that emotionally abusive behaviours may be perceived to be more acceptable and highlights a possible lack of recognition that emotional abuse is a form of intimate partner violence.

It was also intimated that violence may not be experienced in isolation and is not restricted to intimate relationships or encounters but shapes young women's lives more generally:

Low-level sexual assault was very common at my secondary school – being touched/hugged/grabbed etc. It was almost – unremarkable. The one time I kicked a guy for grabbing me, people were more surprised by my behaviour than his (Female, 19)

This comment highlights how male violence against women can be normalised and accepted, as evidenced in this young women's comment where her physically violent response to male violence received a more noticeable reaction than the initial violence she experienced.

6.3 Associated factors

This section outlines participants' wider experiences of violence within the family and peer group which have been established as being significant risk factors for experiencing violence in teenage intimate relationships (Barter et al. 2009; Herrera & Stuewig, 2011).

Experience of family violence

Young people were asked if their parents or carers had ever used violence against another adult, against another child or young person or against them (Barter et al. 2009, p. 31). It was not specified within the survey what constituted abuse or violence by an adult therefore young people were left to determine how they defined these concepts. Thus, abuse by an adult could refer to emotional, physical and/or sexual violence (Barter et al. 2009, p. 31). Almost a third of young people age 16-19 (n=71, 31%) reported witnessing parents or carers being threatening, violent or abusive towards each other, this was the highest reported incidence of family violence. Witnessing domestic violence was experienced by the same proportion of young women (n=55, 31%) as young men (n=15, 31%). A quarter of participants reported experiencing threats, abuse or violence from a parent or carer (n=52, 23%). Similarly to the findings on exposure to domestic violence, experience of threats, abuse or violence from a parent or carer were reported by around the same proportion of young men and young women (22%, 23%). However, proportionally more young women (15%) than young men (10%) had witnessed their parents or carers being violent or abusive to other young people, fourteen per cent of the sample in total (n=32).

Older adolescents' experiences of domestic violence reported here differ somewhat from the findings of Barter et al.'s (2009, p. 31-2) school based research. In the present study a small gender difference was apparent with regards to witnessing parents or carers being violent or abusive to other young people with a similar proportion of young men and young women witnessing or experiencing violence from a parent or carer. Whereas within Barter et al's (2009, p. 32) study girls were significantly more likely than boys to report that they had experienced some form of family violence. Domestic violence within the home may be 'more hidden' from boys with perpetrators of violence may fear that young men will attempt to retaliate to protect the victim (Fox et al. 2013). Or it could be that young women

are more likely to perceive violent and abusive behaviours perpetrated by adults as more harmful than boys do and as such consider and define them as constituting violence (Barter et al. 2009). Even though young people may have witnessed or experienced violence from a parent or carer they might not necessarily define it as such or perceive there is anything wrong with it.

The lack of definition within the survey of what constitutes family violence was remarked on by several participants:

> The terms 'abuse' and 'violence' are quite loose. This makes my parents sound like drunks who would beat us for no reason. I was hit as a child but only when I deserved it (Male, 17)

> Parents have only been 'shouty' and abusive when I have done something bad (Female)

These remarks provide insights into the way these young people understand and make sense of violence experienced at home. Firstly, they appear to consider themselves as being culpable in some way for the violence. This is illustrated through the defence of a family member's use of violence and abuse which highlights the 'strong emotional ties', loyalty and affection that a child or young person can feel toward a family member even when that family member is abusive and may not reciprocate these feelings (Radford et al. 2011). There is also a suggestion here that they perceive violence or abuse from a parent as acceptable in certain circumstances and perhaps even a normative part of family life. This is concerning considering that exposure to domestic violence has the potential to negatively impact upon all parts of a young person's life; increasing the risk of emotional, physical and sexual abuse and injury; impinging upon their developmental progress which may or may not lead to emotional and behavioural problems for some young people (Holt et al. 2008; Radford et al. 2011). It also increases the likelihood of that child or young person becoming a victim or perpetrator later in life (Fox et al. 2013; Indermaur, 2001; Kyu & Kanai, 2005).

A comment made by one young woman illustrates the overlap between different forms of family violence:

> Watching your Mum be abused by her partner who also abused you (Female, 17)

Experiencing several types of victimisation in different episodes on different occasions illustrates Finkelhor et al.'s (2007) poly-victims concept and highlights the broader, overlapping range of victimisations that a young person might experience (Radford, 2012).

Young people were not asked about their experience of sibling violence, a mistake in retrospect, however the following comments highlight the potential significance of sibling violence, abuse and aggression in respect to young people's perceptions, understandings and experiences of intimate partner violence:

My brother was more violent than any relationship I've had and now I'm scared to have a relationship with a man because of him (Female, 19)

I lose my temper with my boyfriend sometimes (I'm a girl) when he pulls my hair or hurts me (it's always by accident), I automatically hurt him back but worse, which I think is because my older brother used to lose his temper and beat me up and it only stopped when I learned to really hurt him back (Female, 18)

These young women connect their experience of sibling violence with partner violence which suggests an interrelationship between the two. Their experiences of sibling violence appear to have created a generalised fear of men which has contributed to their own instigation of violence within an intimate relationship. Although it is considered the most prevalent form of violence within the family, research examining sibling violence as a predictor of partner violence is still an emerging area of study (Hendy et al. 2011). In research with 11 and 12 year olds about attitudes towards violence Lombard (2011) found that violence perpetrated by or against siblings was not considered to be 'real' violence instead it was seen to be 'a kid on', 'carry on' or 'dummy fighting'. Tolerance of sibling violence may feed into and support a broader tolerance of young men's violence towards young women; this may be reinforced by more violence being perpetrated by brothers than sisters (Lombard, 2011; Hendy et al. 2011). Further research is needed in this area to examine how sibling violence may be related to the occurrence of intimate partner violence in adolescence.

Wider peer violence

In addition to being asked about their own experience of violence from an intimate partner participants were asked if they knew anyone who had experienced violence from an intimate partner. More than half of participants (n=119, 52%) stated that someone they knew had experienced violence from a partner, this was reported by more young women (n=101, 56%) than young men (n=17, 35%). This suggests that if a young person is not experiencing violence from a partner themselves they may still know someone who is.

Participants were also asked whether their friends used aggression or abuse against their partners. In total 20 young people (9%) stated that their friends used aggression towards their partners, (all but 3 of these young people were male). The majority of young people (n=209, 91%) stated that they were not aware that their friends acted in this way. Knowledge of friends' use of aggression against a partner were highest in the 18 year old age group (12%) and lowest in the 17 year old age group.

A further question examined peer violence more widely and asked whether participants' friends used intimidation or aggression against any other young people. The majority of young people (n=194, 85%) stated that their friends did not use aggression in this way. However, in comparison to the previous question, a higher number of young people (n=35,

15%) stated that their friends did use aggression against other young people. Split by gender a greater proportion of the young men (n=11, 22%) than young women (n=24, 13%) reported that their peers were violent to other young people. A higher affirmative response rate for wider peer violence was also found by Barter et al. (2009, p. 34) with double the proportion of participants in their research stating they used aggression against wider peers than those who stated their friends used aggression against a partner. Similar rates were found in the present study with 9% stating their friends used aggression against a partner and 15% stating their friends used aggression against wider peers. Eight per cent (n=5) of 19 year olds indicated that their friends used aggression or intimidation against their peers, this rose to nearly a quarter (22%, n=6) of the 16 year old age group.

These results contrast to what was found by Barter et al. (2009) who reported that for both forms of peer violence as age increased so did reports of friends' use of aggression and intimidation, whereas in the present study as age increased the use of aggression or intimidation against peers decreased.

6.4 Discussion and conclusion

The quantitative data provides useful insights into the nature and extent of violence in older teenagers' intimate relationships. The data indicate that across all forms of violence more young women experienced violence from an intimate partner and that this violence was more likely to have a negative impact on their wellbeing than young men.

Consistent with international and national prevalence rates, emotional violence was reported as the most frequently experienced form of violence (Leen et al. 2013; Barter et al. 2009, 2015). In contrast to the international literature which found similar rates of emotional violence for girls and boys, a distinct gender divide was apparent in the present study with more young women reporting emotional forms of violence than young men. This is however consistent with Barter et al.'s (2009) study which found higher rates of female emotional violence victimisation. This gender divide was also apparent with regards to physical and sexual violence in the present study with higher numbers of young women reporting experiences of these forms of violence in comparison to young men.

Table 9 below shows a comparison between Barter et al.'s (2009) results, upon which the survey was adapted, and the findings of the present study.

	Young people 13-17 (Barter et al. 2009)		Young people 16-19	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Physical violence				
Physical force	25%	18%	37%	20%
Severe physical force	11%	8%	12%	8%
Sexual violence				
Pressured sexual activity	27%	15%	47%	9%
Forced sexual activity	13%	6%	24%	6%
Pressured sexual intercourse	16%	6%	38%	4%
Forced sexual intercourse	6%	3%	13%	2%
Emotional violence				
Made fun of	47%	30%	90%	63%
Shouted/screamed/names	36%	21%	47%	17%
Said negative things	35%	15%	51%	30%
Threats of physical violence	11%	4%	16%	2%
Told who could see etc.	33%	13%	31%	13%
Checked up on	42%	29%	52%	30%
Used private information	9%	6%	17%	9%
Mobile or internet threats	12%	4%	17%	6%

Table 9 Comparison of survey results with Barter et al.'s (2009) results

There are some interesting points to note when comparing the results of both studies. Similar rates of young men experienced physical violence in both studies and similar numbers of young women reported severe physical violence. Higher rates of young women reported experiences of physical force in the present study than the girls in Barter et al.'s (2009) sample. Aside from pressured sexual activity, reported by young men in Barter et

al.'s study[7], similar rates of young men experienced sexual violence. Sexual pressure was much lower in the present study for young men with similar rates of sexual force to the Barter et al. (2009) study. It could be that as age increases young women may be more likely to experience violence from a partner and this may be compounded for young women who have a preference for older boyfriends (who they perceive as more mature and holding a higher status) whereas young men are likely to have a partner of similar or younger age (Barter et al. 2009). This might also partly be explained by sampling methods as the sample of older adolescents were self-selecting so young people with experience of intimate partner violence may have been more likely to complete the survey.

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[7] In their report Barter et al. (2009, p. 197) note that in one particular school a group of young men were 'laughing and talking' when completing the survey. The authors therefore acknowledge that this group may have not responded to the questions truthfully which could explain the higher rates of sexual violence found in that particular school, alternatively that school may have had a specific problem with female perpetrators of sexual violence.

Chapter 7: Gender identities

This chapter is the first of four findings chapters which present the themes from the analysis of the qualitative focus groups. This chapter explores young people's construction of gender identities and how these identities are performed in their interactions with others. Gender is a social category which shapes the way that we think about and understand ourselves and others. It plays a fundamental role in the way that young people understand and make sense of the world around them. Understanding how young people view and construct ideas about gender is especially important in light of the debates regarding the gendered nature of intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence is understood, from a gender violence perspective, as resulting from unequal power relations between men and women (UNIFEM, 2006). In order to understand how young people identify, define and contextualise intimate partner violence it is important to explore how they construct and make sense of gender identities.

This chapter begins by outlining characteristics participants within focus groups associated with male and female gender identities. The intersection between gender and social factors such as age and culture are discussed. The concept of 'otherness' and its use in the discussions to establish dichotomies within and between gender identity categories is examined. Finally, the way that gender identities are performed in participants' interactions with one another is explored. The ideas discussed within this chapter will be drawn upon in subsequent findings chapters to explore how conceptualisations of gender relate to understandings of teenage intimate relationships, partner violence and telling/help seeking.

7.1 Gender identity

This section explores the characteristics and traits that participants discussed and associated with male and female gender identities. Ideas about what it means to be a man or a woman were set up as dichotomies by participants, with male and female gender identities understood as mutually dependent opposites (Bauman, 1991). The relational nature of gender identities is illuminated by participants' use of comparisons to constitute one gender identity by its absence within the other. In other words, male identity cannot be fully understood in isolation from female identity (Reay, 2001, p. 153-4).

Male identity

Some participants associated a male identity with physical strength and a larger physique. This is illustrated in the following exchange in one of the mixed-gender groups (FG3) where participants were discussing whether it is wrong for girls to hit boys:

> Cameron: No it's not true a guy can put a girl on her arse a lot quicker than a girl can put a guy on their arse

> Leah: All you've got to do is kick them in the balls

Kyle: Yeah but that's been dissimilated (sic) isn't it?

Cameron: It's not it's been proven it's genetics, a guy's a lot bigger than a girl

(Inaudible)

Cameron: If you look at the way a girl's built and look at the way a guy's built you'd say 'yeah the guys a lot bigger'

Andrew: Well no

(Inaudible)

Kyle: If a boy was going out with like I dunno like a female bodybuilder or something yeah and then that girl done that to him (pause) but she punched him (pause) then how can you say that boy has any power over the girl?

The interaction between participants in this mixed-gender focus group is argumentative; several participants disagree with and challenge Cameron's viewpoint, however he maintains his original position on the issue. Cameron firstly states that boys are stronger than girls, suggesting that, for him, a male identity is associated with physical strength. Both Leah and Kyle challenge Cameron's point of view and he attempts to justify his position by presenting the group with 'proof' for his claim; biology (genetics). Cameron notes the biological differences between men and women which he puts into context using a comparison of the build of girls and guys. Here he sticks to his original position and builds a further layer of meaning to what a male identity incorporates – not only physical strength but a larger physique than that of a female which, he claims, has been proven by genetics (biology). Again this view is challenged, this time by Andrew. Kyle, who had earlier disagreed with Cameron, makes an interesting comment about female bodybuilders. He is willing to acknowledge that there may be some well-built, muscly females but only by associating these women with bodybuilding, a pastime typically associated with men. Kyle's comment hooks together the ideas of strength, physical build and power which, whilst seemingly challenging Cameron's position, actually reinforces that these characteristics are typically associated with a male, and not a female, identity.

The perception that males are strong and dominant was noted in several other group discussions. The following exchange occurred in the mixed-gender group at the vocational college (FG8). Here Jenna and Russell discuss why they think male victims of domestic violence might not come forward:

Jenna: Cos the way they see it it wouldn't be a woman beating up a man that's not usually how they see it you usually see men being the strongest so they'll probably laugh at him and say like 'how could you let a woman beat you up' and that (pause) and makes jokes

Russell: It's like a macho thing isn't it

Moderator: Sorry what did you say?

Russell: It's like a macho thing a bloke's not gonna want to be saying that they've been getting beaten up by their partner for like a year or whatever

Jenna notes that men are (stereo)typically perceived as physically stronger than women and, as a result, are more likely to be considered as perpetrators and not victims of physical violence. Jenna notes the detrimental impact of cultural norms of what it means to be a man (being strong) upon male victims of physical violence – the minimising of their experiences by being made fun of by their peers. Russell (who was one of two older participants, aged 29) reinforces this idea by explaining that men's experiences are constrained by the notion of being 'macho' which stops them from showing their emotions. His comment implies that being macho is a display of strength which includes concealing emotions in front of peers, and this reinforces and adds meaning to Jenna's comment. Russell suggests that as a result of the constraints of being macho men are 'not gonna want to' speak out about their own long term experience of violence. This idea was also voiced in another of the mixed-gender discussions (FG3) by Leah. Here she explains why it is more common for young women to seek advice about intimate partner violence than young men:

I think when that sort of thing happens to a man they tend to hide away because they feel ashamed that they've been hit by a woman, but obviously with women it's kind of like, like a normal thing you hear about it all the time so there are places for it, but then obviously being a man (pause) it would kind of (pause) be like a big blow erm (pause) obviously if it was a girl like half the size of you then (pause) like if you were to tell your mates they might take the piss out of you (pause) so you would need to go to like a proper place but obviously then again you would be scared

Leah discusses and explains in much more depth the complex interplay between social ideals regarding male and female identities and the role of peers in restricting male victims of domestic violence speaking out about their experiences. Leah begins by explaining how men experiencing violence hide away because they are ashamed of being hit by a woman. This comment demonstrates an understanding of how gender role expectations restrict male victims from speaking out, echoing Russell's comment about being macho. Leah goes on to note that violence against women has greater visibility and coverage in the public domain, and as a result she is aware there are places for female victims to go to seek support. She notes that men should tell someone and/or go to a 'proper place' but that the interplay of gender identities and the response of peers may stop male victims from doing this. Thus, dominant forms/expectations of male behaviour, like being macho, shape the way that men expect and are expected to perform their gender identity.

The relationship between peers, mentioned previously by Jenna and Leah, and male identity was also discussed in one all-female group at the vocational college (FG1). The young women were talking about why they thought young men would bully their partner:

> Moderator: Ok, what do you think motivates him to be like that?
>
> Bianca: His friends maybe
>
> Elle: Other boys
>
> Alexis: His ego
>
> Elle: Yeah they can go in front of their mates and say that he wears the pants in the relationship
>
> Alexis: She's my bitch
>
> Bianca: Yeah, she's not texting anyone else cos she's mine

Both Bianca and Elle suggest that a young man's peers play a part in his perpetration of violence (bullying), whereas Alexis puts the onus on him – 'his ego'. Elle hooks together the two ideas – ego and peers – suggesting that bullying a partner is used by young men to perform their gender identity, establishing and 'proving' their masculinity to their peers (Connell in Mullins, 2006, p. 9). Men constantly face the need to reinforce their masculine status because it is constantly policed by their peers (Connell in Mullins, 2006, p. 9). Elle's comment about him telling his mates that he 'wears the pants', which is built upon by Alexis and Bianca, highlights how he proves his masculinity to his peers – by being dominant and displaying ownership and entitlement over his partner. These comments highlight the collective dimension of masculinity; individual practice is required, but it is through interaction with the group that meaning is ascribed (Connell, 2005, p. 106-7).

The association between strength and male identity was also noted in an all-female group at the vocational college (FG1). The following comment was made after participants were shown a clip from the television drama *Waterloo Road*. Teenage school girl Vicki is shown repeatedly punching her boyfriend Ronan during an argument. Here Eve explains why she expected the boy to hit the girl and not the other way round:

> Cos men seem to be stronger than women, so like they stick up for themselves, but not all men do

Eve comments that men appear to be stronger than women and suggests that some men use their physical strength to 'stick up for themselves'. Strength is linked to physical violence by Eve and she alludes to the social acceptability of male violence in the context of sticking up for oneself. She acknowledges that she is making a generalisation by stating that 'not all men do' use physical violence. Eve shows a degree of awareness of gender stereotyping –

she is aware that this stereotype is applied to group members simply because they belong to that group (Heilman, 2012, p. 114).

An awareness of gender stereotypes was also evident in a discussion that occurred in one of the all-male groups (FG4). Discussing the social acceptability of female to male violence, participants discuss how being dominant is associated with a stereotyped male identity:

> Moderator: Why do you think that is?
>
> Grant: It just goes down to (pause) the males supposed to be the dominant one
>
> Josh: Yeah, it's just how we've been taught from like growing up
>
> Marc: Stereotypes
>
> Josh: Yeah I suppose it's just down to stereotypes really
>
> Moderator: Mmhmm
>
> Grant: Yeah cos to be honest women shouldn't hit men
>
> Marc: And men shouldn't hit women

In their interaction participants show a collective understanding of gender stereotypes being generalisations about attributes associated with being a man. They also show an awareness of where ideas about gender originate. Grant firstly identifies that dominance is associated with a stereotypical male identity. This is established by his statement that males are 'supposed to be' dominant which highlights a commonly held belief (and gender stereotype) about the male role, and not the view Grant himself holds. Josh supports his view and suggests that ideas about gender are learned during socialisation. Marc further elaborates and labels what has been described as stereotyping. This is supported and reaffirmed by Josh, followed by Grant and Marc who contextualise the discussion by stating their position – that violence is not acceptable regardless of who it is perpetrated by.

A further stereotype - that men are more advanced than women - was identified by Andrew in one of the mixed-gender groups (FG3). The following comment was made by Andrew after watching the clip of female to male physical violence from *Waterloo Road*:

> Fuck knows what's going through his head right now, but no you'd feel pretty shitty wouldn't you? You would after something like that cos people like think girls (pause) like people say that men are more advanced don't they yet that blokes shouldn't hit girls but girls should have a right to do something back to men. But I think that's just shit man, all that

Andrew begins by discussing how he thinks Ronan (the young man in the clip) would feel after being physically attacked by his girlfriend. He empathises with Ronan and shows an

understanding of the emotional impact of physical violence. He then goes on to identify the stereotype that men are more advanced which is flagged up by his use of 'people think' and 'people say'. In doing this Andrew both identifies the existence of this view and implies that this is not the view he holds which is affirmed by his use of 'but I' and his statement that he thinks it's 'just shit'.

A little later in the same discussion (FG3) the following exchange occurred. The discussion features comments that challenge the notion of male physical strength and dominance as a justification for male to female violence:

> Kyle: I dunno I think that girls have more power over boys

> Leah: Yeah but hang on there's this image that guys are stronger and whatnot and they can do what they want to us girls

> Andrew: Yeah but there's girls out there what are stronger than blokes so

> Leah: Exactly! So if it's wrong for one way then it's (pause) if it's wrong for a guy to hit a girl then it should be wrong for a girl to hit a guy (pause) cos it's the same apart from we've got different bits

Although Kyle states that he believes girls have more power over boys, he does not explain in what way he believes this power is exerted. Leah interprets 'power' to mean physical strength and a sense of entitlement over girls which is implied in her comment about boys doing what they want to girls. Andrew builds meaning by disagreeing with Leah, and reinforcing the point he made earlier that he does not subscribe to 'traditional' gender norms by stating that some girls are stronger than blokes. Leah uses Andrew's comment to illustrate the point she is making – that, irrespective of gender, perpetrating physical violence is not acceptable. For Leah the behaviour of girls and guys should not be perceived differently because they are separated only by their biological differences, specifically their sexual organs ('different bits'). Whilst Leah used biological differences (sexual organs) to support her claim that men and women's action should not be treated differently, later in the same discussion (discussed earlier in this section) Cameron used biology (genetics) to evidence his claim that men and women do differ in their physical characteristics (e.g. men are stronger and have a larger physique). The use of the same example to support two very different points about gender identities highlights how different points of view remain polarised within the discussion.

In summary, male identity was perceived by some participants as characterised by physical strength, dominance and power, reflecting traditional gender roles and stereotypical norms of what it means to be a man. Other participants showed some awareness that these are stereotypical traits which constrain the way that men expect and are expected to perform their gender identity. Peer relationships were identified as playing an important role in

conformity to a traditional male gender role through displays of strength and dominance and constraining typically 'feminine' characteristics such as displays of emotion.

Female identity

Female identities were associated, directly and indirectly, with notions of beauty and looks. In one of the mixed-gender groups in the context of discussing why male victims of domestic violence might not want to come forward Marie says:

> it's not like something you hear about every day like the women beating the men up cos women are known as the fairer sex you wouldn't think that a woman would be able to beat a full grown like hench man

Hench is used to refer to someone big, strong and/or muscular thus Marie's reference to women as the 'fairer sex' is understood relationally in opposition to that of the 'hench' man. Referring to women as the fairer sex, the qualities of being beautiful, soft and delicate are attributed to a female identity. Later in the same discussion this idea is repeated by Layla who, discussing the relationship between gender stereotypes and male victims, states:

> Like what Marie said women are the fairer sex and the men are generally stronger and so I think that might have a part to play in it as well

These comments highlight how, in order to understand/explain a female identity, it is positioned by young people in opposition to a male identity. Both comments consolidate that a male identity is associated with physical strength and larger physique whereas a female identity incorporates soft and gentle characteristics.

The importance of appearance and looks was also illustrated in a discussion in one of the all-female groups (FG2). In a conversation which began whilst I was away from the group participants talked about Katie Piper, a former model whose ex-partner organised an acid attack which left her scarred and blinded in one eye:

> Rosie: Have any of you ever seen that thing on the telly that what's her name, I can't remember. It's erm she had acid thrown on her face by her ex-boyfriend
>
> Lizzie: Katie Piper
>
> Olivia: Oh yeah I've seen that
>
> Rosie: It's well sad innit
>
> Olivia: She's got books and everything out now
>
> Lizzie: She was well pretty weren't she
>
> Rosie: She was. I think she still actually is

Lizzie: Yeah I didn't mean it like that, it sounded a bit harsh

Rosie: I mean when you think someone has gone through that they wouldn't

Lizzie: They'd look worse

Olivia: Yeah but she's had loads of surgery

Rosie: Yeah

Olivia: Like a stupid amount

Lizzie: She's blind in one eye isn't she

(Silence)

Lizzie: If that happened to me though I'd probably fucking kill myself

The emphasis upon Katie Piper's pretty appearance before the acid attack by Lizzie is reinforced by Rosie who states that she thinks Piper still is pretty. Lizzie somewhat retracts her statement for sounding 'harsh'. Rosie might be about to indicate some awareness of the impact of the attack as more than just changing someone's appearance but her comment is cut across and the discussion is returned to ideas about beauty by Lizzie. She provides some context to her comment being harsh by explaining that she would expect that victims of an acid attack would 'look worse' after. Olivia responds to Lizzie stating that Piper has had to undergo a 'stupid amount' of surgery to improve her appearance after the acid attack (Piper actually underwent 40 surgical operations to treat her injuries). Lizzie demonstrates further knowledge of the case, presumably gleaned from media coverage of the story, because she knows that Katie Piper lost the sight in one of her eyes. Lizzie goes on to put herself in Piper's shoes stating that if it happened to her she would kill herself.

Lizzie's contributions in this exchange are particularly interesting. Her first statement in this sequence demonstrates her knowledge of this case as she names who Rosie is talking about. She then goes on to focus upon Piper's appearance before the acid attack and, whilst challenged by Rosie, she acknowledges that she may sound harsh but she does not change her perspective. In her fifth statement her knowledge of the story is demonstrated once more. Her final comment hooks together the comments she makes in this sequence clarifying her perspective – if this happened to her she would kill herself. Appearance and beauty are clearly important to Lizzie because that is what she comments upon. She does not mention Piper's success as a charity campaigner, author and television presenter following the acid attack in 2008. The preoccupations with beauty in this exchange highlights how these young women place importance upon appearance and monitor the appearance of other women within narrowly defined beauty ideals.

Whilst characteristics of female identity were mostly discussed by young women, ideas about beauty were also briefly touched upon in an all-male discussion at the sixth form

college (FG 6). In the context of a discussion about what love is and where ideas about it come from these two young men respond to a question which reflects back to them an earlier comment made by David that 'love is all feelings and emotions which can't be seen':

> Moderator: So people don't get ideas about love from anywhere? it just sort of happens from within you?
>
> David: Yeah I think it kind of just
>
> Nick: Real love does
>
> David: Yeah
>
> Nick: Cos obviously there's these portrayals in the media that say otherwise
>
> David: Yeah people might kind of
>
> Nick: Like finding the most beautiful woman
>
> David: Yeah people might look for a fairy tale ending that they see in films or that they hear about in the news but a lot of the time for regular people it's not like that at all there's different kinds of love I suppose really so

Nick suggests that, for men, an emphasis is placed upon seeking out the most beautiful woman. Nick's comment incorporates a number of points regarding gender roles, love/relationships and the role of the media. Firstly, Nick demonstrates an awareness of where ideas about love come from and how appearance (beauty) is tied to successful romantic relationships in the media (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The emphasis upon female appearance in the media, highlights that images of beautiful women are shown in the context of the male gaze and as a result these cultural norms constrain both young women and young men who seek out a particular script that is not attainable for 'regular people' (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). These comments can be linked to the discussion about Katie Piper where the young women in the discussion were preoccupied with her beauty and looks. Taken together these remarks highlight how young women learn and internalise beauty ideals from the media, and how young men are taught to seek out these, often unattainable, characteristics in a female partner (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012, p. 869).

Whereas male friendships were characterised as constraining displays of emotion (emotional detachment), discussions of female peer relationships illustrate how emotional support is associated with a female identity. This can be seen in the following exchange which took place in one of the mixed-gender groups (FG8):

> Moderator: So you said like you thought his friends might laugh at him but if it was a girl it was happening to her friends wouldn't laugh at her?

Chloe: No

Russell: Her friends would be more supportive

Jenna: Yeah

Moderator: Why is that?

Chloe: Girls understand more

Discussing a female victim of domestic violence telling her friends about what is happening to her, Russell perceives that a young woman's peers would offer support, which Chloe explains is because girls are more understanding. For young women peers are a source of understanding and support, which may facilitate their ability to talk to a friend about their experiences. Whereas the role of peers for young men is perceived to be the display and reinforcement of a masculine identity, this included hiding emotions and resulted in a minimising of experiences through peer ridicule.

In two discussions several participants talked about how some women play to gender stereotypes in order to hide or mask their own violent behaviour. Discussing a storyline about female perpetrated domestic violence in the television soap opera *Coronation Street*, participants in one of the mixed-gender discussions (FG8) explain how they perceive some women use socially ascribed gender role characteristics to deflect attention towards their partner in order to hide their own violent behaviour:

Chloe: Women get believed more as well like Tyrone's been locked up cos she lied and

Marie: Pretended it was him

Layla: Women tend to play on pity

Chloe: Yeah

Layla: Yeah cos you're a woman

Jenna: Cos women get the sympathy they try and get the sympathy for it and that

Chloe talks about how women are more likely to be believed than men when claiming their partner is being violent towards them. This is enabled by conformity to a typical female identity where women are perceived as emotional and in need of assistance as illustrated by Layla's comment that women 'play on pity' (Carlyle et al. 2014). This point is further reaffirmed by Layla stating that it is *because* 'you're a woman'. Jenna, agreeing with Layla's point, goes on to reinforce the idea that women use characteristics which are associated with female gender role stereotypes, such as being emotional, to elicit a certain reaction. In

the context of this extract, traditional gender role stereotypes are used in non-traditional ways to conceal behaviour that is not considered 'typical' for a woman (Carlyle et al. 2014).

A further, related idea is that some women capitalise upon increased social awareness of the gendered nature of intimate partner violence to get away with being physically violent towards their partner. This is illustrated in the following exchange which took place in the context of a discussion about whether it is ok for women to use physical force against a male partner in one of the mixed-gender groups (FG3):

> Cameron: Cos a lot of women hit men now cos they think that men can't hit them back
>
> Kyle: Yeah
>
> Andrew: Yeah they take advantage of it

Cameron's comment highlights how male to female violence is considered to be wrong, it implies that this idea has become socially ingrained. He notes how this allows females to be physically violent towards their male partner because the unacceptability of male to female violence may stop her partner from retaliating. Like the comment made about the *Coronation Street* storyline, it is suggested by Andrew that some women play to or 'take advantage of' gender stereotypes in order to get away with their violent behaviour. There is an interplay here between the way that women are stereotypically characterised as the weaker gender and the social understanding of the gendered nature of intimate partner violence which participants perceive are used by some women to justify, hide and get away with their own violent behaviour.

The 'Othered' female

'Othering' is used to put the behaviour of others, in this case other young women, under the spotlight and in doing so positions participants own behaviour as conforming to the perceived 'norms' of femininity/female identity (Fine, 1994). 'Othered' identities were discussed only by young women in two all-female focus groups and one mixed gender group.

When I moved away from the group to play the video clip in one of the all-female groups (FG1) the young women continued talking. Drawing on a high profile celebrity relationship the following extract highlights the 'Othering' of Rihanna for returning to a violent relationship:

> *(Moderator walks over to computer to play clip)*
>
> Jess: That's like Rihanna isn't it
>
> *(Incoherent)*

Alexis: Yeah Rihanna's getting back with Chris isn't she the div!

(Someone laughs)

(Moderator plays clip)

Rihanna is a successful and influential singer, actress, and fashion designer. Here the participants voice their disapproval of her rekindling a relationship with singer Chris Brown who was convicted of felony assault and making a criminal threat for physically attacking and threatening Rihanna in 2009. The term 'div' is slang meaning stupidity; it is used here as an insult. In this extract it is used to 'Other' Rihanna as stupid for returning to this relationship, the focus is on Rihanna and not upon Chris Brown the perpetrator of the violence. This is a fleeting comment which, if I had still been within the group, I would have liked to explore in further detail.

Later on in the same discussion participants were talking about what they perceived boys got out of bullying a partner. Amongst the views put forward Amelia stated that 'he will always have a bed to go home to after he's been with all the other sluts'. 'Slut' is used by Amelia in its derogatory form to refer to sexually promiscuous females. Slut is used here as a signifier of shame which diminishes the sexual value of the 'sluts' that Amelia refers to and becomes a form of sexual regulation of femininity (Ringrose & Renold, 2012). The emphasis here is upon 'Othering' young women who do not conform to or abide by Amelia's view of acceptable female behaviour. Derogatory terms like 'div' and 'slut' are used as a rhetorical device by Alexis and Amelia to position themselves as the unmarked 'us' against the Othered 'them'.

Whilst the boundaries of 'us' and 'them' were more clearly defined in the previous exchange, there was a blurring of these boundaries in another all-female group (FG2) during a discussion about the role of peer pressure and sexual relationships. In the following exchange Rosie labels young women from a town in the shire county that she attends college as sexually promiscuous. In Lizzie's response to Rosie the position of the self and the Other becomes blurred by Lizzie implying that Rosie is sexually promiscuous (which Rosie agrees with):

Lizzie: I think it's a bit stupid that your friends like your friends disown you or laugh at you because you haven't had sex (pause) it's ridiculous

Rosie: All these boys who want sex that much should just come to [town in Shire County] shouldn't they

Lizzie: I know

(Laughter)

Lizzie: And go to Rosie

Rosie: Yeah, come to me!

(Laughter)

Lizzie: But no it is a bit of a shame though that people feel that they're gonna be outcast within their friend groups if they haven't had sex

Initially, Lizzie is critical of friends ridiculing one another for not having sex. Rosie then jokingly says that boys who are looking for a sexual relationship should go to the town where she attends college, implying that the girls who live there are sexually promiscuous. Lizzie agrees and the rest of the group laugh at this remark positioning themselves in opposition to the Other (sexually promiscuous). In a similarly joking fashion Lizzie says that boys looking for sex should 'go to Rosie', the comment does not appear to offend Rosie as she exclaims her agreement. Again the group laugh. There is a blurring of boundaries here between the self and the Other, Rosie's first comment positions her in opposition to the sexually promiscuous girls from the town she attends college. Rosie has to negotiate being Othered by Lizzie in a group of her peers and does so by agreeing in a way that makes light of the remark. What Lizzie says to Rosie reflects what she is critical of at the start of the exchange - having sexual relationships regulated and policed by peers, a point that she returns to at the end of the extract. There is a sense here that young women 'can't win' – they are Othered if they have had sex and if they have not.

In two different discussions two young women showed an awareness of the damaging nature of the use of the term 'slut'. In one of the mixed gender groups Leah, in response to my question about other behaviours the group would consider as being abusive within a relationship, talks about verbal abuse and explains how she perceives calling someone a slut as being a form of verbal abuse:

Moderator: We've talked a bit about physical violence, is there anything else you think of as being abusive in a relationship?

Leah: Verbal abuse (pause) putting them down, like calling them a slut or something or (pause) just like (pause) picking all their little insecurities and throwing them back at them in a really vicious way making them feel like they aren't worth nothing (pause) yeah

Leah describes verbal abuse as involving verbal put downs which belittle and humiliate the person they are aimed at. She considers calling someone a slut as being a form of verbal abuse which, like the other examples she mentions, is intended at making someone feel worthless. In this context 'slut' is used as more than a verbal insult, it is an accusation about a person's sexual behaviour which is used to humiliate and diminish a person's sexual value by what the term implies about their sexual reputation. As the discussion continued the group did not respond directly to Leah's comment, instead Kyle begins to talk about how a boy should treat a girl like 'they're your one and only'. It could be that he was not

comfortable addressing what was said by Leah and instead preferred to explain how he thinks girls should be treated.

The negative connotations and impact of being labelled a slut was discussed in the all-female group discussion at the sixth form college. The destructive nature of the term was explained by Daisy:

> Daisy: Say like a girl sort of slept with her boyfriend for the first time and then she goes into school and everyone knows and it's like (pause) especially if it's like at a younger age like at high school you then get like stigmatised as like being the slut or something and it can be very harmful
>
> Moderator: Ok and it what way do you think it might be harmful to them?
>
> Daisy: Erm it could jeopardise friendships and relationships and generally just being in school could be a problem (pause) and it's just like just that lack of privacy

Daisy explains how the process of being labelled a slut might occur, by people at school finding out that a girl had sex with her boyfriend for the first time. The labelling of the girl as a slut is circulated by other people (presumably peers) who use the information of two young people engaging in a normative relationship activity (having sex) to stigmatise the young woman (and not the young man) for her behaviour.

Throughout these accounts it is important to note that the role of the male is not discussed or explored – it is by 'Othering' that participants distance themselves from 'stupid' and sexually promiscuous female identities and position themselves as conforming to normative ideas about what it is to be female. Young people can Other and be Othered which means the boundary between self and Other can be blurred.

Girls and women, boys and men

The way that participants understand and make sense of gender identities was given a further layer of meaning by the ways that they differentiated girls from women and boys from men within gender identity categories. This is illustrated in the following exchange where participants in one of the all-female groups (FG1) were talking about the 'Party' clip from the UK Government's *This is Abuse Campaign*:

> Moderator: Did someone just comment on their age?
>
> Alexis: Yeah, that boy looks about ten!
>
> Bianca: She looked quite young as well, yeah
>
> Amelia: Well if she hasn't done it yet she must be under twenty, mustn't she
>
> Eve: Yeah but they're really young aren't they

Alexis: Not necessarily

Bianca: Not necessarily

Jess: Cos everyone's done it he reckons she should, but she should have it when she's ready

Eve: When people are young though a lot of people lie don't they about having it

Alexis: Yeah but that's quite rare for a little girl, well, like that age to say no cos they think it's cool and stuff

Bianca: Mmmm

Alexis: You've got to be, like, an older woman to know what you're doing to be able to know, like, 'I'm not ready' but when you're really young you're just like 'oh alright then' (laughs)

(Laughter)

Alexis begins by describing the male teenage character in the clip as a 'boy' which is based upon how old she thinks he looks ('about ten'). The focus upon age and appearance is continued by Bianca who states that the female in the clip also looked quite young. Amelia develops this position further by stating that the girl must be younger than twenty, the cut-off point for when she would expect a girl to have had sex for the first time. Eve suggests that they are both a lot younger than twenty and both Alexis and Bianca respond to and disagree with Amelia's comment regarding the age of having a first sexual encounter. Jess identifies that the young man in the clip is trying to pressure the young women to have sex by saying that 'everyone's done it' and Eve contextualises her comment linking lying about having had sex to being young. Alexis refers to the female in the clip as a 'little girl' suggesting that she associates 'girl' with being young, impressionable, immature and (sexually) inexperienced. This idea is reinforced by her belief that, in comparison to girls, women - who are older, more mature and sexually experienced – know what they are doing and are aware, and in control, of their sexual desires.

Whilst this exchange begins with a comment about a boy, the young women spend much more time talking about the girl, again reflecting how young women monitor the appearance and behaviour of other young women but not the behaviour of young men. The discussion goes further than participants merely differentiating between girls and women; it provides insight into how young women's notions of girlhood and womanhood are tied to sexuality. Their comments also suggest that the choice/responsibility for the sexual relationship sits with the young woman and there is less expectation that the young man will be responsible or make wise choices.

In another all-female discussion (FG2) participants differentiated the characteristics of boys and men when they were talking about the 'Takeaway' clip from the UK Government's *This is Abuse Campaign*:

(Moderator leaves group and plays This is Abuse clip – takeaway)

Paige: He looked like a little boy

(Laughter)

Lizzie: You could at least get some more manly people on these couldn't they

Paige: I can't really talk though

(Laughter)

Lizzie: What does yours look like Justin Bieber?

(Laughter)

Like Alexis in the previous extract, Paige bases her perception of the male teenager as being a 'little boy' upon how he looks. The other young women laugh at her remark and Lizzie shows support for her comment by saying they should depict more 'manly' people in the clips. In this clip the young man insults and threatens his female partner for talking to another young man. By focusing upon how he looks like a little boy and stating that they should show someone more manly they use his boyhood to discount and make light of the way he is behaving, which is reinforced by the group's laughter. When I returned to the group they explored this idea in more detail:

(Moderator returns to group)

Moderator: What were you saying about that one?

Paige: Oh no (pause)

Lizzie: We were just saying he doesn't look that manly

Paige: I wouldn't feel threatened by him

Molly: He didn't seem very convincing did he

(Laughter)

Molly: He didn't seem very intimidating

Lizzie: Like again in the same one he's forcing her to have sex with him again and if not he's blackmailing her and will say that she's frigid

His perceived lack of manliness is used by these young women to minimise the way he is behaving. This is illustrated by Paige saying she 'wouldn't feel threatened' and Molly stating that he was not 'convincing' and did not seem 'intimidating'. Their comments imply that as a boy he is unable to convincingly make threats and be intimidating, rather these characteristics are associated with being a man. At the end of the extract Lizzie eventually talks about him trying to force his partner to have sex and using threats to coerce her. However, she is not referring to the clip that the group just watched but instead is discussing the previous clip they saw. This clip ('Bedroom'), also from the UK Government *This is Abuse Campaign*, depicted a young man trying to coerce his female partner into having sex with him by threatening her. Whilst watching this clip Lizzie also commented upon the young man's lack of manliness and when I returned to the group and asked what they thought further ideas about gender were illuminated:

> Rosie: She handled herself quite well though didn't she, I didn't think she was playing like the victim
>
> Lizzie: At least she stood up for herself
>
> Olivia: She was able to stand up for herself
>
> Lizzie: If he was more manly I'd be more scared but cos he looked like a bit of a quince I would have sorted him out!
>
> *(Laughter)*

Rosie's comment about not playing the victim suggests that she perceives the young woman does not passively accept the way her partner is behaving towards her and 'stands up for herself' by challenging his behaviour. It is perhaps implied through this comment that Rosie perceives some women 'play the victim' by tolerating violent behaviour, making no attempt to challenge it. Lizzie returns to her point about manliness and uses this to minimise the way he is behaving and the impact this might have. She refers to him as a 'bit of a quince', which, as far as I am able to gather is slang for a male homosexual or effeminate male (dictionarycentral.com). Referring to him in this way is a direct attack on his normative gender role identity which serves to reinforce Lizzie's point that he is not manly. In the context of these discussions it appears that these young women consider violence as something that men do. Because they do not perceive the young men in the clips to possess the characteristics they associate with being a man they make light of their violent behaviour and minimise the impact it might have.

Girls and women and boys and men are understood by participants relationally. What it means to be a girl is understood in terms of its difference to womanhood. Where girls are considered inexperienced and susceptible to pressure from peers to have sex, women are independent, sexually experienced and in control of their sexual desires. Whereas the difference between girls and women was tied to sexuality, boys and men were

differentiated by men being perceived as dominant, intimidating and threatening and boys lacking these traits.

Cultural differences in gender roles

Perceived cultural differences in gender roles were discussed in one all-female group discussion (FG2). In this exchange the meanings of cultured gender roles and present day sexism are explored, ideas are co-constructed by the participants through their group interaction. This extract begins with Rosie talking about the role of religion in dictating the way that men and women should behave. A broader discussion of sexism follows which is brought back to cultural differences by Rosie who repeats her original comment affirming her individual position:

Rosie: But in some religions (pause) that's how they've got to be

Lizzie: Yeah

Rosie: I heard, yeah, cos I work with Indians, so I heard that erm like back in like the day when the man died they had to erm (pause) they had to kill the woman as well like at the same time. Like they'd burn her alive with him

Moderator: Why would they do that?

Rosie: Because it was always like the man, without the man the woman was nothing and I think some people still think that like nowadays

Lizzie: Like sexist?

Rosie: Yeah

Olivia: Well yeah cos it's like 'you're at home, you're cooking, you're feeding the kids and I'm going to work and I'll do whatever'

Lizzie: Yeah

Paige: I'd be alright with that to be honest

Rosie: Yeah people still think that though don't they

Olivia: Dominant male

Rosie: But it depends, in different cultures and stuff there's different things in relationships. Like round here (pause) well no not round here. Personally like me I wouldn't let no-one treat me like shit, you know but that's how it is in other countries

Lizzie: Yeah

Rosie: They've got to be like that. They've got to be like 'you're not allowed out'

Lizzie: No sex before marriage as well

Rosie: Yeah (pause) damn

(Laughter)

Here Rosie is recounting a story she heard from her Indian work colleagues (that in the past when an Indian man died his widow was killed at the same time). What Rosie describes is Sati, the Indian (Hindu) practice of burning or burying alive a widow, voluntarily or by pressure or force, along with the body of her husband[8] (Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1987). Sati is illegal and is rarely practiced in modern India, however, whilst the practice is rare it does still occur. A woman who commits Sati is considered a heroine until the end of time by her community (Johnson & Johnson, 2001, p. 1061). As noted by Rosie, in this tradition the woman was considered to be 'nothing' without the man (her husband). Indeed, if an Indian (Hindu) man was widowed he was encouraged to remarry thus men were not expected to self-immolate to be considered heroes (Johnson & Johnson, 2001, p. 1061).

The discussion is shifted from 'back in the day' to 'nowadays' by Rosie. Lizzie builds meaning by labelling this behaviour as sexist which receives collective agreement and support from Rosie and Olivia. Olivia continues to build meaning by going on to describe what sexism means in regards to traditional gender role activities - housework and childcare are the woman's role whilst the man works and possesses the freedom to 'do whatever' unbound by the constraints of a caregiving role. This exchange illustrates that these young women have an understanding of the nature of sexism. In stating that some people still view gender roles in this sexist way Rosie implies that this is not the view she holds and that, for her, her gender does not impact on how she lives her life or her wider opportunities. This is further demonstrated in the comment that she 'wouldn't let no-one treat me like shit'.

Paige's individual position, on the other hand, is a personal preference for the traditional gender role expectations that Olivia described. Her point of view, which does not support the notion that these activities/behaviours are sexist (the group norm), is neither acknowledged nor challenged. This may be because Paige made this statement fairly quietly and the discussion continued with Rosie responding to Lizzie and Olivia and not Paige. This extract illustrates the ability of these young women to locate gender within historical and cultural contexts, recognising that not all women share the same experiences. The young

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[8] The Commission of Sati Prevention Act (1987) Part 1, Section 2(c) defines Sati as:
The burning or burying alive of –
 (i) any widow along with the body of her deceased husband or any other relative or with any article, object or thing associated with the husband or such relative; or
 (ii) any woman along with the body of any of her relatives, irrespective of whether such burning or burying is claimed to be voluntary on the part of the widow or the women or other-wise.

women identify the traditional gender roles that underpin the example discussed by Rosie and explore them in relation to their own cultural context.

7.3 Performing gender identities

Insights into participants understanding of gender can be found not only by what they say about gender but also how they perform their gender identity when interacting with others in the group discussion. This section explores how gender is performed in the interactions between participants providing a glimpse into male and female identity in action (Allen, 2005).

In one of the mixed-gender discussions (FG3) Kyle uses what he says as a means through which to signify his masculinity:

> Kyle: At the end of the day I think a girl could throw loads of punches at me and I'd just stand there and take it
>
> Andrew: Then you're a mug
>
> Kyle: There's no way I'd even retaliate at all

Kyle explains how he would not respond or retaliate if a female partner physically assaulted him, but would 'stand there and take it'. He could almost have said 'take it like a man' here, which would reflect the underlying point that he is making – when hurt by a female partner he would not react or respond demonstrating his conformity to a stereotypical masculine identity. This comment may also illustrate broader social awareness that male to female violence is wrong.

Gender performance in 'naturally' occurring conversations

During some of the focus groups 'naturally' occurring conversations took place when I moved away from the group to play the visual clip. These exchanges provide interesting insights into gendered peer relations through the different ways that young men and young women interact with one another.

'Gossip' Girls

Two of the three all-female discussions were comprised of young women who knew each other (FG1, FG2). In these discussions young women use peer related gossip to talk about other people, discussing and sharing their opinions of particular celebrities and speaking about me (when I am out of earshot).

Both within the focus group discussion and when I moved away from the group to play the visual clips young women referred to and discussed a number of different celebrities, examples in this chapter include Katie Piper, Justin Bieber and Rihanna. Talking about celebrities can facilitate a sense of collective belonging to the group as it requires a shared knowledge about that celebrity – who they are, what they do and gossip about that

celebrity from the media. Gossiping also offers an opportunity to learn the morals and norms of the peer group, for example where they 'Other' Rihanna by referring to her as a 'div' for reconciling with Chris Brown they demonstrate disapproval of this behaviour (Rysman, 1977). Collective gossiping may serve a functional role in young women's lives fulfilling basic social needs such as fostering a sense of belonging, providing a forum to gather social information and reaffirming social norms (Schuh, 2013; McDonald et al. 2007).

In the first focus group I facilitated when I moved away from the group to play the video clip two young women used my absence as an opportunity to talk about me:

> *(Moderator leaves group and goes to computer to play clip)*
>
> *(Whispering whilst moderator puts clip on)*
>
> Bianca: I don't think she likes us
>
> Eve: She doesn't like us
>
> *(Bianca laughs quietly)*
>
> *(Silence)*

This is a fairly brief exchange; however I feel it is one that merits commenting upon. In their interaction Eve confirms Bianca's perception that I don't like them. They may have come to this conclusion by policing my behaviour (as a slightly older female researcher) towards them – this is the group who were messing about and wouldn't listen to me so I took control of the discussion by loudly saying if they didn't want to listen to me they should leave. Whilst it appears that they are not bothered that (in their opinion) I do not like them, my perceived dislike of them is deemed important enough to openly state to one another, perhaps indicating a preoccupation for social approval from other women.

Young women use gossip to communicate with each other. Talking about celebrities illustrates the significance of popular culture in their lives and how it can be used to communicate norms and values but also foster a sense of collective belonging. This kind of interaction may increase self-disclosure between gossipers because of the enhanced relationship that develops via this form of communication (McDonald et al. 2007). When gossiping about me the young women are clearly bothered about whether or not I like them. For girls, being liked by others is important to them. It is interesting to note that young men did not talk about or refer to celebrities nor did they express any concern about whether or not I liked them.

'Banter' Boys

Whereas young women's conversations were orientated towards celebrities and concern about the impression they have made on others (me), some young men participated in banter, teasing and verbal one-upmanship. When young men were talking to each other

they use terms like 'man', 'bruv', 'mate', 'boys' and 'son' as markers to indicate a particular stance towards their peers at that moment.

At the start of one of the all-male discussions there was an awkward silence following my initial question about what a dating, romantic or intimate relationship is. Joey reflects the question back by saying 'relationship?' and then breaking off mid-sentence by saying he doesn't know. Following a short silence he states 'I don't know what to think boys to be honest'. Given the context of what the young men have been asked to talk about, they may be worried about saying something which makes their masculine identity vulnerable. This idea finds some support in the next comment made by Joey where he refers to a 'sexual relationship' which may indicate to other young men his sexual interest which signifies his masculine identity (Allen, 2005). Joey's use of the term 'boys' might also be an attempt to draw the rest of the group into the discussion.

In two different discussions the term 'mate' was used when participants were responding to a view which challenged their own. In the context of a debate regarding whether a man can be raped by a woman, Danny (FG7) takes and maintains the position that this can and does happen. Joey, on the other hand, repeatedly challenged Danny's position and asked him how it is possible to which Danny replies 'it's possible mate anything's possible'. Rather than explain how it is possible, Danny restates his position using the term 'mate' to diffuse any tension arising from their conflicting views by using the term as a marker to indicate that their discussion is being negotiated within the context of friendship. Whilst they are comfortable in challenging each other their points of view remain polarised as neither changes their position on the matter.

Similarly, in one of the mixed-gender groups (FG3) specific terms were used which denote a friendly relationship between two young men. When talking to Andrew at different times Lee calls him 'man' and 'bruv/bruvva' and Andrew also used 'man' and 'mate' in his interactions with Lee. The terms infer a collective belonging to a specific male identity and illustrate one way that young men can 'do' their gender when interacting with other young men.

Some young men performed their gender identity by teasing others. This can be seen in the following exchange in one of the all-male groups (FG7) where participants were talking whilst passing around the refreshments I had brought and put on the table:

Ayden: Brett there you go you haven't had one yet

Brett: I don't like chocolate

Tyler: Pass us a caramel one

(Inaudible)

Tyler: Put some in mine, oh shit

(Laughter)

Tyler: Oi put some in there!

Wes: You don't like chocolate?

Joey: Yeah ha ha course you like chocolate *(long laugh)*

Ayden: As if you don't like chocolate

Tyler: Course he does!

At the start of this exchange Ayden passes a tin of chocolates to Brett because he noticed he hadn't eaten any. Brett comments that he doesn't like chocolate and Wes picks up this thread of conversation repeating what Brett said in the form of a question. Joey teases Brett in a hurtful manner ridiculing his comment by stating that Brett must like chocolate. His elongated laughter reinforces that this is a cruel remark. It is important to contextualise this discussion by noting that Brett was a somewhat larger young man, certainly the largest in the group. My interpretation of Joey's comment is that he is teasing Brett because of his size. Unlike Joey, Ayden takes Brett's comment at face value and is incredulous that someone might not like chocolate. However, Tyler then shows support for and reinforces Joey's remark.

This exchange illuminates how the male body is interpreted by other young men and used to construct and reinforce ideas about masculine identities (Mora, 2012, 235). Mora (2012, p. 235) notes that 'flabby bodies' are perceived by men and boys as less manly because they do not conform to idealised notions of the male physique, such as being lean and muscular, which are associated with traditional masculinity. In addition, being fat is perceived by other men as a lack of control and weakness (Grogan & Richards, 2002, p. 226). Teasing may be considered a 'legitimate' response to those who did not fit the slender ideal (Grogan & Richards, 2002, p.226). Because Brett's body does not conform to idealised notions of the male body, and thus a masculine identity, he is ridiculed by some of his peers.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the ways that young people understand and make sense of gender. Gender identities were defined by some young people in terms of stereotypical roles and traits associated with each gender. There was some recognition of how these stereotypical traits may restrict or restrain the way that women, but particularly men, are expected to perform their gender identity. Some young people were able to locate gender within historical and cultural contexts demonstrating awareness that not all women share the same experiences. The way that gender was performed by participants in their interactions with one another also illuminated how young people 'do' gender not only in how they talk about it but also in the way they perform their gender identity in their interactions with others. The following analysis chapters will draw upon the themes/ideas discussed within

this chapter to consider how conceptualisations of gender relate to understandings of teenage intimate relationships, intimate partner violence and telling/help seeking.

Chapter 8: Teenage intimate relationships

This chapter explores participants' understanding of intimate relationships. Different types and stages of intimate relationships are examined and the qualities and kinds of things that young people think are and are not acceptable are then discussed. The connection between gender and participants' understanding of relationships is explored throughout the chapter.

Defining intimate relationships

To explore how participants' viewed and understood what intimate relationships are, they were initially asked 'what kind of things do you think of when I say intimate relationships or dating relationships?' Some young people talked about what intimate relationships are and involve in a clear and articulate manner. Other young people found it difficult to respond to this question and talk about or explain what an intimate relationship is. This may have been because they did not feel comfortable being asked to talk openly about this personal and sensitive topic (Frith, 2000). Responses to this question also provide insights into the techniques some young people use to negotiate difficult or sensitive questions.

Uncertainty

Some participants were initially uncertain and several techniques were used by those who were uncertain and/or reticent. Kyle (FG3) directly asked me 'what do you mean?' and Joey (FG7) sought clarification/asked for my opinion when he reflected the question back to me: 'relationship? I dunno I mean do you'. He then went on to draw the rest of the group into the discussion by saying 'I dunno what to think boys to be honest'. It is worth considering this remark in relation to my presence as a female researcher. By referring to 'the boys' he is clearly separating the group (males) from me (female). His bravado when making this comment also suggests he was performing an aspect of his male gender identity which could serve to affirm his position in the hierarchy of masculinity within the group (Hyde et al. 2005, Goffman, 1956).

A combination of conformity to a particular gender identity and feeling uncomfortable talking about this sensitive subject might explain why, in a group with peers who may police the views of others within the parameters of traditional gender identity characteristics and whose opinions the young person may value, Joey and others were reluctant to be the first to respond to the question. This could be for fear of saying the 'wrong' thing which can potentially leave young people open to ridicule and embarrassment. These ideas also find support in the silence and nervous laughter that followed this question in several other discussions (FG 1, 2, 8).

Whereas young men tended to seek confirmation from me, young women looked for reassurance from the rest of the group. This is illustrated in the following exchange in one of

the all-female groups (FG1) where intimacy was initially linked to sex by Izzy. Alexis confirms this link and goes on to seek reassurance and approval from the rest of the group:

(Short silence)

Izzy: Sexual

Bianca: Sex

Alexis: Sex (laughs)

(Laughter)

Moderator: Ok

Alexis: That's intimacy, isn't it?

Bianca: Yeah

These young women perceive sex as being part of a dating, romantic or intimate relationship. Their collective laughter suggests that they may feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or uncertain discussing this topic. Alexis seeks confirmation from the rest of the group and her connection between sex and intimacy is confirmed and supported by Bianca, illustrating how young people seek support from peers (the collective/rest of group) when they are uncertain or unsure. In another of the all-female groups (FG5) the young women explored the meaning of intimate and dating relationships together, posing questions to one another and coming to a collective agreement about what an intimate relationship is. The techniques used by these young women illustrate how the peer group can be used to explore ideas and co-construct meaning by interaction with one another, rather than constraining sharing one's views, which happened in some of the all-male groups where discussion was initially stilted.

There was also a sense in one of the all-male groups (FG4) that there is a shared, unspoken understanding of what an intimate relationship is which does not require further explanation because it is assumed that the group know what the terms refer to. This was suggested in Grant's statement that 'It's just normal relationships innit (pause) that's what a relationship is really'.

Certainty

In contrast to those who initially found it difficult or were unsure of how to articulate and explain how they understood these terms, other young people had a clearer idea. In three discussions (FG 4, 5, 6) participants confidently responded to the question, putting forward their individual views of what they thought the terms 'intimate' and 'dating' relationships meant. In the all-male group at the sixth form college Nick (17) summarises an intimate relationship as:

Like having a partner that you're close to physically (pause) in like a loving way that's what I think when you say intimate

When asked to elaborate what he means by in a 'loving way' he clarifies that he is talking about things like 'hugging and kissing', connecting intimacy to the physical acts of closeness he refers to above. In the same discussion David (16) had his own viewpoint:

I kind of think of it as like having a boyfriend or girlfriend or fiancé or whatever that you kind of see on a regular basis, or maybe not depending on the situation, that you have feelings for that you can be yourself around and you don't really think you have to hide anything about yourself to keep the relationship going a certain way

David's understanding of intimate relationships brings together a number of ideas about what relationships involve. He identifies who is in the relationship in terms of clearly defined labels such as 'boyfriend', girlfriend' or 'fiancé' and also acknowledges other kinds of partners with his 'whatever' which may refer to casual partners that may be more difficult to label. He goes on to say that he would expect someone to see a partner fairly frequently, although he acknowledges how often people see each other may differ depending on their situation. An expectation of a significant emotional element to the relationship is suggested as is openness and being comfortable to be yourself around your partner.

The different ways that young people responded to my initial question highlight the complex nature of these kinds of relationships. This complexity is explored in further depth in the next section which outlines the different types of intimate relationships that were described by participants.

Who is in the relationship?

Unless they were talking about their own boyfriend or girlfriend there was a tendency for young people to talk about 'partners', this term is one which can be applied across all the relationships mentioned. In a number of discussions young people referred to 'boyfriends' and/or 'girlfriends' (FG1, 2, 3, 5, and 6) which are terms typically used to label people in committed, serious relationships. In one discussion opposite sex and same sex relationships were mentioned by Lizzie (18) who referred to 'boyfriend and boyfriend' or 'girlfriend and girlfriend' (FG2). Fiancés, husbands and wives were also discussed by David (16) in an all-male group but were not considered to be relevant to him at this stage of his life.

8.1 Relationship types and stages

Relationships were considered to be comprised of a number of stages which could be seen to serve different purposes and involved different behaviours and activities. Young people distinguished different types of relationships which are here divided broadly into firstly casual encounters characterised by sexual activity and emotional detachment, and secondly more committed, exclusive relationships with much clearer rules, boundaries and expectations. These two relationship types have similarities but also distinct features and

are important in understanding the diversity of intimate relationships and encounters that young people may experience. The following diagram provides a pictorial representation of the different types of relationships and stages outlined by participants.
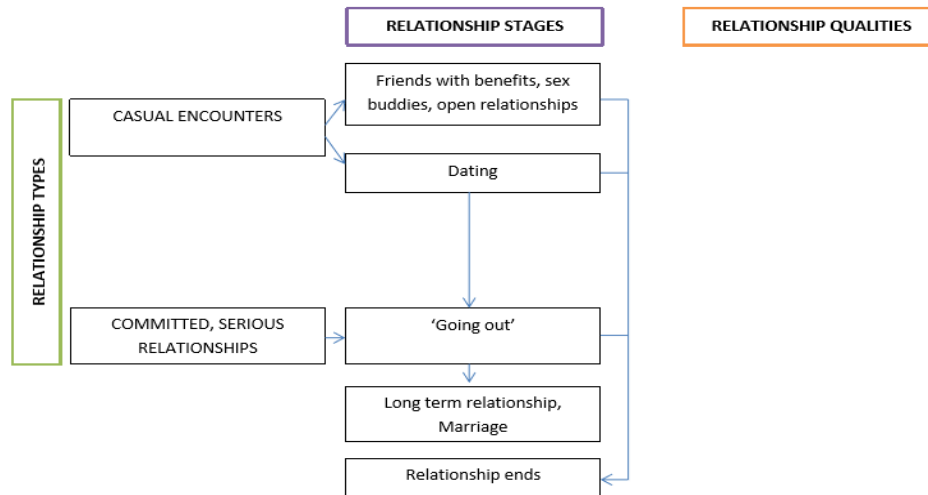
Figure 6. Relationship types and stages

Casual encounters

Participants outlined two different kinds of casual encounters; those which are purely sexual in nature such as friends with benefits and sex buddies, and dating relationships where an individual spends time with a potential partner and decides whether or not they want to enter into an 'official' relationship. The following analysis provides participants' explanations of these sorts of casual encounters including the activities involved and purpose of these kinds of relationships.

Friends with benefits, sex buddies and open relationships

Participants in three focus groups discussed relationships which are characterised by sexual activity that they referred to as 'friends with benefits' and 'sex buddies'. Cameron (FG3) describes these sorts of relationships as involving 'friends that just meet up and have sex'. Both Alexis (FG1) and Josh (FG4) state that friends with benefits are 'no strings attached' encounters, with Josh going on to explain that being friends with benefits is 'without the problems of being in a relationship'. For both Cameron (FG3) and Josh (FG4) friends with benefits and sex buddies are defined as emotionally detached sexual relationships.

For young women there was some uncertainty and ambiguity around these sorts of relationships highlighted in the following exchange:

Alexis (20): Like sex buddies

(Everybody laughs)

Alexis: No strings attached

Elle: But then that's not a relationship cos then you don't have no feelings whatsoever

Amelia: But it is kind of

Alexis: Well you always kind of end up having feelings

Bianca: You've got a connection with them haven't you

Several people: Yeah

Amelia: A big connection

(Laughter)

Whereas the young men suggest that sexual intercourse is an end in itself 'without the problems of a relationship', these young women interpret casual relationships as emotionally meaningful sharing some of the characteristics associated with a romantic relationship such as greater closeness and intimacy (Adams & Williams, 2011; Grello et al. 2006).

Similarities between casual sexual relationships and romantic/intimate relationships were outlined later in the same all-female discussion (FG1). In this exchange young women are discussing arguments as a feature of all relationships:

Elle: Yeah everyone has arguments, everyone

Alexis: And crying and being depressed and miserable and stressed

Moderator: What sorts of relationships does this happen in?

Several people: All

Alexis: Yeah

Bianca: Yeah

Moderator: Even friends with benefits?

Alexis: Yeah

Amelia: Yeah

Bianca: Yeah

Moderator: Yeah?

Amelia: Cos you end up falling in love with them and they tell you they're not in love with you

Alexis: Yeah

Amelia: And then you're like ohhhhh

(Laughter)

This exchange builds on earlier remarks providing further support for the idea that young women may interpret even casual relationships as emotionally meaningful (Anderson, 1989; Eder et al. 1995). Amelia's comment suggests that young women may seek out qualities of a romantic partner/relationship whereas young men perceive these kinds of relationships as characterised by sexual activity and emotional detachment. These gender differences in relational perceptions might be explained by traditional gender roles which place responsibility for satisfying male sexual desire upon women (Impett & Peplau, 2003). Young women may therefore enter into a casual sexual relationship to meet their partner's needs and in doing so believe there is potential for a committed relationship to develop (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Grello et al. 2006). This idea is perhaps reinforced if we consider the gender double standard that means women may be judged more negatively than men for initiating sexual activity (Eder et al. 1995; Crawford & Popp, 2010). This may explain why young women hope for something more meaningful to develop

Like friends with benefits and sex buddies, open relationships were defined by their sexual nature. In the following exchange Marc and Josh try to explain what an open relationship is and why they think people might enter into these sorts of relationships:

Moderator: Ok, you said about an open relationship, what sort of things happen in that?

Marc: So you're with someone but then you can see other people sort of thing, I dunno. It's hard to explain

Josh: People who like to sleep around

Marc: Yeah, pretty much

Moderator: Ok, so that might be why people have open relationships?

Josh: Well not necessarily but it can be

(Inaudible)

Josh: I'm not saying that is always why

An open relationship is described somewhat tentatively by Marc as a non-exclusive relationship where both partners are free to pursue other people. Josh attempts to articulate what Marc is having difficulty explaining. He emphasises that an open relationship is characterised by freedom to pursue and experience sexual activity/intercourse outside of the central relationship, which Marc agrees with. When pressed further, Josh states that some people may choose to have an open relationship as a result of the associated sexual freedom, but he goes on to stress that there may be other possible reasons/motivators, although he does not elaborate upon what these might be.

Both friends with benefits and open relationships were defined by the sexual nature of the relationship. Friends with benefits relationships are characterised by their emotional detachment by young men, but the potential for emotional attachment in these types of encounters was suggested by some young women. Open relationships share similarities to serious relationships where you are 'with someone' and potentially committed to them. However, being in an open relationship enables an individual to see other people and have sexual encounters outside of the relationship. The divergent expectations of young men and young women in regards to the nature, qualities and outcomes of casual sexual encounters were striking.

Dating

Dating was described by participants as a period of exploration and getting to know someone. It was considered as something exclusive with just two people involved (Mia, FG5) which serves the purpose of assessing each other's suitability as a partner, informing a decision about whether there is potential for a committed, serious relationship. The following exchange in one of the all-female discussions (FG5) illustrates how dating is perceived as a distinct stage in itself but can also act as a bridge between casual and committed relationships:

> Alice: I think of dating as just kind of getting to know someone before you like (pause) properly (pause) I don't know

> Lucy: Yeah dating kind of leads on to the more intimate stuff. It's kind of like the first section where you sort of build the trust and that and then you have the more intimate stuff

> Moderator: Mmhmm (pause) would anyone agree or have a different viewpoint?

> Daisy: Yeah it's like dating and then boyfriend and girlfriend and then that's like the intimate side like dating comes first

These young women consider that intimacy is not part of a dating relationship, although it does play a role in leading to the intimate 'stuff' that they perceive takes place in more clearly defined boyfriend/girlfriend relationships. When moving through these stages there

are changing expectations about what the relationship means and involves. The idea that dating progresses through stages was also explained by Joey (FG7):

> I'd say dating was the first couple of weeks do you know what I mean when you go cinema, go have a meal I'd say that's dating then you actually get into a relationship with someone and then become intimate and then all them sorts of things boom boom boom

Like the young women in the previous extract, Joey perceives dating as being an initial period of getting to know one another and he associates dating with specific activities involving two people going somewhere and doing something together. Grant, in another all-male group, actually refers to stages in his description of dating:

> There's like the different stages isn't there. Like when you're like say dating or whatever like when you take them out or (pause) just have them round every now and then

Grant also refers to the kinds of things that happen during this stage. He speaks of taking 'them' out and having 'them' round which could suggest that he perceives the man is in control of the relationship and has an active role, taking the female out or inviting them round [to his house], implying that the female has a reactive role to the behaviour of the man (Rose & Frieze, 1989). Dating relationships may therefore not only be staged but also gendered with traditional gender behaviour informing how some young people understand the dynamics of this type of relationship.

To summarise, dating is conceptualised as a period of time where two people who are interested in each other get to know one another by doing things together. It is a stage of exploration which informs the decision about whether or not to progress to the next, more formal/serious, stage of 'going out'. Whilst dating, like more causal encounters, can be a stage in and of itself, the dating stage plays a significant role in the formation of more serious, committed relationships.

Committed, serious relationships

Participants referred to committed relationships as 'going out' (FG3, 4, 6, 7) 'long term relationships/boyfriend/girlfriend' (FG5, 6, 7) and 'making it official' (FG6). Committed relationships share some of the qualities of casual encounters but they possess a range of distinct qualities which distinguish them from other types of intimate encounters and relationships. This section provides a brief outline of what a committed relationship is. It is followed by an in depth exploration of the qualities, behaviours and activities that young people think are and are not acceptable in a relationship.

'*Going out'*

There are two trajectories that a young person might take to enter into an exclusive, committed relationship - a relationship may develop from a friendship (FG5), or more commonly, a relationship may form after a period of dating where the relationship moves from exploration into this more formal/serious stage.

Daisy (FG5) explained how a committed relationship might develop from a friendship:

> Possibly being friends first or like knowing someone like in a really close way first and then like as you've gone through your friendship there's like you've got to a point where you're not friends any more it's got more than that and then you just like go out sort of thing. Maybe just got close so it's like that

For Daisy, it is the closeness which develops over time that progresses the relationship from friendship to a more serious, committed relationship. There is some similarity between what Daisy describes and the development of a relationship through dating in that both involve the formation of a relationship over time. Dating, however, is founded upon a romantic interest between both parties where the decision to enter into a committed relationship is informed by 'going on more dates (laughs) seeing whether you like them or not' (Nick, FG6). Once this decision has been made, the relationship may progress to 'going out' (Kai FG4) or 'making it official' (David FG6).

Once a young person enters into a committed relationship, the relationship itself develops and grows over time. Some young men talked about how in the early stages of a committed relationship you get to know someone (Joey FG7) and 'learn their personality and stuff' (Ayden FG7). Being with a partner (Grant FG4) and 'spending time together' (Marc FG4, Daisy FG5, Wes FG7, Russell FG8) are distinct qualities of this stage. Joey and Ayden (FG7) explained how getting to know someone, most likely by spending time together, makes things more 'comfortable' with a partner which in turn can support the development of intimacy in a relationship as 'then when you get intimate it's a lot more calmer' (Ayden FG7). Developing intimacy can be a difficult and challenging process particularly when moving from casual or dating relationships to a committed relationship and it can be affected by heightened uncertainty about the relationship (Solomon & Knobloch, 2001). Ayden's comment alludes to a calming of this relationship turbulence once intimacy has been established.

A committed relationship might therefore involve a level of intimacy that might not necessarily be found in the other relationship types and which is developed by spending time together and getting to know one another. Although intimacy was often equated to sexual activity such as 'hugging and kissing' (Nicki FG6) and being 'sexually active' (Russell FG8), being 'really close' to a partner (Bianca FG1, Lizzie FG2, Daisy FG5) can also be interpreted as intimacy within a committed relationship.

Marriage

Marriage was mentioned in two all-male discussions (FG 4, 6). It was referred to as the next, more serious, stage that a committed relationship can progress to. In the following exchange when talking about relationships and how they relate to marriage, David (FG6) connects marriage with age/time:

> Moderator: Ok. Are there any other sorts of relationships do you think?
>
> David: Mainly I just think of boyfriends and girlfriends but then I guess there are some people that even at our age take it a bit further. I've heard of 16 year olds wanting to get married already but erm usually I just kinda think of boyfriends and girlfriends, that kind of thing (pause) I don't really think of husbands and wives yet
>
> Moderator: Could you say a bit more about that?
>
> David: Personally I think cos we're so young we've got the rest of our lives to live before we get too serious about that kind of thing but even still we might have a long term boyfriend or girlfriend of a few years but not have to get married

Like David, Grant (FG4) considered 'marriage and stuff' as something that happens 'later on'. Marriage is perceived by David and Grant as being a future life event and not something they consider as typically taking place during adolescence. The completion of education, full-time employment, followed by marriage then parenthood was identified as the normative sequence for young people's transition into adulthood in the 1990s (Greene, 1990). Although marriage might not be considered a transitional event for David and Grant, they identify it as a life event which takes place in adulthood (Arnett, 1997).

This section has outlined the diverse range of relationship types and stages described by participants. Their comments illuminate how the terms 'dating relationships', but particularly 'intimate relationships', encapsulate a range of intimate encounters, activities and relationships which can make them difficult to define and differentiate. To reflect this diversity, and to aid clarity, reference to intimate relationships in the remainder of this chapter includes the range of intimate encounters and relationships that young people described.

8.2 Relationship rules

Young people talked in detail about the kinds of things they expect to happen in intimate relationships and things they think are not acceptable, in other words 'relationship rules'. These included the qualities, behaviours and activities which inform young people's understanding of what should happen within relationships. Such rules shape young people's expectations of committed relationships and guide the way that they behave and expect their partner to behave. This section explores these rules and what happens when they are broken.

Desirable relationship qualities, behaviours and activities

Trust

Trust was considered to be an essential part of an intimate relationship and was discussed in almost every focus group. Discussions about trust encompassed how participants think trust is gained within a relationship and what happens when trust is lost or breached.

Trust was considered by many to be the 'main thing' (FG2, FG7, FG8) in a relationship, as Joey comments (FG7):

> I think everything begins with trust really cos you don't really wanna be in a relationship with someone them saying something to you and everything they're telling you you're thinking 'that's not right' or…

This idea was reflected in the way that almost all desirable and undesirable relationship qualities and activities were tied to the notion of trust, demonstrating its significance to young people's intimate relationships.

Trust was defined by participants as mutual respect for one another which makes you feel secure (FG2, FG4, FG7, FG8). It is built over time by getting to know someone and learning their boundaries (FG4, FG2, FG6, FG7). In one of the all-male groups Kai explained that trust is something which has to be earned 'by not screwing up'. Trust is therefore founded on the idea that once a young person has earned the trust of their partner they will care for the other person's interests by refraining from breaking the trust bestowed upon them (Jones, 1996). The following remarks made by Nick and David in an all-male discussion (FG6) hook together a number of ideas about what trust is and how it develops:

> Moderator: Mmhmm. How do you get the trust do you think in a relationship?
>
> Nick: Spending time (pause) just like getting to know who they are and if you've been with someone a long time and they've never let you down before then why are they going to do it now type thing
>
> David: Yeah I think like a big bit of it is getting to know the person before you get with them because if you rush into a relationship and you don't know the person you kind of might be let down because you haven't prepared yourself to be protected against that. Whereas if you get to know them and you kind of you might have feelings for them but they, you don't think they're trustworthy then you might decide not to get into a relationship with them because you think that they might let you down

The following exchange (FG4) provides further insights into what participants perceive trust is and the activities and behaviours which illustrate trust in action:

> Moderator: Ok so what do you mean by trust?

> Marc: Trust is like you'll go out and you won't like flirt with other people or you won't do anything like cheat on them or whatever

> Josh: Just being able to talk to somebody

> Owen: Not having to worry about them when they're going out or them worry about you when you go out or (pause) when you're with each other just (pause) you know not having a sense of worry

> Josh: Just like being able to talk to somebody and like tell things like in confidence that you don't want them to tell other people (pause) just like little things like that

Trust is not breaking relationship rules by doing things that would have a detrimental impact on your partner, which Marc relates to keeping your partners feelings in mind in the things that you do. Owen adds that trust is reciprocal and means each person in the relationship does not worry when the other is doing something without them. Josh explains how he perceives trust as being able to talk to a partner in confidence. A similar point was made by Mia (FG6) in an all-female group who explained that trust is gained by 'sharing things and thinking "yeah they're going out for a night but it's fine nothing bad will really"…'. Like Owen and Josh, Mia considers trust as being reciprocal. She also uses an example which focuses upon trust in relation to a partner going out and not having to worry about what they are doing.

As well as trust being linked to a partner's behaviour when the other is absent, the way a partner behaves when they are together was also linked to trust. As Lucy (FG5) explains:

> You don't want to like be uneasy and there be times where you don't know if they're going to get angry or something or like how they're going to react to you and that kind of thing. I'd say you want there to be like trust that you know they're not going to I don't know say something nasty or (pause) violence

Like Lucy, some of the young men talked about expecting a partner 'not to hurt you…not to mess you about' (Ayden, FG7) which was explained by Joey (FG7) as 'that comes under trust though really doesn't it not to hurt you'. These remarks suggest that trust is a general expectation that a partner can be relied upon to behave in a particular way (Rotter, 1980). Therefore, if there is trust in the relationship a young person expects their partner not to hurt them and should not feel uneasy or uncertain about how they will respond or react, illustrating Deutsch's (1973, p. 148) definition of trust as 'confidence that one will find what is desired from another, rather than what is feared'.

'If there's no trust there's nothing there…'

The idea that trust is built suggests that it can be 'demolished' in the sense that trust can be broken or breached by a partner. Many comments about what happens when there is a lack or loss of trust in a committed relationship reinforced ideas about the importance of trust as

the foundation for the relationship. In one of the all-female groups Mia (FG5) explains how trust is the defining quality of committed relationships and without it the relationship could not become intimate:

> Mia: There's got to be a certain degree of trust for it to be romantic and intimate. You can't really have intimacy with someone if you don't trust them

This view was echoed by Andrew in one of the mixed-gender groups in the context of a discussion about a partner spending time with opposite sex friends. He explains that 'if there's no trust then there's nothing there at all. You gotta have trust to have a relationship I say'. Further support for this idea can be found in Rosie's comment in another all-female group (FG2): 'I think trust is the main thing in a relationship, without trust there's no like relationship. That can hurt you in a lot of ways like'. Rosie notes not only how she does not consider it to be a relationship if there is no trust but also how she perceives a lack of trust as having a range of harmful consequences. The invasion of a partner's privacy was one such consequence mentioned by Lucy (FG5) who explained that '…to have the privacy there needs to be that sort of trust to start with cos otherwise he probably would be tempted to look through her phone and just like see if she was texting someone else or that kind of thing.'

As trust is founded on previous actions and behaviours, unacceptable relationship activities and behaviours were linked by participants to leading to a lack of trust in a partner (FG3):

> Cameron: Yeah but you should trust them
>
> Leah: Yeah but say they've really hurt you before?
>
> Cameron: Well then why are you still with them?
>
> *(Silence)*
>
> Leah: Maybe you really love the person
>
> Cameron: You've got to break up with them if you don't trust them
>
> Leah: Yeah but think about it if you really like this person you do whatever you can to stay with them
>
> Cameron: Nah
>
> *(Silence)*

These remarks were made in the context of a discussion about how talking on a mobile phone could make a partner paranoid. Leah initially attempts to challenge Cameron's view that a partner should be trusted by suggesting that if a partner has hurt you before, not trusting them is justified in her eyes. Responding to Leah's point, Cameron argues that if

there is no trust the person should not remain in the relationship. Leah's subsequent comments highlight a gender difference in regard to the emotional commitment that she places upon a relationship in comparison to Cameron who rejects the significance of emotional investment, instead emphasising trust as what is important in the maintenance of a relationship. Although Leah appears to grapple with the complex interplay between trust and emotions (love), ultimately, it is the maintenance of the relationship which is particularly important to her. This reflects findings from Chung's (2007) research which found that young women feel pressure to stay in an intimate relationship and may minimise or mask inequality or violence in order to maintain it. In this case Leah rationalises not leaving the relationship on the basis of the emotional attachment to a partner whereas Cameron is adamant that if there is a lack of trust in a partner the relationship should be terminated, regardless of the emotional attachment that Leah describes.

Young people's views of trust demonstrate the importance they place upon it and how it is considered an essential component of an intimate relationship. This is reinforced by what young people say about when trust is lost or lacking and that this is not or should not be considered a relationship or should act as just cause to terminate a relationship.

'Communication is very vital' (Kai, FG7)

Communication was also considered to be an integral part of a relationship. Participants explained why they think communication is important, in what contexts they consider communication to be particularly salient and the different ways that partners might communicate with one another.

Communication as 'give and take…you've got to say what you want and then they've got to say what they want…' (Marc, FG4)

Communication was recognised as an ongoing, reciprocal process which fosters open discussion and support. Michael (FG7) mentioned how he considered having 'someone you can tell stuff to (pause) anything like worries anything' to be particularly important. Communication was perceived as enabling issues to be talked about and worked out. Layla (FG8) explained that 'if there are problems you can talk about it' and in a different discussion Josh (FG4) offered further in depth explanation of this idea:

> Yeah (pause) hopefully you'd be in a relationship where you'd be able to tell each other if you're not comfortable with something (pause) or they've hurt you you'd be able to tell them but obviously it's not just as easy as that sometimes. Like in that relationship [Crush clip] I doubt she'd be able to just say to him like 'don't do this' or something. But you should (pause) you should be able to tell like without even saying anything sometimes in a relationship cos you should know that person like well enough to be able to tell that you're upsetting them

Josh recognises the importance of communication in making the relationship work as it allows both partners to communicate what they are and are not comfortable with. He also identifies how telling a partner you don't like something might be difficult in certain circumstances, such as a violent relationship like the one depicted in the *Crush* clip.

If any 'problems' or issues are not resolved, further discussion was considered to be necessary to attempt to work things out:

> Owen: So if it's somewhere that him or her has definitely told you 'I don't like him or her' or 'I don't like where you're going'
>
> Kai: You have to respect that
>
> Owen: You probably respect it but then you think 'maybe I want to' so that's where you have to obviously talk about it a little bit more

In this extract from one of the all-male groups (FG4) Owen gives the example of one partner not liking something the other partner is doing. Having communicated these feelings to one's partner, Kai acknowledges these should be respected. Owen goes on to explain that although they should respect where there partner is coming from, the issue needs to be discussed further if they are not willing to do what their partner is asking. The two-way, cyclical communication between partners provides another example of the way in which communication is integral in making the relationship work (Altman et al. 1981).

Sexual communication – 'you should discuss it first' (Nick, FG6)

Communication was considered to be particularly important in regards to the sexual aspects of a relationship. This idea was discussed by the two young men at the sixth form college (FG6). In the following extract David explains why he considers talking about sexual relationships to be especially significant:

> David: I think if you're going to have a sexual relationship then you I think to begin with you both need to be comfortable with the idea of it and with doing it but if you do keep the same partner then you obviously I don't think you really need to kind of discuss it and say that you're ready each and every time you do something. But if you have a different partner then I think to begin with with each different partner you have you should discuss it because while you might be ready they might not be ready or while you might not be ready you might be kind of thing

Communicating about each other's readiness for sexual activity appears to be associated with the early stages of a relationship. It serves to facilitate the negotiation of sexual interactions by both partners openly sharing their thoughts and feelings. The importance of sexual communication was further explained by Nick who stated that '…they could be feeling completely different to what you are and how you think they're feeling'. Nick stressed that there should be 'nothing without consent…' and he made the point that for a

relationship to move beyond 'hugging and kissing' a discussion needs to take place before any sexual activity occurs. Sexual communication therefore gives both partners an opportunity to talk about and agree to (verbally consent) things moving beyond a hug or kiss. These remarks are particularly striking with regards to the maturity, sensitivity and non-stereotypical attitudes of Nick and David who were 16 and 17 respectively.

Ways of communicating

Participants explained how communication can happen in one of two ways; verbally and non-verbally. Verbal means of communication were most often discussed and included talking to one another, telling each other things and arguing (FG4, 5, 6, 7, 8). Non-verbal methods such as interpreting a partner's reaction and listening to them were less commonly referred to.

The role of talking and telling were described within the previous section in relation to communicating feelings and working out issues. Arguing was described as sharing some similarities with talking in that its purpose was to work things out. Interestingly, it tended to be young men who focused upon arguments and what their function was in a relationship. Kyle (FG3) suggested that '…every relationship has their arguments', although Lee was adamant that arguing is not part of all relationships. He explained that rather than argue about something he uses a different strategy to solve the problem:

> Like (pause) like you get round argues innit like rather than arguing with your chick or something like you just go out chill for a bit innit then come back and it'll be cool again or something, I dunno

Although Lee put forward a different point of view, it was Kyle's view which was met with general support from the rest of the group. Kyle went on to explain that rather than leave to diffuse a difficult situation like Lee, he would '…try and sort it out'. He continued to develop and justify his point of view by explaining that '…there's a time when everyone can portray their emotion and therefore can argue'. The positive functions of arguing as a form of communication were also explored in further depth by Joey (FG7) who explained that:

> Cos I do think like say I've gone out with like a long term I've had a long term relationship with a girl for a year and I haven't argued with her for a whole year I think maybe that one argument (pause) something quite major happened or whatever that could just break it all down from there but if you have a little argument do you know what I mean you've worked it out worked it out worked it out you're becoming stronger you're becoming stronger you could have a big argument and then maybe that would be worked out easier than what it would going a long time without having one

Having 'little arguments' on a more frequent basis enables a couple to work through their issues. Arguments offer an opportunity to understand and appreciate a partner's point of

view and resolve issues by communicating and compromising which may strengthen the relationship, rather than dissolve it as one off 'big arguments' might do (Canary & Cupach, 1988).

Listening was also recognised as an important part of the communication process (FG7):

Joey: Listening to them listening to what they say cos if they're telling you something and you're doing the other thing that's obviously not going to make them happy (pause) but if you're listening to what they say you think 'yeah they've said that I'll do that' that's going to make them happy

Joey recognises that when a partner tells him something, by listening and responding he provides support to his partner which can improve their mood (Collins & Feeney, 2000). Another form of communication was picking up on non-verbal cues (FG4) such as 'how they react' (Owen and Grant, FG4) which helps one partner to recognise the other isn't happy or there is a problem. Owen explained that '…you just know by the look or what they say or something, you just know'. What is interesting is that these young men perceived that they should be able to recognise when their partner was '…in a mood' (Grant) and respond in a manner that addressed the issue:

Marc: Yeah cos if you've upset them you know you've crossed a line (that's when you start trying to make things right by apologising and that

There are two approaches to communication here, Joey emphasises the role of listening whereas Owen refers to seeing how a partner reacts. Interestingly none of the participants talked about doing both. This is potentially problematic because without using both forms of communication these young men could be misunderstanding and making assumptions without checking they've interpreted what they see and/or hear properly (Tannen, 1992).

Although young people appeared to prefer verbal communication, it was recognised that a partner might not want or be able to communicate their feelings in this way. Indeed, some young women were perplexed by the behaviour of their male partner but did not feel able to openly talk to them about how their behaviour was making them feel:

Alexis: My ex used to be like that really bad and I was really miserable and I just used to think what are you actually getting out of this? What's amazing about it? Do you just leave the house and be like 'ha ha'

The different aspects of communication that were discussed by young men in comparison to young women may highlight differences in male and female cross-sex communication (Maltz & Borker, 1982). The young men talk about listening to partners and interpreting their body language, whereas Alexis questioned her partners' behaviour inwardly rather than asking him directly. Whilst communication was considered a desirable relationship quality serving an important function in making the relationship work, in their own

relationships there may be a discrepancy between what they want or expect in regards to communication and what actually happens. This is potentially problematic as it may restrict a young person from communicating effectively with their partner and/or lead to miscommunication.

Undesirable and harmful relationship activities, behaviours and qualities

There was a great deal of talk around what was not acceptable within a relationship. There was a consensus that violence was wholly unacceptable, this is explored in detail in the following chapter. This section focuses upon cheating and lying which were repeatedly identified as unacceptable behaviours which 'broke the trust' (FG5, 8), and undermined the foundations of the relationship.

Cheating

Cheating involves being 'with two people at once' (Lucy, FG5) so its very nature stands in opposition to how young people understood what a relationship should be and involve because '…if you're with someone you're meant to want to be with them aren't you and if you don't want to be with them then you shouldn't be with them' (Marc, FG4). If a partner cheats, it was perceived as eroding what a relationship is and is based upon (trust) illustrated in Marc's (FG4) comment that '…if you're just gonna cheat on someone and sleep with other people you might as well just not be in a relationship'.

Across all the discussions the unacceptability of cheating was often related to the impact it had upon the faithful partner. Kyle (FG3) talked about how if a girl was in love with a boy, if he then went on to cheat on her it could …'tear em up…like a lot'. From a female perspective, Daisy (FG5) explained how 'it's not a nice feeling to know that you're not the only one they care for, that you're not enough for them'. This sense of inadequacy was also referred to by Mia (FG5) who described the short and long term impact infidelity might have on the faithful partner:

> I think it all can be harmful really, it kind of depends on how extreme it is. Cheating on someone, being cheated on can be incredibly harmful to someone's self-confidence (pause) cos you feel like you're inadequate and you're not enough for anyone really and it breaks the trust and you can't trust anyone really for a while at least…

Mia refers to how the trust becomes broken, in the following extract David (FG6) focuses on how cheating can 'break down' the individual:

> …can lead to the person that you're in a relationship with being broken down and not having any confidence to do a lot of things for a long time which isn't fair because (pause) they're being kind of punished in a way when they haven't done anything wrong

The sense of being broken at the individual and relationship level, illuminates how cheating can make the relationship fragile. In contrast to trust, which provides a secure and strong foundation for a relationship, cheating serves to undermine and weaken both the relationship and the partner who has been cheated upon. An interesting point to note is that there is no mention by any of the young men of the impact of cheating on them, they refer only to their perception of the impact on young women.

'I think it's wrong to lie to someone…' (Mia, FG5)

Like cheating, lying was considered to be unacceptable because it violates trust and open communication that young people associate with a healthy relationship. As Russell (FG8) explains '…you shouldn't have to lie in a relationship you should be able to be honest…'. With Grant (FG4) pointing out that '…everyone finds out at some point (pause) no matter how far along the line it is it always come out so', perhaps indicating some personal insight and experience of being lied to and a general dislike for lying in general.

The consequences of being lied to were also discussed with Russell (FG8) explaining that '…it's not nice for that other person to know that they've been lied to (pause) then they might not trust you again when you are telling the truth'. He went on to describe how the loss of trust in a partner who had told lies could lead the faithful partner to become paranoid and suspicious which could then '…wear you down and it will wear your partner down as well' (Layla, FG8).

The detrimental impact that lies have on trust was used by Mia (FG5) to explain why lying is not acceptable within a relationship:

> I think it's wrong to lie to someone you're with because again it kind of comes back to the trust thing if you're lying to someone there isn't the trust and it's not really a relationship, they're two-way you know

In the following extract Joey makes the admission that lies are an inevitable part of social life/society and enable it to function, but he goes on to stress that lying to a partner is unacceptable and should act as just cause to terminate the relationship:

> It's not you don't get anywhere with lying to be honest (pause) the world wouldn't work without lies but really (pause) lying to your partner obviously isn't good therefore I think if you've lied to your partner really you shouldn't be with them to be honest that's the way it is

Although lying to a partner was generally considered as being wrong, some young men alluded to the fact that 'most people lie' about going places and seeing people they know a partner doesn't like (Marc, FG4). When asked whether it was then ok for a partner to be annoyed if they found out they had been lied to about doing either of these things, Owen's response that it 'depends how extreme it is' suggests that he perhaps perceives lying to be

alright in certain circumstances. He did go on to say that any issues arising from going against a partners' wishes should be talked about and worked through, illustrating the important role that communication can play in the mediation of problems.

8.3 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the different types and stages of intimate relationships that were described by participants. Relationships were divided broadly into casual encounters characterised by sexual activity and emotional detachment, and more serious, committed relationships. The significance of these different relationship types and stages was apparent in the way that young people talked about them. Gender differences were apparent with regards to the meaning of casual relationships. Young men interpreted casual relationships as purely sexual whereas young women consider these types of relationships as having the potential to be emotionally meaningful and similar in some ways to intimate relationships.

Trust and communication were identified as the two main essential components of an intimate relationship which served to positively support and develop the relationship. Whilst cheating and lying were recognised as wholly unacceptable, as they stood in opposition to trust and communication and thus undermined the foundations of a relationship. Perceptions of trust and communication also highlighted some distinct gender differences. A lack of trust was considered as a reason to terminate a relationship by one young man whereas one young woman suggested that the relationship should be maintained due to the emotional attachment to a partner. Likewise, males and females identified different ways of communicating which highlighted how ideal and actual perceptions of communication may not match up. Whereas female participants spoke about the impact of cheating on other young women, some young men tended to focus upon the impact of cheating on girls rather than how it might affect them. These gender differences highlight the significance of gender to the ways that young people view, understand and participate in intimate relationships.

Chapter 9: Understanding teenage intimate partner violence

The overarching aim of the focus groups was to explore how young people identify, define and contextualise intimate partner violence. This chapter addresses this aim and is guided by the following research questions:

1. What behaviours do young people recognise and define as constituting partner violence?
2. How do young people talk about violence in intimate relationships?
3. Are conceptualisations of interpersonal violence linked to different gendered identities?
   3a. What views of gender do young people draw on when:
   i.   Describing instigators and victims of intimate partner violence
   ii.   Discussing different forms of violence

The chapter begins with an outline of the range of violent behaviours that were talked about by participants. It then goes on to examine how these young people understood and made sense of different forms of violence and explores their interconnection with perceptions of gender identities and adolescent intimate relationships.

Intimate partner violence often involves a range of inter-related, co-occurring violent behaviours making it difficult to categorise. However, for discussion purposes, the analysis of what young people said is organised into distinct categories of physical, psychological/emotional and sexual violence[9] in this chapter. These professionally recognised categories are also used by a range of agencies to identify and respond to intimate partner violence.

9.1 The violent act

In every focus group participants referred to specific violent acts that constitute different forms of violence. The words used by participants to describe these violent acts are outlined here and provide a foundation from which to explore the ways that young people understand and make sense of intimate partner violence.

Young people said that physical violence was 'hitting', 'fighting, proper fighting, slaps and kicks', 'biting', 'he slapped her', 'pulling her hair', 'spitting at them' and 'beating up'.

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[9] The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:
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, emotional (Home Office, 2013)

Participants described a range of sexually violent or 'sexually abusive' behaviours as 'rape', 'forcing her/someone to have sex with you', 'sexual harassment' and 'sexual assault'.

Young people counted as abusive 'mental and emotional violence', 'mentally abusing' 'mentally being mean', 'abuse of the mind'. They described a range of emotionally abusive behaviours including: 'verbally abusing', 'swearing at them/cursing at them', 'calling them a slut/calling them horrible names', 'putting her/your partner down', 'manipulating her', 'picking their little insecurities and throwing them back in a vicious way', 'insulting them', 'mind games', 'try to warp the other persons opinion', 'intimidation', 'controlling' (1 male) and 'control freaks' (1 female).

Although the range of terms used by young people reflects their ability to name the various forms that violence can take, they are not indicative of the ways that they understood and made sense of these terms. Their understanding of different forms of violence will be discussed later in this chapter.

9.2 Terminology – violence or abuse?

During the discussions young people referred to both violence and abuse at different times to mean different things suggesting that these terms have certain connotations and mean particular things to them (Lombard & McMillan, 2013, p. 10). This is illustrated in the following exchange where a specific type of behaviour is considered to be abuse and not violence. This exchange took place in one of the all-female focus groups (FG1) in the context of a discussion about inappropriate relationship behaviours:

> Jess: Not using a condom
>
> Amelia: Oh yeah if someone's got AIDS and they don't tell you about it that's classed as (pause) something isn't it?
>
> Jess: Some people do that, I read something before someone like gave someone AIDS or something like that, or chlamydia or something, and didn't tell them and ended up like
>
> Alexis: ill
>
> Jess: Not having a very nice
>
> Moderator: How would you describe that then? What sort of behaviour would you call that?
>
> Alexis: Selfish
>
> Jess: Yeah but he only done it because, so she wouldn't ever go with anybody else

Alexis: Oooooh

Moderator: Do you consider that abuse, or violence?

Jess: Yeah (pause) not violence

(Several people talking)

Eve: That would be sexual

Amelia: It is some kind of abuse but I don't remember what it's called

Eve: Yeah

There is some uncertainty about how to define the activity they talk about here which perhaps reflects the complex nature of what they have described. Both Jess and Amelia struggle to name this behaviour perhaps indicating that they want to get it 'right' and use the correct terminology. There is a consensus that they do not consider this to be violence but perceive it to be some form of abuse. It is Elle who articulates that it is abusive because a partner who has a sexual infection has sex with another person without informing them of their infectious state[10]. These participants might use the term abuse here because it is often used to refer to a range of behaviours that may be experienced beyond physical violence (Lombard, 2013). This exchange highlights how these young women are able to identify what they perceive to be abusive behaviour and provide a rationale as to why they define it as abuse and not violence.

The varying use of terms may reflect the broader lack of common terminology used to refer to violence that occurs within the context of an intimate relationship. Further instances where different terms were used by participants will be explored within the context of broader discussions about violence.

9.3 Violence dynamics, understanding and attitudes

This section explores how young people explained and made sense of the violent acts and behaviours they talked about. It examines their understanding and attitudes towards partner violence and their perceptions of the impact that different forms of violence can have. The ways in which participants' understanding of gender identities and teenage intimate relationships appeared to inform the way they made sense of violence are explored in parallel to broader discussions about interpretations of violence. For clarity, this section is structured/organised using the distinct, professionally recognised categories of physical, sexual and emotional/psychological violence.

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[10] Under the Offences Against the Person Act (1861) person-to person transmission of a sexual infection that can have serious and potentially life-threatening health consequences for the infected person can be considered as grievous bodily harm (CPS, 2014).

Physical violence

Many participants drew on normative social standards for male and female behaviour to explain the nature, dynamics and impact of physical violence. In the following exchange (FG1) participants were responding to the visual clip from *Waterloo Road* which depicts teenage school girl Vicki, physically attacking her boyfriend. Recognising her own behaviour in the video clip, Alexis draws on gender stereotypes in order to minimise the impact of her own physical violence:

> Alexis: I done that to my ex, but not that bad. And he was massive so it didn't really matter

> *(Laughter)*

> Alexis: Does it matter? It's not that bad, it didn't hurt him

> Moderator: Why do you think it doesn't matter?

> Alexis: Cos it weren't like that, it was just like

> *(acts out slapping/hitting action and squeals)*

> Bianca: She's not really hurting, she weren't really hurting him as such though

> Elle: Depends how hard you do it

> Bianca: Yeah

Alexis openly admits being physically violent towards her partner but uses his large physique to discount the seriousness of her behaviour. The laughter from the rest of the group reinforces, rather than challenges, the argument that her violence towards him 'didn't matter' because he was 'massive'. This comment reinforces ideas about traits associated with a male gender identity. Alexis goes on to ask the group if it does matter and answers this herself by explaining that what she did wasn't 'that bad' and 'didn't hurt him', presumably because of his larger physique. She justifies her behaviour by linking the impact of violence to perceived stereotypical differences in physical traits of men and women.

When asked to elaborate why she thinks it doesn't matter Alexis claims her behaviour was different to the way Vicki behaved in the visual clip, distancing her own behaviour from the physical violence perpetrated in the *Waterloo Road* video. Referring to what they saw in the video, Bianca reinforces the idea that violence perpetrated by females is less serious, by

remarking that she (Vicki) wasn't hurting her boyfriend. Elle shows some awareness that the young woman in the video clip could potentially hurt him, explaining that whether or not it hurt depends upon 'how hard you do it' implying that the impact of physical violence depends upon the severity of the act and not necessarily the gender of the perpetrator and victim. In this exchange participants emphasise the physical consequences of physical violence and do not discuss or consider the emotional impact of such violence.

The idea that physical violence perpetrated by females is 'different' (FG3) from physical violence perpetrated by men was also discussed in one of the mixed-gender discussions:

> Kyle: I think there's a line like I think that it's wrong for a bloke to hit a woman but it is sort of different if a woman hits a bloke because the bloke can't hit her back
>
> Andrew: mmm
>
> Kyle: and I think there's a line where a woman can hit a bloke but they can take it too far (pause) so there's like (pause) a slap and then there's like (pause) abuse
>
> Cameron: cos a lot of women hit men now cos they think that men can't hit them back
>
> Kyle: yeah
>
> Andrew: yeah they take advantage of it
>
> Kyle: cos its works vice versa don't it though, like a bloke can abuse a woman but a woman can also abuse a bloke so I think it's just a line we should stop

The way that Kyle understands violence is based upon a hierarchy where certain acts are considered abusive and others are not. His understanding is also informed by societal expectations of men and women which create a gender imbalance condoning female physical violence and condemning violence perpetrated by men.

The idea that all physical violence is wrong, regardless of who perpetrates it or the reason for the violence was also discussed in several groups (FG3, 4, 8). Referring back to an earlier comment made in a discussion about the unacceptability of male violence (FG4), I asked participants what they thought about physical violence perpetrated by young women. In their response to my question Grant and Marc highlight how socially ingrained the unacceptability of physical intimate partner violence is:

> Grant: well it's still wrong isn't it (pause) regardless of who hits who

(Silence)

Marc: yeah cos if you hit people that's not the way a relationship is meant to go, I think anyway. Why would you want to hit your other half? (pause) But that's just my opinion

Earlier on in this discussion Grant acknowledged that although physical violence on the whole is wrong, growing up he learnt that male to female violence is unacceptable:

Just the way I was brought up really (pause) erm I've always believed that (pause) obviously no one should hit anyone but for a man to hit a woman is wrong, completely wrong, no matter what the situation is you shouldn't hit a woman (pause) and just cos she wore a dress that he didn't want her to wear that was a bit (pause) too far

This comment highlights how, even though Grant perceives all physical violence to be wholly unacceptable, he recognises that gender standards in relation to behaviour are learned through socialisation and may be drawn on when explaining and making sense of violence.

The wrongness of physical violence was also explored in depth in one of the mixed gender groups (FG3) where Kyle earlier remarked physical violence was a 'line we should stop'. Several youth workers were present in this group to ensure its smooth running (crowd control). Although they were asked not to interject in the discussion, in the following exchange a youth worker poses a question to the group. In this extract there is a difference of opinion about whether or not female perpetrated violence was the same as, or more acceptable than, violence perpetrated by men:

Youth worker: what would you think if it was the boy hitting the girl? It is difficult because you didn't see that, but what do you think?

Lee: it just wouldn't be right

Andrew: it's the same

Cameron: I don't see why it's any different though cos if a girl can hit a boy then surely it should be allowed a boy can hit a girl?

In this initial exchange Lee's comment that it isn't 'right' affirms the social unacceptability of physical violence. Andrew states that female perpetrated physical violence is 'the same' as

violence inflicted by men, implying that it does not matter who does what to whom it is still wrong. Cameron agrees with this point by stating that it is not any different and his next remark, that girls 'can' hit boys so it should be 'allowed' for boys to hit girls, challenges the notion that men and women should be held to different standards in relation to their behaviour. As the discussion continued, Kyle explained why he disagreed with this view and the rest of the group try to explain to him, using his own justifications, why they disagree with his position:

Cameron: cos a lot of girls can knock a boy out

Kyle: yeah but she was slapping him

(Inaudible)

Kyle: I think cos like boys wouldn't slap like I think girls, if that girl wanted to punch him she'd punch him, and she slapped him know what I mean so I don't think she (pause) physically wanted to hurt him I just think she wanted to (pause) like say it straight to him like for him to respect her

Cameron: yeah but there's an intention to hurt someone if you're punching or slapping either way

Andrew: no like say

Cameron: cos you're still punching them or slapping them

Kyle: yeah but if a girl wants to hurt a boy she can still hurt a boy

Andrew: right Kyle so you're saying that's right, just say that was the other way round and the boy done exactly the same thing as what she just done to him just say if a bloke done that to a girl, what would you think of that? Would you think it was wrong for a bloke to do that? So why is it right for a girl to do that? (pause) know what I mean?

(Silence)

Lee: it's wrong in both ways

Kyle: I dunno I think that girls have more power over boys

Cameron explains his earlier comments by stating that the physical harm resulting from female perpetrated violence could be significant (knocking them out). Attempting to challenge Cameron's point Kyle explains that girls and boys use different forms of violence in different ways for different reasons. According to Kyle the intention behind her slapping her partner is not to hurt him but to communicate a message to him – that he should respect her. It could be that Kyle considers young women exercise their power over male partners in a different way than through the use of physical violence.

Further insights into the relationship between gender and physical violence came from the same discussion (FG3) where Andrew explained how female perpetrated violence is acceptable in certain circumstances:

Andrew: well just say the bloke, just say it's a married couple alright say these two (points at screen) and obviously he's a fag in a way anyway and she's beating him every day all day no he was beating her every day all day and you're saying it's not right for the girl to use physical force to stop that or prevent that. So you've got to think there there's two ways of looking at that, it can work both ways I think. He beats her then

Lee: so what you saying

Andrew: I'm saying that I think it is right for a girl to use physical force as well on a bloke, you know what I'm saying? Cos you're saying it's not right to do that

Lee: they've got to put their point across innit

Andrew: yeah that's what I'm saying they've got to stick up for themselves as well (pause) know what I'm saying?

It is firstly worth commenting upon Andrew's use of the slang term 'fag' to refer to the young man who is physically assaulted by his girlfriend in the *Waterloo Road* clip. Although 'fag' can have different meanings in different social situations, it is interpreted here as 'a weapon with which to temporarily assert one's masculinity by denying it to others' (Pascoe, 2005, p. 325). Andrew directly challenges the masculinity of the male victim by referring to him as a 'fag'. Using this term illustrates how Andrew interprets the behaviour and experiences of other young men within the constraints of a stereotypical masculine gender identity where victimhood is equated with weakness and constitutes a failed masculine identity. Challenges to male masculine identity can have wider implications on the recognition of violence and help seeking behaviours. It can result in victimisation becoming hidden as Marie (FG8) explained in a different discussion, 'men tend to hide they don't want to come forward and say a woman has been beating them up'. Here it is clear that

stereotypical gender roles and the way that young men police each other's masculine identity within narrowly held ideals of what it means to be a man can constrain young men from recognising and telling someone about their experience of violence.

Ayden (FG7) put forward a similar explanation as to why physical violence is acceptable in certain circumstances:

> it depends if she if it's self-defence it's fine (pause) if he's gone to hit her and (pause) like she's moved out the way and slapped him in a way I think that's fine because (pause) she's saying 'no don't try that don't you dare' (pause) but if he didn't do anything and she just randomly slapped him I reckon that's a bit out of order

Like Lee and Andrew, Ayden considers that young women are entitled to physically retaliate in order to defend themselves and/or stop or prevent the violence. Sticking up for oneself was also equated with physical violence in one of the all-female groups (FG1). Discussing the female to male physical violence in the *Waterloo Road* clip Jess stated that she was expecting the perpetrator of the violence to be male. When asked why she thought this she commented that '…men seem to be stronger than women, so like they stick up for themselves, but not all men do'. Jess draws upon the stereotypical notion that because men are stronger than women they use violence as a way of affirming their position, although she does acknowledge that not all men do. Whereas the young men talk about and justify female perpetrated violence on the basis of it being reactive, Jess draws upon stereotypical views of gender and uses the same notion of sticking up for oneself to explain why men might be violent towards their partner.

These comments illustrate a gender double standard where male violence is condemned, male victimhood is constrained and female violence is legitimised as acceptable in certain circumstances (Lombard, 2012).

Physical violence as a turning point

It was not until a partner was physically violent that some young people considered action needed to be taken to challenge or stop the violent behaviour. Wes (FG7) remarked that 'it's got to get physical for her to do anything', illustrating how he perceives physical violence to be the point at which action should be taken. Like Wes, in one of the all-female groups Lucy (FG5) explained how physical violence acts as a marker for a 'point reached' in recognising behaviour as unacceptable and challenging it:

> When he hit her I'd say that's the kind of point that you'd really want her to realise that it's not just mental abuse and that he's gone too far and she should really get out by then and you want her to walk out the door and be like 'no I'm not putting up

with this anymore' but I don't think she would cos she's kind of gone through the mental abuse and now it's sort of led to the physical

Lucy shows some awareness of the complex dynamics and interconnection between different forms of violence demonstrated by her linking 'going through' mental abuse as 'leading to' physical violence. Responding to this comment made by Lucy, Daisy explained that she thought there were earlier warning signs that the young woman's partner was behaving violently towards her:

I think the warning signs were there in the earlier clip like when he was towering over her and like forcing her to sort of model her underwear for him and stuff like that

Although Daisy identifies the specific behaviours that she interprets and labels as 'warning signs' she does not suggest that these warning signs would act as a trigger or turning point to do something about his behaviour. It could be that the visibility of physical violence makes it easier to recognise and do something about than other forms of violence.

In one of the mixed-gender groups (FG8), Russell also referred specifically to physical violence as a trigger to leave stating 'cos if you just once is too many (pause) if you get hit you should be gone straight away'. Although he uses the example of physical violence here, when asked whether he was only referring to this kind of violence he responded 'no' and Layla said it also applies to 'emotional [violence] as well'. The notion that other forms of violence could also act as a trigger to leave the relationship highlights how some young people perceive all forms of violence to be equally unacceptable, illustrated by the remark that the first time any form of violence is experienced a young person should leave the relationship. The idea of leaving after it occurs 'just once' in relation to emotional/psychological violence may be more difficult because the nature and dynamics of this type of violence can make it difficult to recognise.

Psychological/emotional violence

The complex nature and dynamics of psychological/emotional violence and the range of behaviours that this form of violence incorporates can make it difficult to define and recognise. Some young people were able to identify behaviours which constitute coercive control and explain what they perceived the intention of behaving this way might be. The possible reasons a partner might use coercive control were also discussed by some young people and perceptions of the impact of this form of psychological/emotional violence were also explored.

Coercive control[11]

Coercive control involves one off or complex patterns of ongoing psychological violence including threats, intimidation, verbal abuse, bullying, control (social and economic) and monitoring which are intended to harm, punish or frighten a partner (Home Office, 2013). Perhaps because coercive control encompasses a range of strategies and behaviours, it was the most commonly talked about form of emotional/psychological violence discussed by participants. This section explores the way that young people talked about and understood the range of behaviours and tactics which constitute coercive control (Stark, 2007). Coercive behaviour is separated out in this section into broad categories of control, threats, intimidation and bullying.

Control

Young people were able to recognise and explain to varying degrees what control is, they discussed why they perceived that it might be used and the impact it might have on the person experiencing it. Some of the different forms that controlling behaviour can take are illustrated in the following exchange (FG8):

> Moderator: Mmhmm yeah ok so you mentioned control what do you mean by that?
>
> Russell: Not letting them go out with their friends and trying to control their whole life (pause) you get some people like they get with a bloke and they stop seeing their friends and it becomes that all they have is their partner (pause) and they sort of try and get them away from their friends and family and just basically control them
>
> Moderator: Ok
>
> Jenna: And also like controlling money as well
>
> Russell: Yeah I know someone who does that he works away but he takes his partners bank card even though she has her own money she has to ask him for money (pause) he doesn't let her go out or anything

It is worth noting that Jenna and Russell were the only participants across all the discussions who mentioned financial control. It could be that this form of control may not be as relevant

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[11] 'Coercive control may be defined as an ongoing pattern of domination by which male abusive partners primarily interweave repeated physical and sexual violence with intimidation, sexual degradation, isolation and control. The primary outcome of coercive control is a condition of entrapment that can be hostage-like in the harms it inflicts on dignity, liberty, autonomy and personhood as well as to physical and psychological integrity.' (Stark, 2012, p. 7)

to teenagers who may be more likely to live at home or be controlled in a different way, for example using technology which is discussed later in this chapter.

Explanations for controlling behaviour illuminated how some young people may not fully understand the dynamics of this sort of violence. In the following exchange Rosie begins by explaining why someone might try to control their partner:

> Rosie: Like maybe they've been controlled at one point so now they're controlling them to feel powerful
>
> Alexis: It's surprising how many girls go along with it though isn't it, like when they're like sixteen that kind of age they're like really naïve and they just go along with it
>
> Bianca: Yeah they do
>
> Alexis: Like no one turns round and says 'you're not treating me like that' like if you
>
> Izzy: That's cos they think they love them though
>
> Elle: You always see all these campaign things but we always get sucked in don't we (pause) like girls

In her explanation, Rosie makes the point that someone who has been controlled themselves might become controlling to feel 'powerful'. She could be implying that because that young person had lost their own sense of control and become powerless in a previous relationship, they exert control over their partner in subsequent relationships as a way to reclaim that power. Alexis then comments that girls 'go along with' controlling behaviour, suggesting that she perceives control as something that young women recognise and actively choose to accept. Whilst Bianca agrees with Alexis who goes on to say that girls don't challenge controlling behaviour, Izzy interjects to explain how allusions to love make it difficult for a young person to recognise that their partner is controlling them. Elle then refers to 'all these campaigns' suggesting she has seen and is aware of relationship violence campaigns. Her comment about girls always getting 'sucked in' reinforces the point made by Alexis that young women are aware that their partner is controlling them and choose to stay in the relationship. Whereas Rosie tries to explain away the behaviour of the controlling partner, Alexis and Elle place some of the responsibility with the young women who are being controlled.

Like Rosie in the previous example, Owen (FG4) talked about how a young person's previous relationship experiences might explain why they control their partner:

Also might be learning by experience (pause) he might have had a girlfriend who's gone off and left him so he's probably a bit more insecure and wants to try and keep hold of her and so he might be a bit more controlling. So he could be insecure about her leaving but also controlling just in case she does decide to up and go

Owen notes how negative experiences in a previous relationship, which may cause insecurities, might be transferred into a future relationship in the form of control. This echoes Rosie's (FG2) earlier point and she went on to explain how she considered that controlling behaviour could be justified if a partner had wronged you, for example, by cheating:

Rosie: To be honest you don't know the situation, I'm not saying it's right, but you don't know the situation with the girl. The girl might have cheated on him, like you don't know what

Olivia: There's loads of things you could say

Rosie: She could have made him like that

Moderator: Does that make what he's doing ok then?

Olivia: No

Rosie: I think it does in a way, makes it more acceptable

Rosie explains how she perceives control to be justified in certain circumstances, in this case because his partner has cheated on him. Like some of the comments about physical violence, her remark shows that psychological violence, in the form of control, is perceived as being justified depending upon why someone is doing it. This comment is met with disagreement from Molly and Olivia who explain that whilst this gives you a reason for his behaviour it doesn't make it acceptable.

The use of technology to monitor and control a partner's behaviour was talked about by some participants. In two discussions (FG5, 6) participants talked about the young man in the clip looking through the photographs on his girlfriend's phone and how he uses them as a means to make threats and be physically violently towards her. The following comment made by David (FG6) illustrates how technology might be used as part of a broader pattern of intimidating and threatening behaviour:

Apart from him hitting her nothing really (pause) I guess putting the phone in her hand and making her look at (pause) I guess it would have been a picture, forcing her

to look at it (pause) when she says she's just been at a party, which may or may not be the case he might be right but she might be right, but he's assuming that she's been sleeping with other people or been with other people when she might not have been at all

Using technology to monitor a partners behaviour was also explored in one of the all-female groups (FG5):

Mia: I don't think any of it really was. Going through her pictures on her phone to start with, I don't think she was showing him because she was excited and happy. He was questioning everything she said and then he actually hit her in the face (pause) tells her all these horrible things about how she's lying to him and she's disgusting and then after all that he's trying to get her to be intimate with him (pause) like absolutely nothing is wrong (pause) so really what he's doing is physically and mentally abusing her really

Mia identifies the complex pattern of overlapping coercive and controlling behaviours the young man uses in the clip and at the end of this extract she labels this behaviour as physically and mentally abusive. Her comment demonstrates her understanding and awareness of the complex nature of this form of violence and how different forms of violence are inter-related.

Intimidation and threats

The use of intimidation and threats was defined by some participants as a form of emotional abuse. In one of the all-female discussions, the young women explained how threats were used to control the behaviour of a partner:

Molly: Verbally abusing her sort of (pause) mentally abusing her as well

Lizzie: Yeah I was about to say mentally abusing

Molly: Like 'you can't wear a skirt that short otherwise I'll hurt you' or something like that

Moderator: Ok

Rosie: And like if you were with like someone else, say you were out with another boy and like your boyfriend found out and like beats the boy up. They hurt everyone that speaks to you

In this extract Molly and Rosie describe threats which are underpinned by the possibility of physical harm either to the young person or to the people around them. Molly identifies the threat of physical violence if a young person wears something their partner considers inappropriate (too short). The threat of harm to other people which might result from a young woman talking to someone of the opposite sex was referred to by Rosie. A little later in the same discussion Molly explained how the threat of what her partner might do if she does something that he does not like is used to control and regulate behaviour. Molly defined the regulation of a partner's behaviour as emotional blackmail:

> Molly: Emotional blackmail (pause) like if they don't like you doing it then you're not allowed or (pause) you can't go certain places without sort of them being there or something like that

> Rosie: What a lot of people do is like boys mainly, or girls I don't know about girls I've never been with a girl, but they, they try and say that like they're gonna hurt themselves just for the (pause) blackmail

> Olivia: Attention seeking

> Rosie: Yeah. They think that you're gonna roll over and stay but if you just said to them 'go on do it' they wouldn't do it like they try and get you that way

Olivia uses the phrase 'roll over and stay' which suggests a young person is being forced into submission by the threat of what their partner might do to themselves. Her understanding is further demonstrated by her acknowledgement that if you told your partner to go through with the threat they wouldn't actually do it. Rosie interprets and understands that threats of harm are intended to force a partner into a position where they can be controlled. Although Rosie appears to understand the dynamics of this behaviour, there appears to be some ambiguity in her point of view as she put forward justifications for controlling behaviour.

Several young women (FG5) talked about how you should not feel threatened by a partner because 'it's not a nice feeling' (Alice) and it can make you feel 'uneasy' (Lucy) because you do not know how your partner is going to react, for example they might get angry, say something nasty or become physically violent. When asked to explain this idea further Lucy uses the following example:

> Like with girls where they like talk to another man or something then like their partner gets angry and I just think like you need that trust between the woman and the man so that they know that even if the woman does talk to another man it's not anything in there, there's no like feelings or anything it's just talking

As part of an ongoing pattern of coercive control Lucy explains how a male partner's response to his partner talking to another man may prevent her from doing this again because she is afraid of what he might do. Andrew (FG3) also noted how jealousy might explain a partner's violent behaviour:

> Ah easily. Jealousy leads to loads of shit, loads. Like abuse, it's always jealousy. Like people what abuse like their girlfriends for instance just say like the girl went out and obviously and he's seen her talking to another bloke or something down the street and when she's come home and that it's all kicked off again cos they just fucking lose it (pause) and obviously girls and blokes they can't see that cos they're just too wrapped up

Like Lucy, Andrew explains how he perceives that jealousy can act as a trigger for physical violence. He goes on to explain how being 'too wrapped' up, presumably in the relationship, becomes a barrier to 'girls and blokes' recognising this violence. Andrew's perception that that this kind of behaviour is not acceptable, was illustrated earlier in the same discussion where Kyle explains what he thinks the young man in the *Waterloo Road* clip could have done to prevent his partner being violent towards him:

> Kyle: mate if I was that boy mate oh I dunno I'd feel like shit right now. Cos I'd feel (pause) I dunno (pause) it's hard to explain cos in a way he did bring it upon himself but he could have prevented it
>
> *(Silence)*
>
> Kyle: it depends on how you look at it
>
> Andrew: how could he have prevented it?
>
> Kyle: not have stood there with that girl
>
> Andrew: why not? Is he not allowed to talk to other friends or?
>
> Kyle: yeah but then there's like (pause) spending time with a girl when you've got a girlfriend
>
> Andrew: what's wrong with that?
>
> *(Lee laughs)*
>
> Kyle: and there's spending time with your mates with some girls
>
> Andrew: fuck knows what you get yourself into man
>
> Lee: it's at school as well you know what I mean!
>
> *(Andrew laughs)*

In this exchange Kyle explains how he perceives there to be a difference between spending time in a group of mixed sex and spending time alone with one person of the opposite sex. He uses this explanation to justify why he thinks the young man in the video brought the violence on himself, placing the responsibility for the violence upon him and not upon the young woman who physically assaults him. Throughout this exchange Andrew asks Kyle several questions in order to understand why he holds this view and to challenge Kyle's argument. Although Andrew gains a better understanding of Kyle's point of view he stops his attempt to challenge it. Following on from this extract both Lee and Cameron continue to challenge Kyle's point and he remarks 'yeah but like (pause) yeah (pause) I dunno, I'll think about it'. Although he attempts to respond to explain his position he is unable to articulate what he wants to say and instead puts an end to the discussion of this topic by stating that he'll think about it.

Some young men (FG7) also identified and described behaviour that they saw in the *Crush* video clip as threatening. In the following extract they identify visual and verbal cues to interpret his behaviour as threatening:

> Wes: She was scared

> Ayden: Yeah she seemed scared

> Wes: She was quiet (pause) and she didn't say anything back she just agreed

> Ayden: It was like the only time she said something was when he was basically threatening her threatening him to leave her or

> Wes: Yeah

> *(Silence)*

> Moderator: How was he threatening her?

> Ayden: He was saying 'do you want me to leave you?'

> Joey: I would say 'yeah, here's the door'

> *(Laughter)*

At the start of this extract they refer to the young woman appearing scared and Wes explains what it is about her demeanour that informs his understanding, illustrating how these young men are able to pick up on visual clues when interpreting behaviour. Ayden also identifies and interprets verbal signs when understanding and making sense of what he saw. He explains what exactly it was about the behaviour that he perceived as threatening – the verbal threat that he would leave her. In response to Ayden's comment, Joey jokingly remarks that in the same situation he would resist this attempt at control and tell his partner 'here's the door'. Whereas the other young men in this exchange show an

awareness of how threats cause fear and maintain a person in a position where they are unable to leave, Joey perhaps to lack the same level of understanding/awareness.

Bullying

After watching the This is Abuse 'School' clip in one of the all-female focus groups (FG1) one young woman identified the behaviour in the clip as bullying:

> Eve: He's being protective I guess
>
> Alexis: He was bullying her! I still don't understand what the big deal is, like why he's bullying her, what he gets out of it
>
> Izzy: Control
>
> Rosie: Probably gets control of her doesn't he
>
> Bianca: But that's the same as people doing drugs or doing cocaine, y'know
>
> *(Laughter)*
>
> Bianca: What! What do they get out of that, do you know what I mean?
>
> Alexis: Yeah (pause) you get something out of that don't you?

In this extract Izzy and Rosie demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of the behaviour Alexis defined as bullying, whereas Alexis and Bianca on the other hand appear not to have this level of understanding.

Bullying was also referred to in another all-female discussion (FG 5). In the following extract the nature of bullying that takes place at school is likened to the nature of threatening and intimidating tactics partners use in their intimate relationships:

> Mia: I think it's a bit, kinda like when kids are being bullied at school they don't really tell anyone because of the fear that if they do they'll get into even more trouble and that's kind of what must be stopping her really cos if he's being that threatening now and she's not actually done anything wrong then how bad is he going to be when she actually does something that actually is wrong, in his opinion anyway

Mia explains how a person who is being bullied at school may not tell anyone because they are scared of what the bully will do to them if they speak out, ensuring that the bullying remains secret. Mia goes on to draw parallels between school bullying and being bullied in a relationship. She explains how fear of what a partner can or will do if upset or disobeyed acts as a barrier to disclosure as threats that are made are considered credible (Stark, 2013, p. 23). Mia clearly understands how threats can be used as part of a wider pattern of

intimidation intended to make a partner fearful, dependent, compliant and loyal and prevent them from seeking help (Stark, 2013).

Sexual violence

Young people distinguished between unwanted, pressured and coerced sexual activity and rape (also referred to as forced sex). Participants were able to identify sexual pressure and coercion within the video clips and explained the number of different forms that this behaviour could take. When discussing the nature and dynamics of rape/forced sex some participants showed a clear understanding of what rape is and the potential impact it can have on the victim's wellbeing. Other participant's perceptions were informed by the victim's gender and relationship to the rapist which illuminated how some young people hold 'stereotypical or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists' (Burt, 1980, p. 217).

Sexual pressure and coercion

The clips from the *Crush* short film that were shown to participants depicted a range of sexually violent behaviours. Specific behaviours and activities were identified by participants in their interpretation of his behaviour as an attempt to pressure or coerce his partner into having sex. One tactic that participants (FG 1, 2, 5, 7) identified and commented upon was the young man 'automatically' giving his 16 year old partner an alcoholic drink when she arrived at his house. This behaviour was interpreted as a calculated move to get her drunk which would enable him to have sex with her (FG 1, 5, 7). In the following extract from one of the all-female discussions (FG1) these young women explain that they think he is giving his partner alcohol to make her more susceptible to his sexual advances:

Bianca: and he poured her a vodka at half one! (laughs)

Moderator: Why do you think he did that?

Jess: Probably trying to get her drunk

Bianca: Yeah get her drunk so he can sleep with her

Jess: and wear that thing he wanted her to wear

Amelia: Or if there's any violence then he can say 'oh she started it cos she's drunk'

Bianca: Yeah cos she's been drinking

These comments illustrate an understanding of how alcohol can be used to facilitate sexual pressure.

In one all-female discussion (FG1) sexual pressure was condemned by Eve. Responding to this viewpoint, Bianca explained that 'if you don't want to do something they should respect that'. However, comments made in another all-female group (FG2) illuminate the complexities of young people's social worlds which might make it more difficult for a young person to resist this pressure. The following extract illustrates how the dynamics of sexual pressure interact with broader social pressures upon a young person to participate in sexual activity:

Lizzie: Like again in the same one he's forcing her to have sex with him again and if not he's blackmailing her and will say that she's frigid

Olivia: Yeah it's like peer pressure

Lizzie: Yeah

Molly: I think she's more worried about what's going to be said about her

Lizzie: I think it's a bit stupid that your friends like your friends disown you or laugh at you because you haven't had sex (pause) it's ridiculous

Rosie: All these boys who want sex that much should just come to [town in shire county] shouldn't they

Lizzie: I know

(Laughter)

Lizzie: And go to Rosie

Rosie: Yeah, come to me!

(Laughter)

Lizzie: But no it is a bit of a shame though that people feel that they're gonna be outcast within their friend groups if they haven't had sex

Olivia: But yeah it's really important to you when you're at school like when you're thirteen, fourteen something like that

Lizzie explains how the young man's attempts to force his partner to have sex with him are underpinned by threats relating to her sexual reputation. He uses these threats as a mechanism to control her behaviour to his advantage (Lees, 1989, 1996). The policing of female sexual reputation, which begins in adolescence, places pressure on young women to not appear promiscuous but at the same time they do not want to be labelled as 'frigid'. Young women must therefore negotiate a fine line where they are damned if they do have sex and equally damned if they don't. Lizzie's connection between his threat regarding her sexual reputation as a way to blackmail her shows that she has some awareness and understanding of the dynamics of sexual coercion.

Whereas Lizzie referred to him trying to force his partner to have sex, Olivia likens his behaviour to peer pressure. Following a jokey exchange with Rosie about where 'all the boys wanting sex' should go, Lizzie's comment about feeling outcast within a friendship group for not having sex links back to Olivia's remark about peer pressure. His threat, to tell people she is frigid, is reliant upon the reaction of others to this label. It is the social stigma attached to this label and how a young person perceives their friends will respond to it, which might include believing they will be 'outcast' from their friendship group, which enables his threat to be effective. A further dynamic underpinning this situation, Olivia explained, is that sex is 'really important' during adolescence which, it is speculated, may put a young person under increased pressure to have sex and make them vulnerable to their partners advances.

Although the social pressures upon young women to engage in sexual activity and how these underpin attempts to coerce or pressure a partner into having sex were noted by some female participants, in a different discussion David (FG6) explained that deciding whether or not to enter into a sexual relationship with someone is a decision that an individual should make on the basis of whether they feel emotionally ready. His explanation might illustrate that he holds a more sophisticated understanding or it could be that gender relations, where young men prioritise their own autonomy and young women prioritise maintaining relationships, inform the way that these participants understand sexual relationships (Wetherell, 1995).

It was also recognised that love could be used as a tool to coerce a partner into sexual activity (Hird & Jackson, 2001, p. 37). In the following quote David (FG6) explains how love, along with a range of other coercive tactics, can be used to pressure a partner into having sex:

> Erm he kind of, when she says that she does love him he tells her to 'show him' and then what it looks like is he's about to do is try and actually have sex with her (pause) but (pause) it doesn't really look like she wants to especially cos he's just hit her. I think the sensible thing for her to do would be to walk out because if someone hits

you once there's nothing really to stop them from doing it again. It's kind of like (pause) she should, once it's happened once I think she should leave rather than stay and for it to potentially happen again, I mean for this kind of relationship to go the way it's going it might stay that way for a long time which (pause) isn't very nice by the looks of it

David notes how love can be used to challenge a partner to 'show' their commitment through having sex (Hird & Jackson, 2001, p. 38). He recognises that the young man fuses love and sex in order to pressure and coerce his partner into doing what he wants – to have sex with her. He picks up on visual cues which suggest she is reluctant, particularly as her partner was physically violent prior to asking whether she loves him. Interestingly, David focuses upon physical violence and how this should act as a trigger to walk out of the relationship. He explains how he thinks she should leave, rather than stay in the relationship where there is a risk of further physical violence. His initial recognition of love as a sexually coercive tool does not appear to play as significant a role for David in determining whether or not she should remain in the relationship as the physical violence does.

Forced sex/rape

Discussions about forcing another young person to have sex illuminated the polarised views of participants regarding what rape is. Some young people had a clear understanding of what rape is and its consequences, whereas other participants held inaccurate views of rape explaining this type of behaviour using rape 'scripts' which endorse stereotypes and myths about rape.

There was a degree of consensus in one of the all-male groups that 'rape is rape' (Marc, FG4) meaning it is unwanted, forced sex. This idea is illustrated in the following exchange:

> Marc: If someone doesn't want to have sex that's forced on them then that's rape whether it's in a relationship or not
>
> Owen: That's all it is really isn't it
>
> Marc: Yeah
>
> Owen: That's simply what rape is, forced upon sex from one person on the other

Rape myths

There were other instances where young people's beliefs about rape, their 'rape scripts', were illustrated. Rape myths can be defined as widely held mistaken beliefs about rape

which justify and deny men's sexual aggression towards women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Myths can inform the way that people understand and make sense of the world. They can influence scripts (defined as prototypes for how events 'normally' proceed, Schank & Abelson, 1977) which people either utilise or avoid (Schank & Abelson, 1977). Within the context of broader discussions about forced sex, participants drew on rape myths and stereotypes when explaining what rape is and who perpetrates it.

It is known that rape is predominantly perpetrated by men and experienced by women, and this was recognised by a number of participants who commented that when they hear that someone has been raped it usually involves a female victim who is raped by a man:

> Eve: Most things happen to women, like mostly women get raped you don't really see men on the street getting raped

> Elle: But then again you get some very controlling women

> Amelia: Yeah obviously you do

> Bianca: Yeah you don't hear about men getting raped do you

> Izzy: It does happen though

> Several people: Yeah

> Bianca: But it does happen a lot

> Jess: It probably happens more than we think it does

At the start of this extract Eve claims that 'most things happen to women' and refers to how she perceives it is mostly women who are raped. The hidden nature of male victimisation is also implied through her remark about not 'seeing' men on the street being raped.

Ayden (FG7) also commented upon the gender of the perpetrator stating that '…if you ever hear about rape it's always a bloke doing the raping but if a bloke ever gets raped', which suggests he perceives that men are commonly reported as 'doing the raping' and perhaps implying that as a result, men's experiences of rape are hidden. Ayden's comment was cut across by Michael who says 'that's sexual harassment', redefining what he perceives rape to be referred to when it is experienced by a man. Michael's labelling of this as sexual harassment and not rape takes the discussion in a different direction. Sexual harassment can be defined in different ways depending upon where it takes place, however it can be broadly considered as unwanted verbal, non-verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature

which violates another person's dignity. Rape[12] differs from sexual harassment because the legal definition refers to the intentional penetration of another person without their consent. There is recognition by some young people that rape can be experienced by men and women, but how this is not necessarily captured in the way rape is depicted/reported.

Beliefs about the nature of rape illustrated how some young people also draw on rape myths when explaining men's experience of rape. The myths that men cannot be raped and women cannot sexually assault men were drawn upon in a lengthy discussion in one of the all-male groups (FG7) where Joey argued that it is impossible for a man to be raped and Ayden challenged this perception:

Joey: It's virtually impossible Ayden to be raped as a man

Ayden: No it's not

Joey: It is

Michael: They call it sexual harassment don't they?

Joey: It is impossible

Ayden: It isn't!

Joey: You can't go in like this (holds hand up and imitates a limp penis with little finger)

(Laughter)

Joey: Do you know what I mean you can't get inside anywhere like this

Joey is firm in his belief that men cannot be raped whilst Ayden opposes this viewpoint. Michael once more attempts to redefine male rape as sexual harassment, but no one

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[12] Sexual Offences Act (2003) **Rape**
(1)A person (A) commits an offence if—
(a)he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis,
(b)B does not consent to the penetration, and
(c)A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
(2)Whether a belief is reasonable is to be determined having regard to all the circumstances, including any steps A has taken to ascertain whether B consents.
(3)Sections 75 and 76 apply to an offence under this section.
(4)A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable, on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for life.
(UK Parliament, 2003)

acknowledges or responds to his comment. In an attempt to explain to Ayden why he perceives that men cannot be raped, Joey focuses solely upon rape perpetrated by women and claims that because a man won't be aroused a woman therefore cannot rape them. In the following extract Ayden's response demonstrates his understanding of what rape is:

Ayden: yeah but you don't consent to it (pause)

Joey: Oh yeah I see what you're saying

Ayden: Just cos they've got a rock on doesn't mean they want to do it

Joey: Yeah I see what you're saying but (pause) I definitely don't think I don't see how a man could possibly or a boy our age maybe or a couple of years below could possibly be raped without being all there in the head maybe

Moderator: Were you saying you disagree with that?

Ayden: Yeah (pause) a guy can be raped

Joey: How? How do you think a woman could lay you down right and then put her mouth round your thing

Michael: Cos they can be bigger and stronger than you can't they

(Inaudible)

(Laughter)

Joey: It's impossible to hold someone down like that

Ayden: It's not!

Joey: I'm telling you

The notion that rape is non-consensual sex is identified by Ayden and Joey claims that he can see the point that Ayden is making. Although he acknowledges Ayden's point of view, he still does not agree with him and explains how he is willing to consider that a boy could be raped but not a man suggesting that his perception is informed by his understanding of male gender identity with men and boys possessing different gender characteristics. There is also an emphasis upon the male victim being incapacitated in some way, here he refers to 'not being all there in the head' and later in this discussion he was willing to acknowledge

that being disabled might also enable a man to be raped. Ayden stands firm on his position and Joey continues to challenge him. Michael attempts to defend Ayden's position and draws on his perception of the physical characteristics of female rapists as 'bigger and stronger' than men. In order to explain how women are able to rape men, Michael suggests that female rapists possess qualities typically associated with a male identity. Ayden and Joey continue to disagree with neither willing to change their position on the basis of what the other has said. As the discussion continued there was a continued focus upon masculine qualities possessed by female perpetrators of rape:

Ayden: It's not (pause) for all we know there could be some really desperate butch girl out there raping

Joey: Do you think yeah you'd be able to stick your thing in her mouth still (pause) say someone massive do you know what I mean someone as big as that door I really don't think that they'd still be able to thingy without me putting up a bit of a fight do you know what I mean

Ayden: yeah you'd put up a fight but if someone like big if they're going to rape you they're going to rape you

Joey: If you're all there it's not happening if you're a man and you're all there or you're a boy and you're all there in the head it's not happening but if you're all sort of 'mmuuerr' (imitates someone 'not all there in the head')

Ayden: No

Joey: You won't give up you won't give up that sort of point women I think maybe are easily (pause) I sound wrong now do you know what I mean easier for a man I think to (makes whistling noises)

Ayden: No it's the same

Ayden endorses the idea that female rapists are 'butch' but also draws out an erroneous idea that their behaviour is motivated by desperation, which does not fit with the generally understood dynamics of rape as an act of power and control. It is possible that erroneous beliefs about rape might be used by Joey to distance himself from the possibility of being a perpetrator or victim of rape (Ryan, 2011, p. 775). As this discussion continued Joey claimed that he didn't know what rape is, perhaps as an attempt to justify his beliefs because they were repeatedly challenged by Ayden.

The 'real rape' script

The notion that rape is different depending upon the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim illustrates how some young people draw upon specific 'real rape' scripts where rape is associated with strangers (Horvath & Brown, 2009). This can be seen in the following extract where Kai (FG4) explains how he associates rape with strangers and uses this belief to justify why he considers rape in a relationship as rape on a lower or lesser level:

Kai: and at the end he's pretty much forcing sex upon her (pause) because she's obviously not going to want to, especially after being hit, and it's kind of (pause) rape on a lesser level like on a lower level because obviously they're together so it's not exactly rape but she doesn't obviously want it and he's forcing it on her so that's pretty much as bad as hitting her because it's (pause) it's just as scarring mentally (pause) and everything so

Moderator: Tell me why you think its rape on a lower level?

Kai: well (pause) rape to be (pause) if (pause) having sex with someone who doesn't want to have sex so it's basically she doesn't want to and he's forcing it on her pretty much so it's basically rape but it's not strangers they are together so it's less (pause)

Moderator: So do you associate rape with strangers then?

Kai: 9 out of 10 times (pause) but

Owen: it can be with partners as well

Kai: but it can be and if someone doesn't want it then it just boils down to that

Kai perceives that rape in a relationship is rape on a lower level because the victim and perpetrator know each other. Although he does appear to understand that rape is sex that is forced upon one person by another. He continues to differentiate between stranger and acquaintance/partner rape suggesting that he considers these to be different in some way. He was asked to explain this difference:

Moderator: So how is it different when it happens in a relationship?

(Inaudible)

Kai: it's not really different

Owen: he's like putting a guilt trip on her and she sort of gave in cos he was making her feel guilty about wearing the dress and lying to him (pause) but even though she didn't want to she thought 'I better just in case he hits me again'

Kai: like if there is rape in a relationship then usually the relationship shouldn't last too long because hopefully they're in the position or one of them is in the position to be able to leave that relationship, obviously it's not always as easy as that but (pause) sometimes. So that's why rape in a relationship won't last as long as say, the one time rape from a stranger kind of thing

Kai appears to change his mind when pressed further about his point of view, perhaps because he does not find support from the rest of the group. Owen offers an explanation of the coercive dynamics that underpinned the situation and explains how the perpetrator manages to get his partner into a position where he is able to rape her because she fears the repercussions if she does not let him. Following this Kai makes a somewhat confusing statement regarding why rape by a stranger is different to rape in a relationship, but it is not entirely clear what point he is trying to make.

9.5 Hierarchy of violence

Explanations/understandings of violence were also underpinned by the idea that there is a hierarchy within and between the different categorisations of violence. This section will explain how participants used a hierarchical approach to explain and justify why they thought one form of violence was worse than another.

Hierarchy of physical violence

The hierarchical approach was applied by some young people to different behaviours within the distinct categories of violence. In the following exchange that took place in in one of the mixed-gender discussions Kyle places certain physically violent behaviour within a hierarchy based on his perceived severity of the act:

Kyle: I reckon there's a line isn't there really (pause) cos like (pause) there's a slap round the face then there's (pause)

Andrew: A head butt

Kyle: A head butt

The way these violent acts are described and considered hierarchically suggests that these young men may consider a slap round the face to be less serious and perhaps more acceptable than a head butt (Bowen et al. 2013; Burman & Cartmel, 2005).

Later in the same discussion Andrew's position shifts slightly when he considers the impact of a young man being slapped by his female partner:

> Moderator: So you think he would feel bad because he's a man being hit by a woman?
>
> Andrew: Yeah cos say like if a load of people knew about it it would make him feel small. It would make him feel small, that would make you feel small
>
> Lee: Nah not if it's your girl though man
>
> Andrew: Mate, if you was getting abused by your girl how would you feel?
>
> Lee: That's not abuse though that's just a quick little slap
>
> Andrew: No but I'm just saying, like something like that would make you feel small no matter what if people are there or not relationship or not it would make you feel small (pause) trust me it would (pause) not saying I've had stuff like that done
>
> Lee: Yeah you'd look small

Andrew's view about the emotional impact is significant when considering the emphasis placed upon the physical harm caused by physical violence in other discussions. His emphasis upon the emotional impact and his lack of recognition of the physical harm such violence may cause implies that he considers females to be physically less powerful than males. Lee disagrees with Andrew suggesting that he considers this kind of behaviour to be acceptable from a female partner in a relationship. Lee removes 'a quick little slap' from the hierarchy of physically violent behaviours altogether, suggesting that the gender of the perpetrator informs Lee's views about how serious he considers the violence to be (Bowen et al. 2013). Whereas Andrew recognises the emotional impact of female to male violence, highlighting the different ways that gender can directly influence how these young men define behaviour as violent and determine its seriousness and consequences.

'I think that's the worst one' – hierarchy of violence

The hierarchical approach was more often apparent when participants discussed different forms of violence. Talking about the second clip from the short film *Crush*, and responding to the flow of the conversation about what participants expected would happen next, I ask a summarising question about whether hitting was what stood out most from the clip:

Owen: Kind of what I was expecting (pause) her to mess up and him to hit her

Moderator: Ok (pause) is him hitting her what stood out to you from the clip?

Josh: Well that was just like the main part of it really isn't it (pause) like, the physical violence it's obviously (pause) well I suppose worse than the other things

Owen bases his expectations of the young man's behaviour on the way he had seen him behave in the previous clip. Josh concurs with my summary that hitting - or physical violence – is the 'main part' of the violence that he saw in the clip. In this scene a range of violent behaviours are depicted including emotional/psychological and physical violence. At the end of the clip it is implied that the young man is going to sexually assault his girlfriend. Josh's focus upon physical violence and his claim that it is worse than the other behaviours places physical violence at the top of his hierarchy of violent behaviours. When Josh was asked to explain what he meant he struggled to articulate his point and Grant intervened to support Josh's point claiming 'well it [physical violence] is [the worst] isn't it' and Josh agrees. The perception that physical violence is the worst could also be used to reinforce it being perceived as a turning point by some young people. Another young man, Marc, introduces more nuance into the conversation by stating that 'it is [the worst] and it isn't [the worst]'. At this point Josh attempts to clarify his position:

Josh: But obviously that makes the other things like sound not so important whereas they are still important

Moderator: Ok, tell me a bit more about why physical violence might be more significant than the other things he was doing to her

Josh: I don't really know it's just like (pause) I don't know how to put it into words (pause) just like (pause) well you shouldn't hit anybody should you

(Silence)

Moderator: Ok

Josh: But then you shouldn't really speak to anybody like that (pause) I dunno, ask somebody else!

(Laughter)

In this excerpt Josh acknowledges how focusing upon physical violence may lessen the significance/importance of the other forms of violence that he saw in the clip. He stresses that the 'other things' should be acknowledged as they are still important but this still implies that he does not consider them to be as significant as physical violence. When pressed further by me he states that hitting is not acceptable, reinforcing the idea that

physical violence is wrong. Josh does return to the point he makes at the start of this extract stating that it was not acceptable to talk to your partner the way that the young man did in the clip. At this point he decides that he is not willing or able to explain what he is trying to say, perhaps feeling under pressure, and tells me to ask someone else. Grant also perceives that 'no one should hit anyone'. He went on to explain that, regardless of the context, a man being physically violent towards a woman is unacceptable. For him, gender plays a role in the way he understands and makes sense of why physical violence is not acceptable. His hierarchy is informed by the unacceptability of physical violence which is linked to his perceptions of gender identities, with the gender of the perpetrator directly influencing the wrongness of the violence. The comments made by these young men highlight how awareness raising about the unacceptability of physical violence has become socially ingrained and how other forms of violence are not as fully understood. It may also reflect the prominence of physical violence in law, policy, research and practice (Stark, 2013).

Whereas some young men placed physical violence at the top of their hierarchy of violence, young women in three different focus groups positioned emotional/psychological violence at the top of theirs:

> Leah: But if it they're getting to you like mentally it can do some serious damage
>
> Cameron: Hmm. I don't think so
>
> Moderator: So do you disagree with that? You think it can be damaging?
>
> Leah: Yeah because physical abuse yeah you just get a few bruises and obviously (pause) that does do damage, but (pause) verbal abuse that gets to you mentally and (pause) without that you're fucked basically. That can do like more damage than anything

Leah explains how she perceives psychological violence to cause 'serious damage' to a person. To contextualise her comment she refers to the physical harm resulting from physical violence – 'getting a few bruises' – but notes how the impact of verbal abuse on a person's mental wellbeing does 'more damage than anything'. Her perceptions and placement of violence on a hierarchy is informed by her understanding of the impact that different forms of violence can have on a young person and their wellbeing. For Leah, the impact to a person's mental wellbeing as a result of verbal abuse is considered more severe than the 'few bruises' resulting from physical violence. She does not recognise or consider the emotional impact of experiencing physical violence, rather she focuses on the visible physical marks that are left by this kind of behaviour.

The impact of psychological violence on a person's mental wellbeing was also used in one of the all-female groups (FG1) to explain why this was considered as being 'worse' than other forms of violence:

Moderator: So is there anything else you think is harmful in a relationship?

Bianca: I think mind games are like when they're playing mind games that will like mess your head up

Elle: I think that's the worst one

Bianca: Yeah

Elle: It's worse than physical violence

Responding to Bianca's comment about 'mind games' and their consequences Elle states that she believes this is the worst kind of violence. Bianca agrees with her and Elle states what she perceives it is worse than - physical violence, clearly placing emotional/psychological violence at the top of the hierarchy above physical violence. As the discussion continued and I asked Elle to explain why she thinks this, Jess intimates suggests that the dynamics of these forms of violence are actually the same:

Moderator: What makes you think that?

Elle: I just think that once someone's got in your head and is playing games with you they ain't getting out

Bianca: That's it, yeah. Like especially if they've been in the relationship for a long time and they've spent all that time building up this thing, in your head, you're then thinking 'well I love this person' but you don't actually love them I guess

Jess: But that's the same with being hit though like, what if you really loved them

Elle: Yeah

Bianca: Yeah

Jess: If you really love them and they start hitting you (pause) most people don't leave do they

Initially Elle clarifies her position by saying it is the impact upon a person's mental wellbeing that she perceives make psychological violence 'worse'. Building upon Elle's remark, Bianca identifies the 'slow burn' nature of this type of violence which builds up over time and is underpinned by coercive strategies, such as allusions to love, which can act as a barrier to recognising the behaviour as unacceptable (Barter, 2009). Jess also links allusions to love with physical violence illustrating the interconnection between different forms of violence and illuminating potential issues young people might have in trying to unpick these complex dynamics.

It is important to note that some young people did not position different forms of violence on a hierarchy. David (FG6) acknowledged how there are differences in the forms that violence can take and that their similarity lies in the nature of the behaviour as an 'attack' in one form or another:

> Moderator: You mentioned violence earlier as well, is that different to abuse of the mind?

> David: I'd say it is and it isn't really. I mean like violence a lot of people when someone thinks of violence they kind of think of like physical violence like hitting and things like that which (pause) in any case isn't right I don't think but then abuse of the mind is violent in its own way I suppose because it's kind of it is still an attack in some form or another so they are kind of the same but they are kind of different

David recognises that the term 'violence' is commonly associated with physically violent behaviours such as hitting. This association is reflected in the way that some young people placed physical violence at the top of their hierarchy and others identified it as a turning point in a relationship. David goes on to explain how abuse of the mind is also violent but in a different way from physical violence illustrating how he is able to recognise the distinct forms that violence can take whilst acknowledging their underlying similarity – they are both a form of attack by one person upon another.

9.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the range of violent acts that young people refer to when discussing violence and how such violence is conceptualised. The different terminology that is used when referring to different kinds of violent behaviour illustrates how the terms violence and abuse mean particular things to young people. Violence tended to be used to refer to visible behaviours like physical violence, and abuse for less visible/unseen activities. There was a general consensus that physical violence is wrong, however there was some ambiguity with physical violence perceived as justified in certain circumstances depending upon who does what to who and why.

One of the most significant ideas regarding physical violence is how it acts as a turning point for action to be taken. The complexities of psychological/emotional violence were understood and explained by some young people. Explanations for this form of violence illustrated how this type of behaviour can be discounted on the basis of why a partner might behave this way. The range of forms that sexual coercion and pressure can take were discussed and some participants demonstrated a clear understanding of forced sex/rape whereas others endorsed rape myths and stereotypes. The perceived impact of different kinds of violence was used to position and justify violence on a hierarchy. Throughout the analysis gender underpinned ideas about violence and was used to justify the use of violent behaviour in certain circumstances. It was perceived that there is a gender double standard

which enables female violence, reinforces a female-as-victim gender identity whilst condemning male violence and constraining male victimhood.

Chapter 10: What happens next?

The previous chapter examined participants' views towards teenage intimate partner violence. This chapter explores what participants perceived should 'happen next' after a young person experiences violence. Participants' views of what a young person could or should do can be categorised into five different but interconnected stages. The chapter provides an overview and then discussion of these five stages. Perceived barriers and enablers to recognising and doing something about experiences of partner violence and their relationship to each stage are also examined.

What should happen next?

In seven of the eight focus groups, young people talked about what they thought should happen next. From the discussions a five staged model was developed (Figure 7). The model was developed from a framework for understanding about recognition, telling and help for abuse, neglect and family problems from the perspectives of children and young people (Cossar et al. 2013). The involvement of young researchers in Cossar and colleagues (2013) project in addition to seeking the views and perspectives of those directly affected by abuse makes their framework particularly relevant to the present study. The five stage model was, like Cossar et al.'s (2013) framework, developed directly from the perspectives of young people who are amongst those best placed to define problems and contribute to developing appropriate solutions (Warrington, 2010).

STAGE	CHARACTERISTICS
Realising it is happening to you	The young person realises they are or were in a violent relationship
Making sense of it	The young person makes sense of their experience, usually by talking to an informal source of support
Telling	The young person tells about the violence. Telling tends to be associated with formal agencies
Getting help	The young person seeks or is given help
Leaving the relationship	The young person leaves the violent relationship

Figure 7 Five stage model of 'what happens next'

These stages are not fixed or linear (Cossar et al. 2013). A young person may experience one, all, or a combination of these stages and they may move back and forth between them. Each stage has its own barriers and enablers facilitating or inhibiting a young person from moving between stages. The stages and perceived barriers and enablers of each stage will now be explored in detail.

10.1 Realising it is happening to you

In this stage, a young person realises that they are or were in a violent relationship. This realisation may be triggered once a partner's violence has gone 'too far', or when the violence is physical in nature. Not knowing or recognising that a partner is behaving violently was identified as one of the barriers to realisation. It was recognised that once a young person had left a relationship realisation might then occur as they are able to reflect back on their experiences.

Realisation might be triggered once violence has reached a point where it has gone 'too far'. Andrew (FG3) talked about how when a person gets to the 'limit' of what they can take 'then they realise'. Along the same lines, in the previous chapter it was noted how physical violence might act as a trigger to recognising violence. Lucy (FG5) described a similarly staged process where she considered mental abuse was not enough to trigger recognition, but when this 'leads to' physical violence, she feels this is the point at which realisation would take place. Once this has occurred Lucy says how this should prompt the young person to leave the relationship. However, she acknowledges that this might not actually be what happens because a young person has been through the mental abuse and now it has 'gone too far' making it more difficult for them to realise and do anything about it.

When a young person is in a violent relationship, coming to the realisation that their partner is violent may be enabled or inhibited in a number of ways. To be able to recognise violence a young person has to know what behaviour is and is not acceptable in an intimate relationship. This idea was explored in one of the all-female discussions (FG1) where Jess said that a young person 'might not know any different' meaning that they may perceive violent behaviour as normal so accept it. If a young person does not know that the way they are being treated by their partner is not right they will not be able to realise or do anything about it.

Another way that participants perceived a young person might not grasp that their partner is being violent towards them is by being blinded by the relationship itself. In one of the all-female discussions Elle (FG 1) commented that 'you're in the moment aren't you and you don't know' and in one of the mixed-gender groups Andrew (FG3) talked about how someone might not be able to 'see' violence because they are too wrapped up in the relationship. These comments suggest that being/remaining in the violent relationship itself is perceived as a barrier to a young person becoming aware that they are experiencing violence from their partner.

A further barrier, related to the idea that remaining in the relationship can inhibit realisation, is the notion that a young person who experiences violence over a sustained period of time becomes used to it and accepts it. Russell (FG8), one of the two older men, talked about how Gillian in the *Crush* clip seemed 'used to' her partners' violent behaviour. In the following extract he explains what happens once a person becomes used to experiencing violence:

> Russell: Yeah cos I think she's accepted that's just how her life is
>
> Chloe: Yeah
>
> Russell: That's just her routine that's how he gets and she feels that it's her fault anyway

Russell makes two different points here. Firstly, in the context of becoming 'used to' her partners violence, he explains how this leads the young person to accept that this is just 'how her life is'. He notes that violence becomes part of her routine and she accepts that this is 'how he gets'. The second, related, point is that she feels responsible for the way he behaves which in turn might feed into her acceptance of his violence towards her. The overarching point made by Russell reflects the third category of Summit's (1983) accommodation syndrome, 'entrapment and accommodation', where the young person accepts violent behaviour and accommodates it. This happens through a process where, if the violence is not disclosed or stopped after the first time it happens it is likely to continue. The young person may feel they have no other options, so accept the situation and learn to survive through developing their own accommodation mechanisms. One such mechanism, which is mentioned by Russell, is the belief that they are responsible for the violence. This belief can result in a 'splitting of reality' whereby the young person registers the 'bad' behaviour of their partner as being 'good' to enable them to deal with their experiences (Summit, 1983, p. 184-5).

Joey (FG7) recognised the importance of realising that violent behaviour is not right as soon as it happens, he explains:

> In a way I think she let it get too far already (pause) like I think this is where people need to stand their ground sort of thing maybe at the beginning she's realising people need to realise before they fall into things otherwise it's not going to be good do you know what I mean she fell into that and now she's in love with him but it's too late by then isn't it it's too late she already got a slap

The point Joey makes here also reflects the 'entrapment and accommodation' category (Summit, 1983). He identifies the need to realise behaviour is not acceptable 'at the beginning' in order to do something about it. He also recognises that if a young person does not realise when it happens for the first time and 'stand their ground' the violent behaviour will continue. The phrase 'stand their ground' suggests maintaining a position and challenging the way a partner is behaving, if realisation does not happen, a young person

does not have an opportunity to stand their ground and as a result loses control over what is happening to them. This idea is conveyed by Joey referring to her 'falling' into things which suggests a loss of control, which he repeats reinforcing the point he is making. Once a young person has fallen into things Joey perceives that it is too late to prevent further violence. Joey recognises the importance of realising it is happening to you at the beginning and notes the consequences, a loss of control and further violence, if this realisation does not occur. Following directly on from this, I asked Joey to expand upon how he thought she could stand her ground and he explained:

> Joey: Erm at the beginning maybe just realising maybe little things he's doing little things he's saying
>
> Ayden: Controlling her
>
> Joey: Yeah the way he's controlling her she should think 'no actually I don't want this' which no girl should really have (pause) or boy or whatever yeah

In order for a young person to recognise that they do not want their partner to behave this way there has to be some awareness of what is and is not acceptable in order for them to be able to notice and recognise that they are not acceptable in order to stand up to their partner. Joey does say that she should 'think' that she does not want this but he does not actually elaborate further on what she should actually do beyond this.

It is perhaps logical that if being immersed in the relationship is considered a barrier to recognition, no longer being in the relationship may enable realisation to occur. This idea was noted in one of the all-female discussions (FG1) where Alexis said that 'you don't know until you're out of it' and Elle agreed commenting how 'until you look back you can't see yourself'. Whilst this idea was not discussed in depth, these points suggest that once a young person has left the relationship they are able to reflect on and make sense of their experiences which in turn can lead to the realisation that they were in a violent relationship.

To summarise, it was noted that realisation may be triggered by a young person reaching the limit or tipping point of what they are willing to take. It is likely that realisation may not happen until after the young person has left the relationship. Participants perceived a number of barriers to a young person coming to the realisation that they are in a violent relationship. Firstly, a lack of awareness of what is and is not acceptable behaviour means a young person may not recognise they are in a violent relationship which stops them from being able to do anything about it. Secondly, when a young person is in a relationship it can be hard for them to know their partner is behaving violently towards them as they can become blinded by the relationship. Related to this is the idea that a young person may become used to the violent behaviour and accept it. Furthermore, they may develop accommodating mechanisms, such as believing they are responsible for their partners' behaviour, which can normalise the behaviour and inhibit recognition.

10.2 Making sense of it

The stage of sense-making can be broadly defined as a reciprocal process of seeking information from another person in order for that individual to ascribe meaning to their experiences and potentially take action (Thomas et al. 1993). This stage can therefore, but may not always, precede the stages of leaving the relationship or seeking help.

To make sense of experiences usually involved talking about them to someone else and Informal networks such as parents/carers and friends, were identified as the most likely sources a young person would turn to. Within the discussions participants specifically referred to 'foster mum', 'mum', 'family member', 'parents', 'family', 'friends', 'good friend', 'close friend' and 'mates' as people a young person might talk to. Participants perceived the role of family and friends as primarily to provide support which may or may not enable them to move between stages. This is particularly interesting as parents have been considered to be unapproachable for this type of problem by young people (aged 12-17) in other research (Bowen et al. 2013).

In two discussions participants spoke briefly about having these conversations with professionals (tutor, school/college and a counsellor). Having 'someone' to turn to who does not know the young person was also mentioned. It was also recognised that a young person may not talk to anyone through choice or fear of the repercussions.

There were two possible outcomes resulting from talking to someone about what was going on: violence could remain hidden (ask them to keep it secret) or it could result in the young person moving between stages (e.g getting help and/or leaving the relationship).

Talking about whether a teenager would know where to go if they thought their partner was being violent; Kyle (FG3) explained that, in the same situation, he would know to go to his foster mum:

> Honestly if there was violence in my relationship the first person I'd go to is my foster mum (pause) I would talk to my foster mum about it (pause) so (pause) I'd go see my foster mum straight away

In this extract Kyle explains how he would physically go to his foster mum to talk to her about what was going on. He emphasises at what point he would do this by his use of 'first' and 'straight away', suggesting that the timing of when he would talk to her is important.

The nature of the relationship between a young person and a member of their family might play a role in facilitating or inhibiting them from talking. Being able to talk to a parent or carer was said to be dependent upon that young person's relationship with them as was their physical proximity as Russell (FG8) explains:

> Depends what sort of support they've got if they've got family they know they can talk to but some people live in an area where they've got no family or friends all

they've got is their partner so they've got no one to turn to (pause) so they put up with it

Having a supportive relationship with family may enable a young person to talk about and make sense of their experiences. Being geographically isolated from family and friends can leave a young person with no one they can to turn to which can result in them remaining in the relationship and 'putting up with' the violence.

Having a good relationship with a family member, specifically mum, was also mentioned by Emily (FG8):

Depends on the relationship with her mum like if she gets on with her it would be easy she could sit and talk with her

Her comment implies that if a young person did not get on with their mum it may not be so easy for them to talk about their experiences. A further point made in the same discussion by Chloe (FG8) was that some young people may actively choose not to talk to their mum about it, preferring to speak to someone else, like a 'close friend' (Jenna, FG8). In the following extract she explains what a friend could do:

If she didn't want anybody to know then I dunno she could talk about it and her friend could try and encourage her (pause) if she's got a really good relationship with her friend and it's really close then that might work or they could go together (pause) and then she could be there to support her all the way and she'll tell her that

Jenna firstly suggests that a friend can keep what they have been told a secret if the young person does not want anyone else to know. She says that a friend could be supportive 'all the way' and this could refer to all the way through the stages of the five stage model. Andrew (FG3), in a different discussion, explained that 'if they do say something to someone it's always one person and they keep it between that one person every time they get hit'. These comments suggest that participants perceive that friends can offer support to the young person and can be trusted not to tell anyone else. Jenna explains how having a 'really good', 'close' relationship with a friend enables them to support and encourage the young person to tell someone what is going on. Joey (FG8), in one of the all-male discussions, also talked about a young person turning to a 'good friend' if they did not have a supportive family relationship. Being able to talk to a family member or a friend is therefore dependent upon the nature of the relationship, such as how close they are.

Perceptions of how a friend might respond to the young person's disclosure were also considered to be important, and illuminated the role that gender might play in the way a young person's friends react. In the context of being asked what they thought about a woman being violent towards a man Millie (FG8) felt that 'men wouldn't come forward', which was challenged by Layla who responded that 'some might'. When I asked Millie why she thought men might not come forward she responded that 'their friends will judge

them'. When pressed further Millie could not articulate why she thought this and Jenna put forward the following suggestion:

> Cos the way they see it it wouldn't be a woman beating up a man that's not usually how they see it you usually see men being the strongest so they'll probably laugh at him and say like 'how could you let a woman beat you up' and that (pause) and makes jokes

Jenna explains that the way his friends react is related to how they understand what partner violence is which appears to be underpinned by stereotypical perceptions of gender roles. This is illustrated in the way Jenna links physical violence to men being 'the strongest' and how, as a result of these gender stereotypes, a man talking to his friends about violence from a female partner may be laughed at because this challenges the traditional male gender role. This is an example of gender role conflict (O'Neil, 1981, 1990), where 'the socialised male gender role has negative consequences for the person and others' (O'Neil, 2008). This gender role conflict, referred to by Russell (FG8) as 'like a macho thing', discourages admissions of victimhood by female perpetrators to friends because it is not considered part of a typical male identity (Jackson et al. 2000). Young men may therefore be reluctant to talk to friends because they fear being ridiculed or considered 'unmanly' (Kimmel, 1997).

Building on the idea of male gender identity acting as a barrier to making sense of experiences, these young people went on to suggest that stereotypical female gender identity characteristics might act as an enabler for sense making. Characteristics associated with a female gender identity include female friends being 'more supportive' (Russell, FG8) and 'girls understand more' (Chloe, FG8). In terms of talking to friends, gender may therefore facilitate sense-making for young women but act as a barrier for young men.

Professionals

Although not talked about in-depth, it was noted that a young person might prefer to speak to a professional. The way that young people spoke about professionals was more about seeking a reciprocal sharing of information in order to ascribe meaning, rather than telling which is distinct because it requires a young person to have realised and recognised their experience as violence.

Jenna (FG8) said that the young woman in the *Crush* clip could talk to a counsellor to 'help her', although she did not elaborate upon what this help might look like. She went on to explain how the young woman would have to feel 'brave enough' to go to a counsellor suggesting that a young person would need to feel ready and able to talk to them. In the context of talking to someone at school or college like a tutor, Molly (FG2) suggested that 'not everyone's as confident and outgoing' to be able to talk to their tutor. These two different views suggest that these young women relate different individual characteristics – being brave enough on one hand to being confident on the other - to the ability of a young

person to talk different types of professionals. This could be related to the relationship between the young person and the professional, with a counsellor potentially being a stranger and a tutor knowing them, which may be important in whether or not the young person is able to talk to them.

The idea that the relationship a professional has with the young person could play a role in enabling sense-making was talked about by Lizzie and Olivia (FG2) who both said that they would speak to their class tutor, if they were faced with similar circumstances to the young people in the video clip. They acknowledged that they would only do this if their tutor knew their situation and if they felt they would be understanding (Rosie, FG2). For these young women the personal qualities of the professional (tutor) and the nature of their relationship with them would enable them to talk to their tutor and make sense of their experiences.

Someone

If a young person was unable to talk to friends or family or didn't have anyone else to turn to, there was a perception that there was always 'someone' a young person could go to. Millie (FG8) explained the importance of having 'someone' outside of the relationship to confide in 'cos then you've got someone to turn to if you didn't want to talk to them [partner]'.

Jenna (FG8) said a young person could 'talk to someone' and Layla noted how there are 'places set up around the country' who young people can talk to 'anonymously'. It is interesting to note the vagueness of these comments and how these young people are unable to name who these people and places are. In another discussion these 'someone's' were identified:

> Bianca: There's always going to be someone there who you can go to
>
> Eve: I wouldn't ever let someone do that to me
>
> Jess: Yeah but some people don't have anyone they can go to, do they, they rely on like, their partner
>
> Alexis: There is always someone you can go to isn't there
>
> Izzy: Like the police and stuff like that
>
> Bianca: There is always someone though, even the man in the corner shop
>
> Alexis: Yeah if it got that bad and there was literally no one you could speak to just go straight to the police station wouldn't you, if you had nowhere else to go

Eve is unwilling to believe that she would 'let' a partner be violent towards her and Jess makes the point that reliance on a partner means that some young people wouldn't have any 'someone's' they could go to. It is interesting that Bianca refers to 'the man' in the corner shop and considers him a suitable source for advice, particularly considering the

sensitive nature of partner violence and what is known about young people preferring to talk to peers rather than adults (Bowen et al. 2013). This comment perhaps reflects Bianca's limited knowledge/understanding of the nature and impact of partner violence and the difficulties some young people might have in talking about it.

It is also important to acknowledge that a young person might choose not to talk to anyone about what is going on. Andrew (FG3) said how, personally, he would 'find it easier to bottle it up' rather than talk about it. He noted how 'loads of shit stops you from talking' but recognised that 'once you get it out it's a lot better'. Even though he was aware that talking about it could be beneficial, he still said he would 'prefer keeping it in'. This comment highlights how young people have different ways of dealing with their experiences and that even if they recognise the value of talking about it to someone, this might not be what they actually do.

10.3 Telling

Telling as opposed to 'talking' requires a young person to have come to the realisation that their partner is being violent towards them and for them to recognise that this behaviour is unacceptable. Telling therefore differs from making sense of what is happening because in order to tell there has to be recognition that things are not right.

Telling tended to be talked about as an active process whereby the person/agency who was told could actively do something for the young person, this ranged from providing emotional support to stopping the violent behaviour. Although telling tended to be associated with professionals, friends or family could act as a supportive mechanism for a young person to tell a professional.

Like other stages, it was the qualities that were considered important, not specifically who that person was:

> Josh: It could just be like anybody she trusts if she told somebody. Cos you obviously wouldn't tell somebody something like that if you don't trust them cos it could be anybody she trusts it's just down to (pause) is appropriate to tell, who you want to tell and who will be there for you

Josh (FG4) perceives that a trusting relationship would encourage telling (Cossar et al. 2013) perhaps suggesting that the young person would tell someone that they already knew and had a relationship with since trust is usually built over time.

Friends and family

When a young person told a friend, participants perceived that their friend could support and encourage them to tell 'someone else'. Like the making sense stage, telling a friend or family member was dependent upon the nature of the relationship the young person had with them. In one of the all-male groups Rob (FG4) explained how a close relationship between a young person and a family member would enable them to tell a family member

what was going on. He went on to explain that a close relationship enables a family member to offer support to the young person and help them, although he did not state what this help would look like.

Telling a friend may be slightly more complex due to the dynamics of the relationship and the increasing significance of friendships in adolescence. Josh (FG4), in one of the all-male groups, talked about how preconceptions of the way a friend might react could impact upon whether a young person tells them:

> like she could think that it could just be her that thinks it's wrong and they could think it's fine and they'll make an opinion on her (pause) so she could just be like afraid of that (pause) like her friend like saying 'don't be so silly blah blah blah' or something like that

If a young person believes their friend won't think there is anything wrong with the way their partner is behaving, they might not tell them about it because they fear their friend will form an unfavourable opinion of them. If a friend did react in the way Josh describes this could have detrimental consequences for the young person, as saying 'don't be silly' actually minimises the experience of violence. Peer relationships play a particularly significant role during adolescence and this comment highlights the importance of how young people look to their friends and what their friends think about them. It also illustrates how telling a friend who themselves does not understand what is and is not acceptable in a relationship can result in them offering inappropriate or victim blaming advice (Black et al., 2008).

Violence itself was also recognised as a barrier to telling friends and family. In the context of a discussion about harmful behaviour within a relationship, both Olivia and Molly (FG2) explained how violence could impact on a young person's relationships with friends and family and stop them from telling:

> Lizzie: Yeah and that can affect their life really, their education and things like that
>
> Olivia: And then you take it out on friends and family
>
> Molly: You can't concentrate and
>
> Olivia: You can't tell them what's wrong it just gets worse (pause) you bottle it up
>
> Molly: You have to deal with it on your own

A young person might treat family or friends badly because they are upset or angry as a result of what has happened with their partner. As a result, the young person may feel unable to tell and has to deal with the violence on their own. Whereas these young women explain how they perceive telling to be constrained by the impact of the violence on the young person which can lead to them bottling it up, John's (FG3) comments in the previous

section highlight how dealing with things alone can also be an active choice made by the individual.

The police

The police were talked about as someone or somewhere that a young person could turn to (FG1, 3, 7, 8). Telling the police could be either in the first instance, following realisation, as a last resort or once they had told someone else such as a friend or family member (FG7, 8). Telling the police about the violence was closely related to getting help in that telling was associated with the police doing something about it. The police and the relationship between telling and getting help are discussed together within the next section.

10.4 Getting help

This stage involves seeking help and there was a tendency for young people to either identify formal services, such as the police, as somewhere to turn to for help or young people would refer more generally to 'services' but they were not able to actually name them. Young people were not always sure about what help might consist of although some participants felt that agencies like the police could 'sort it all out'.

Help was not mentioned as something that would be offered to a young person; instead, help has to be actively sought out by them as illustrated by Molly's (FG2) remark that a young person 'should be given help if they ask for it'. Help seeking requires recognition of the violent behaviour and realisation that it may not stop without help from others, specifically formal agencies (Liang et al. 2005). The decision to seek help and where this help comes from are informed by these issues.

Although some participants recognised the need for a young person to seek help, when it came to identifying where that help might come from and how they might access it, participants in the discussions admitted that they were less clear about these finer details:

> Molly: I know there is places where you can get help but I don't think it's very (pause) advertised. Like if I needed help now I wouldn't have a clue where to start

Like Molly (FG2), Layla (FG8) also referred to 'places set up around the country that are there to help people'. Both of these young women show a vague awareness of services which could provide help for partner violence. Being comfortable in the knowledge that places exist but not being able to name them specifically or concretely highlights a certain degree of false reassurance. Perhaps the idea that violence happens to other people and that they 'wouldn't ever let someone do that' to them (Eve, FG1) reinforces this false sense of reassurance.

The police

When talking about seeking help from the police, some participants tended not to elaborate on precisely who they would ask for help, how they would go about it or what they thought the police could do. Other young people explained why, when and how someone might go to the police for help and what they thought the role of the police would be.

In terms of when police help would be sought, Leah (FG3), in one of the mixed gender groups, repeatedly stated that 'the police' would be the first place that she would seek help. When asked what she thought the police would be able to do she explained that they would:

> Sort it all out, talk to them or contact the right people (pause, silence) cos if you don't know where to go the police is like the first place

According to Leah, if a young person doesn't know where to go, the police should be the primary choice because she perceives that if they cannot help they can contact someone who can. She believes the police will be able to sort out the problem or talk to the violent partner, or refer them to another agency that can help (contact the right people). For some young people, the police might therefore be the first port of call for help and advice. Alexis (FG1), on the other hand, suggested that help should be sought from the police as a last resort:

> Yeah if it got that bad and there was literally no one you could speak to just go straight to the police station wouldn't you, if you had nowhere else to go

Alexis specifically refers to a young person going to a police station but only if the violence had reached a peak ('got that bad') and if the young person had nowhere or no one else to go to. Her remark perhaps reflects the idea of violence reaching a person's limit and triggering them to do something about it. She does not say what she thinks the police would be able to do, rather she says that a young person can physically go to the police station. For Leah and Alexis the decision and timing of when to seek help from the police is informed by whether or not a young person has anyone else to turn to, for Alexis, the extent of the violence is also important whereas Leah's view is informed by what she thinks the police will be able to do (APPGC, 2014).

Russell, one of the two older men in one of the mixed gender groups (FG8), suggested that young people could tell the police once they had left the violent relationship. He explains how turning to the police may stop further violence:

> And then phone the police and tell them what he's been doing and make sure they go round and say 'if you go round there again'

Like Alexis, Russell says help could be accessed from the police – by calling them. As a result of this call he suggests that the police would visit the person perpetrating violence. He perceives the physical presence of the police and their warning to the perpetrator would act as a deterrent to further violence.

Although comments about the police differ in regards to when help should be sought and what the purpose of such help should be, one young person disagreed entirely with the view that the police could provide help to a young person, he argued that:

> Cameron: The police can't do nothing about it til you're 18

When pressed as to why he thought this, Cameron (FG3) did not comment upon his belief that police help/intervention is age restricted. Instead, he went on to explain that it is hard for someone to prove they are experiencing physical violence because it is one person's word against another. When asked whether verbal abuse should be reported to the police he said 'no' claiming it to be 'a waste of police time'. Cameron's comments highlight both what he thinks the police can and can't do as well as his perception/understanding of different forms of violence. If a young person does not know or believe that the police can do anything to help them, particularly in relation to certain forms of violence which the young person might see as being trivial, they may not seek their help.

It appears that perceptions of how the police might be able to help and the timing of seeking help from police are important. So too are perceptions about whether certain forms of violent behaviour are understood as 'worthy' of being investigated by the police. Age can also be seen as a barrier to seeking help from police, an idea which may reflect broader gaps which may exist in the provision of services for young people.

10.5 Leaving the relationship

When a young person's partner was violent towards them, there was a general consensus that they should leave the relationship. Participants identified a range of factors which can influence a young person's decision and ability to leave the violent relationship. These factors are all underpinned by/interconnected to the dynamics of the violence. Participants were aware of some of the barriers to a young person might leaving a violent relationship, but they also stressed the importance of challenging and/or getting away from a violent partner. The importance of the leaving the relationship stage is reflected in several young women's responses to the ending question in the focus group – 'thinking about what we've talked about today what stands out as most important?' In the following quote Elle (FG1) stresses the importance of not accepting the violence and leaving the relationship:

> I think the main message is you've got to stick up for yourself and walk out, you aint got to be afraid to leave

The sense of standing up for oneself and/or getting away from the relationship (FG2) was also mentioned in another all-female group and also one of the mixed-gender groups (FG8). Young men tended to focus more upon the realising stage referring to a young person's ability to 'recognise what's right and wrong' (FG 4, FG7). These subtle gender differences in what participants perceive as most important about the discussion are interesting. Perhaps they reflect the gendered nature of partner violence, which may be more likely to be experienced by girls than boys. It may also be indicative of the way that male gender identity can constrain young men from doing anything about the violence, since recognising refers to realising it is happening to you whereas leaving involves actively doing something about the violence.

Not being able to recognise violent behaviour may stop a young person from realising that they are in a violent relationship which impacts on their ability to leave the relationship, because if they can't see the violence they won't be able to do anything about it. This is illustrated in the following exchange where Grant (FG4) stresses that physical violence should act as a trigger for leaving a relationship, but he acknowledges that when a young person is in the relationship they might not be able to realise what is going on:

> Grant: you'd like to think she'd leave
>
> Marc: yeah
>
> Grant: like straight after that, as soon as she gets hit that's it 'I'm gone', but you just know that they won't, that's just how it is isn't it whenever that situation is there it's easier from someone on the outside to say 'just leave' but then when you're in the situation (pause) it's like (pause)

Grant recognises how it can be easier for someone on the outside looking in to identify the violent behaviour, but when a young person is in that relationship it is more difficult for them to be able to see the violence and leave the relationship. In another discussion Bianca (FG1) recognised the difficulty of leaving once such realisation had taken place:

> Cos once you know that it's happening to you you've then got to find a way to get out of it and that's not as easy as it seems

Following on from this remark, Alexis and Bianca (FG1) explained how they perceived that it was through the actions of others that the young person could leave the relationship:

> Alexis: I think the only way you'd be able to leave it is if someone took you away and never let you see them again. Like that's the only way you'll ever get out of it cos not many people just walk out of it
>
> Bianca: Or if they got fed up of it or if the boy was like 'right, stuff this, I'm off' then started on someone else

Alexis believes that in order to leave a young person would have to be physically removed from the relationship by someone else, this was later reinforced by her commenting that 'dead or alive you're going to have to leave the house'. Bianca remarks that if 'they got fed up of it' they might leave, although it is not clear who she is referring to. She also suggests that it would be the violent partner and not the young person experiencing the violence who would end the relationship, moving on to start being violent towards 'someone else'. Violence can therefore put a young person in a position of powerlessness, where stopping the violent behaviour can become contingent on the behaviour of others to either physically remove them or when the violent partner ends the relationship.

Not knowing whether a partner will carry out threats to harm themselves can also act as a barrier to leaving a violent relationship:

> Olivia (FG2): If you're gonna leave that person and you don't know whether they're actually going to hurt themselves or not so you stay with them

This uncertainty was described as fear by Kai (FG4) who explained how a young person might be scared to leave the relationship because they fear the repercussions:

> Kai: Yeah more fear than actual passion but obviously she'd be way too scared to actually leave if she did feel she wanted to leave

> Moderator: Why do you think she'd be scared to leave?

> Kai: If he's doing something like that over her (pause) the fact that she might leave him so if she ever did say that she was you can't really predict what he might do (pause) but it wouldn't be very good

Kai identifies how previous violent behaviour of a partner may indicate their willingness to carry out further violence. This can stop the young person from leaving the relationship because they can't predict what their partner might do.

The psychological consequences of violence were also recognised to reduce the likelihood of a young person leaving:

> Leah: Yeah because obviously they'll get used to it and then that becomes like routine kind of thing and obviously then get into that routine and obviously if that routines broken they'll freak out (pause) which means they practically rely on them

Reflecting Summit's (1983) 'entrapment and accommodation' category, Leah (FG3 explains how over a period of time the young person comes to accept the violence and it 'becomes routine'. Once the violent behaviour becomes routine, the young person develops their own accommodation mechanisms meaning that they may be less likely to leave the relationship because it would break their routine and make them 'freak out'.

Being in love

The level of emotional attachment to a violent partner was also perceived as significant to whether or not the young person remained in the violent relationship. Kyle (FG3) talked about how being in love with a partner can make it difficult to walk away from a violent relationship:

> I dunno like (pause) I know it's like horrible to say if you're in a relationship with a girl and you're not in love with her but like you can be in a relationship (pause) and you're not completely in love and I think it's easier to walk out of the relationship if there's violence involved but like if you're completely in love with the girl and then they start violence or something like that (pause) and you're like completely in love with her it's going to be hard to walk out of that relationship

Kyle also explains here how not being in love can enable a young person to leave the relationship. Jess (FG1) touched upon this idea commenting that 'if you really love them and they start hitting you most people don't leave do they' and Alexis responded to this by remarking that 'when you're not in love you just think 'what are you doing?'. The connection between love and the ability to leave a violent relationship finds support in a number of research studies which have found that less love for a partner can make it easier to leave the relationship (Bauserman & Arias, 1992; Gortner et al. 1997; Griffing et al. 2002; Katz et al. 1995; Strube & Barbour, 1983; 1984).

After leaving the relationship, Andrew (FG3) explained how memories of what the relationship used to be like – 'the happy times' – might lead some people to return to the violent relationship:

> Then it grates on you, you want to see them again and then (pause) you get back together or something it all goes to shit, it fucks you up man. Trust me, when you get with someone (pause) and you're just with them you just wanna stay with them (pause) and then it suddenly breaks

Andrew's remarks show some awareness of the complexities involved in leaving a violent relationship and an understanding of how once a person has left the relationship the memories of how things were in happier times might encourage them to return to it.

Coping mechanisms

In the context of a discussion about the ways that seeing bad experiences of parents might impact a young person's own relationships, one young woman (Molly, FG2) explained how witnessing parents' bad experiences didn't necessarily mean a young person would also have these experiences or be affected by them in the same way. She added some nuance to the discussion by outlining the different coping strategies that a person might employ to deal with their situation, particularly in regard to witnessing a parents' 'bad experience':

Not necessarily. I think everyone's different (pause) you know just depends on you and how you cope with things. Some people cope by violence, some people cope by drugs, some people cope by suicide you know. I think it depends on you and how you cope with the situation

Molly recognises that people deal with witnessing and experiencing violence in different ways, employing a range of coping mechanisms to deal with their experiences. Her comment does not include leaving the relationship as a way to cope, instead it provides an explanation as to why someone might be violent based on their past experiences and other ways that people might cope with their situation.

10.6 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the ways that participants view what a young person could or should do after experiencing violence from a partner. A five stage model of what participants perceived should happen was generated from the discussions. In the realising stage a young person has come to the realisation that their partner is violent. This may be triggered by limits being reached or through the experience of physical violence. Realisation may be hindered by lack of awareness of acceptable behaviour within a relationship or being blinded by the relationship itself. The making sense stage tended to involve more informal support networks such as friends and family. Making sense usually involved a young person talking to someone else about their experiences, to do this the nature and quality of the relationship with the person they turned to could act as a barrier or enabler to sense making. Gender was significant in this stage, with male identity discouraging young men from talking to their peers. The telling stage requires the young person to realise their partner is being violent and to recognise this behaviour isn't acceptable. Telling could follow sense making with friends and family who could provide support and encouragement, but was commonly associated with formal agencies like the police. The police were also prominent in the help stage where the young person seeks or is given help. The final stage sees the young person leave the relationship. Many young people felt leaving should happen after the first instance of violence, although they recognised that this may not necessarily be as easy as it sounds.

Chapter 11: Discussion and Conclusions

The final chapter of this thesis revisits the aims of the study and the research questions that it sought to address. It also provides a summary of the thesis and presents the key findings of the research which are considered in light of existing literature in this field. The theoretical contributions and practical implications of the research are identified and the strengths and limitations of the methods used within the study are discussed.

The research sought to address the following overarching research question:

What are young people's experiences of, and views toward, partner violence in teenage intimate relationships?

Using a mixed methods approach this thesis firstly aimed to explore the nature, frequency and dynamics of different forms of violence in young people's intimate relationships and to find out how experiencing this violence makes young people feel. The second aim was to explore how young people identify, define and contextualise teenage intimate partner violence. These aims are addressed through the following research questions:

1. What are young people's experiences of intimate partner violence?

2. How does experiencing violence from an intimate partner make young people feel?

3. In what contexts does violence occur and persist?

4. Is violence occurring more often in any particular groups?

5. What behaviours do young people recognise and define as constituting partner violence?

6. How do young people talk about violence in intimate relationships?

7. Are conceptualisations of interpersonal violence linked to different gendered identities?

> 7a. What views of gender do young people draw on when:

- Describing instigators and victims of intimate partner violence
- Discussing different forms of violence

The quantitative online survey was used to address research questions 1-4 and the series of qualitative focus group discussions were undertaken to address research questions 5-7.

The main findings of the quantitative and qualitative studies will be reflected upon within this chapter in relation to these research questions. The findings will also be discussed in light of existing literature to explore whether and in what ways they reflect or differ from previous research into teenage intimate partner violence.

11.1 Summary of the thesis

A literature review was conducted in Chapters 2 to 4. The first chapter of the literature review, Chapter 2, set out the developmental backdrop against which young people are likely to enter into their first intimate relationships. The significant biological, physical, psychological and social changes that take place in adolescence were outlined and provided a sense of the normative developmental milestones reached by young people in this period. The wider social influence of family and friends during adolescence highlighted the changing nature of these relationships as a young person develops a growing sense of autonomy and begins to take more responsibility for their own choices and actions. These social and developmental changes were shown to play an important role in a young person's passage to adulthood and underpin and interconnect with the formation of teenage intimate relationships. The diversity, structure and content of young people's intimate relationships which were discussed highlighted the range of intimate relationship types that may be encountered and their significance in young people's lives.

Following this Chapter 3 explored what violence is understood to be. The issue was placed within the broader historical context from which it emerged through consideration of the role that feminist research and activism has played in raising awareness and recognition of adult domestic violence. The lack of uniform definition of teenage intimate partner violence was discussed and the range of official, practice and research definitions and terminology applied to understand and respond to this phenomenon highlighted some of the shortcomings in the way that violence in teenagers' relationships is presently conceptualised. The peer violence literature illustrated how violence may be better understood and defined by considering the age and gender specific features of this period. The applicability of existing definitions was explored by looking at the ways that young people understand and view teenage intimate partner violence. The chapter concluded with an explanation and justification of the definition of violence being used within the thesis.

The final literature review chapter, Chapter 4, set out what is currently known about the nature and extent of violence in young people's intimate relationships. Prevalence rates from international research indicated emotional violence as the most commonly experienced form of violence. Similar rates for emotional and physical violence were found for both young men and young women, with higher numbers of females reporting sexual violence. The UK evidence base, whilst somewhat patchy, reflected some of the findings of international research although much clearer gender divides were found with regards to older adolescents. Issues of measurement were explored and went some way to explaining wide variations in prevalence rates. The chapter also went on to examine who uses these behaviours and explored debates regarding the extent to which teenage intimate partner violence is gendered. The risk and protective factors found to be associated with violence were briefly outlined and the range of domains in which experiencing partner violence has

been found to have short and long term consequences reinforced the seriousness of the issue as a significant welfare concern.

The research design and methods were set out in Chapter 5. The ways in which feminist psychology and feminist criminology informed the research and how it was undertaken and data analysed were discussed. Ethical issues were outlined and, in keeping with a feminist approach, I reflected throughout this chapter on my role and experiences during the research process.

In Chapter 6 the findings of the quantitative study were presented. This chapter addressed the first part of the overarching research question – what are young people's experiences of teenage intimate partner violence – and the more specific research questions, as outlined above. Young people's experiences of violence were reported, and young women were found to be more likely than young men to experience violence from an intimate partner and for this violence to have a negative impact upon their wellbeing. This chapter provided a background for the qualitative study, informing both its design and analysis.

In Chapters 7 to 10 the findings of the qualitative study were relayed. These chapters addressed the second part of the overarching research question – what are young people's views toward partner violence in teenage intimate relationships – and the more specific research questions, as outlined in the previous section. Chapter 7 explored the ways that the young people in the sample understand and make sense of gender. It described the ways gender identities were defined in terms of stereotypical roles and traits associated with each gender, as well as the ways some participants were able to recognise how these stereotypical traits might constrain the way that women, but particularly men, are expected to behave. This chapter provided the foundation for the subsequent analysis chapters.

Chapter 8 explored the ways that the young people in the sample understand intimate relationships. Different kinds of intimate relationships were discussed and participants' perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable relationship behaviours and activities were examined. This chapter provided the background for Chapter 9 where the range of violent behaviours that young people talked about in the focus group discussions was outlined. Chapter 9 addresses the four specific research questions of the qualitative study. It examined how the sample of young people understand and make sense of violence and how perceptions of gender identities shape the way that different forms of violence, perpetrators and victims are understood. A gender double standard was identified which was perceived as condoning female violence, reinforcing a female-as-victim gender identity whilst condemning male violence and constraining male victimhood. This issue is discussed later in the chapter.

The final analysis chapter, Chapter 10, examined what the young people in the focus group discussions perceived should 'happen next' after an individual experiences violence. A model reflecting what participants thought should happen next was outlined. This model contained five different but interconnected stages which were discussed and the barriers and enablers of each stage were explored. Each of the five stages – realisation, sense-making, telling, help and leaving – were characterised by different qualities and were associated with different sources of social and professional support. Friends were perceived as being particularly important in what happens next as was gender with male identity considered to discourage young men from talking to peers and acting as an enabler for young women to speak out and seek help.

11.2 Discussion of findings and relating them to previous research

Drawing on theory and previous research, this section discusses the findings of this study. It focuses upon the three gaps in the literature that this thesis sought to advance:

- To gauge the experience, impact and context of young people's experiences of partner violence in their intimate relationships.
- To explore young people's understanding of teenage intimate relationships. Their definitions and terminology, the behaviours and activities that are considered to take place within them and their meaning to the young people involved in them.
- To understand the ways young people view, understand and conceptualise teenage intimate partner violence and assess the applicability of current legal, policy and research definitions.

In line with the mixed methodological approach used in this thesis, where appropriate the two studies have been brought together, integrated and combined in an attempt to provide a comprehensive account and discussion of the findings. It is worth restating at this point that the results of the online survey should be considered with caution. There may be significant limitations to conclusions that can be drawn from these data due to the lack of control over who completed the survey, the self-selecting bias of the sample and the potential for dishonesty in the answers provided. Nevertheless, they provide a snapshot of young people's experiences which can be used to inform the development of further, more robust research into this phenomenon in the future.

Discussing the findings on young people's experiences of partner violence

In many ways, the experiences of the young people in my survey sample described in Chapter 6 reflect the findings of existing European and UK research on teenage intimate partner violence (Barter et al. 2009, 2015). The results of the survey suggest that a significant number of young people in the UK have experienced violence from a partner which is likely to be repeated at the same or worsened severity and which has a negative

impact on the wellbeing of the victim. The survey findings also contribute to the debate around the extent to which partner violence in teenagers' intimate relationships is gendered. The findings suggest that the experience and impact of violence from an intimate partner is clearly differentiated by gender although why this disparity exists is not presently clear. The findings of the quantitative survey therefore support the existing evidence base and in some ways extend what we know about older young people's experiences of intimate partner violence in the UK context.

Consistent with prevalence rates reported in international (Leen et al. 2013; Danielsson et al. 2009) and UK research literature (Barter et al. 2009, 2015; Hird, 2000, Burman & Cartmel, 2008; Wood et al. 2011; Fox et al. 2013), emotional/psychological violence was found to be the most commonly experienced form of violence by young people in my survey. Although similar rates of emotional violence for young women and young men were found in Leen et al.'s (2013) review of prevalence rates in Europe, the US and Canada and for online emotional violence by Barter et al. (2015) a much more distinct gender divide was apparent in the present study with more young women reporting emotional forms of violence than young men (Leen et al. 2013). This is however consistent with the findings of Barter et al. (2009) and Wood et al.'s (2011) UK research which found higher rates of female emotional violence victimisation. The pronounced gender divide in the present study may be explained by the age of the sample, and provide evidence to support that partner violence becomes increasingly gendered as young people move towards adulthood.

A gender divide was also apparent with regards to physical violence, with girls reporting higher rates of violence victimisation than boys in my survey. This is an area within the literature where there are disparities with regards to gender differences in victimisation. Prevalence rates within the international literature indicate higher rates of male physical violence victimisation (Leen et al. 2013, Danielsson et al. 2009; Hamby et al. 2012) and this is also the case in several UK research studies (Hird, 2000; Burman & Cartmel, 2005). However, the findings of the present study are in agreement with more recent UK research (Barter et al. 2009, 2015; Wood et al. 2011; Radford et al. 2013). What my findings perhaps highlight are how variations in reported prevalence rates might arise due to the measures used as well as the definition of violence and terminology adopted within research. It also highlights the pressing need for researchers to develop standardised instruments which capture the nature of physical violence in a way that is meaningful and understandable to young people, and that can be used to make comparisons within and between countries and research studies. This will enable a fuller picture of this phenomenon to emerge and will contribute to discussions regarding the extent to which the experience of physical violence in teenagers intimate relationships is gendered.

Findings on sexual violence support much of the research literature which has established that more young women experience this form of violence than young men (Hird, 2000;

Barter et al. 2009, 2015; Wood et al. 2011; Fox et al. 2013; Leen et al. 2013). In keeping with the international literature (Leen et al. 2013; Danielsson et al. 2009; de Bruijn et al. 2006) lower rates were reported in the present study for more severe forms of sexual violence which is also in line with what was found by Barter et al. (2009, 2015) and Burman and Cartmel (2005) in the UK. In contrast to the research reviewed by Leen et al. (2013) which found rates of sexual violence to be generally lower than rates of physical violence, in the present study rates of sexual violence were higher than rates of physical violence.

Whilst the prevalence rates found in this sample of older adolescents suggest that this phenomenon is gendered, it is important to recognise that research with samples of younger teenagers has found high rates of domestic violence which do not appear to be as overtly gendered in relation to physical and emotional violence (Fox et al. 2013). The present study therefore contributes to wider discussions regarding the ways that violence changes over the life course, supporting the notion that violence may become a more overtly gendered problem into adulthood (Fox et al. 2013).

The findings of the survey also illustrate the negative impact that intimate partner violence can have on young people's wellbeing. In line with previous UK research, the impact of partner violence was differentiated by gender (Barter et al. 2009). In the present study, across all forms of violence young women reported much higher levels of negative impact than young men did. However, overall, young men more often reported that the violence either had an adverse effect or both negative/no impact than no impact whatsoever. This finding differs somewhat to what was found in Barter et al.'s (2009) research where the vast majority of boys reported no adverse effects for sexual and physical violence and much lower levels of negative impact with regard to emotional violence. The reported impact of violence provides further evidence to suggest that a gender divide exists and this is strengthened when considered in conjunction with prevalence rates. However, it is important to acknowledge that some young men were able to recognise and report the negative impact of their victimisation. In the focus groups young people perceived that intimate partner violence can have a detrimental impact on male victims but suggested that ideas about male gender identity may constrain young men from acknowledging this. This finding is in keeping with research looking at Northern European adolescents attitudes towards dating violence (Bowen et al. 2013). Further research into the different ways that partner violence affects young men and young women may help us to understand how partner violence negatively impacts on young men's wellbeing.

The survey findings regarding family and peer violence add a further dimension to understanding young people's experiences. The percentage of young people who had witnessed domestic violence (31%) was similar to that reported in Fox et al.'s (2013) study with younger adolescents (34%). However, whereas Fox et al. (2013) found that girls were more likely to report witnessing violence between adults who care for them than boys, a

similar proportion of young women and young men in the present study had witnessed domestic violence. Additionally, this gender symmetry was reflected in the rates of young people who reported parents had been violent or abusive towards them in the present study.
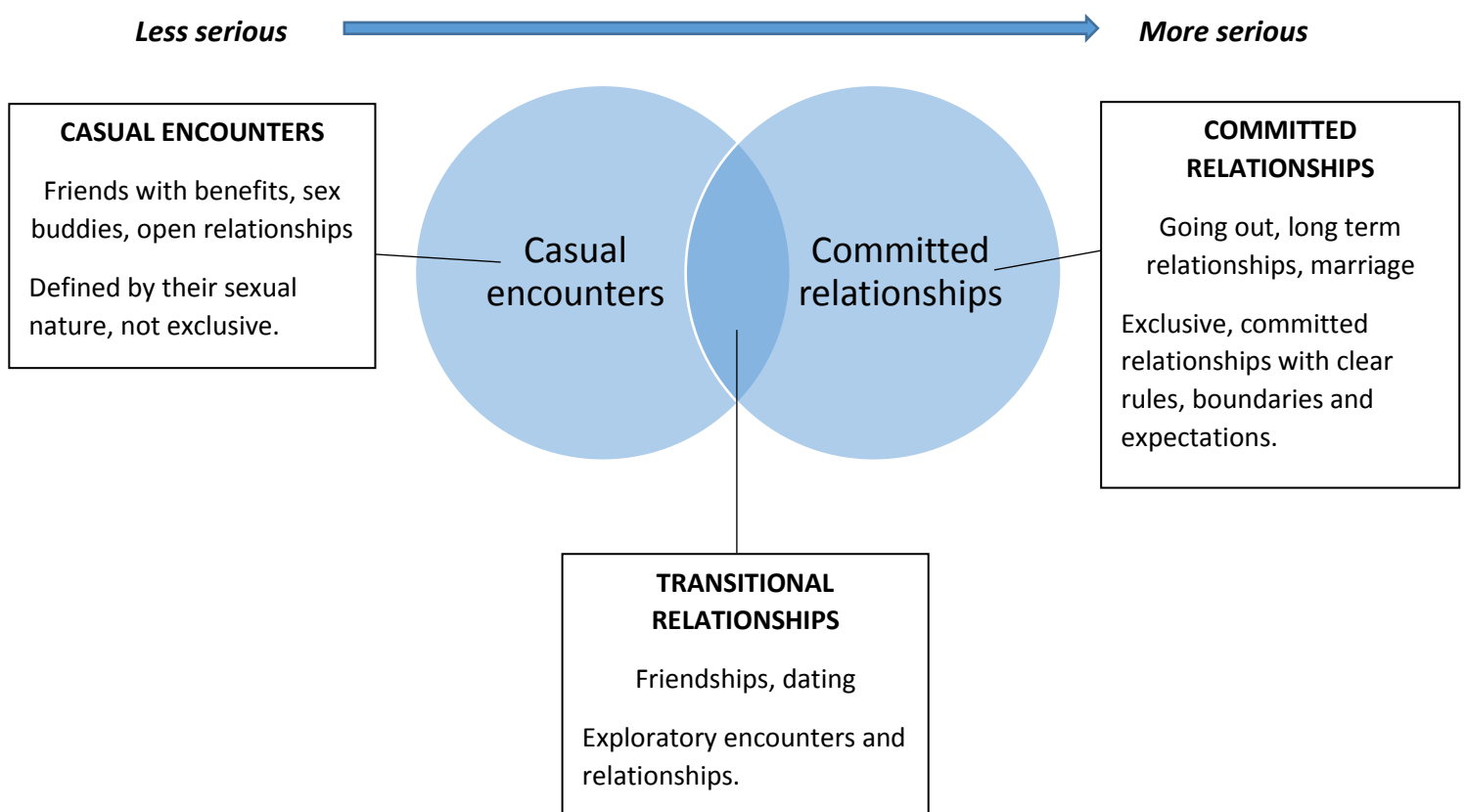
An unanticipated finding that emerged from the online survey was the potential association between sibling violence and subsequent experiences of violence from an intimate partner in adolescence. Considering this finding in relation to the much lower numbers of young people who reported that their peers used violence or aggression towards their partner or other young people, it is possible that sibling violence should itself be considered a risk factor for experiencing or instigating partner violence (Simonelli et al. 2002). This claim is supported by the comments made in the free text section of the survey where several young women connected their experience of sibling violence with partner violence, suggesting there may be an interrelationship between the two. These findings provide tentative support to the evidence base on polyvictimisation which indicates that there is an overlap and interrelationship between intimate partner violence and a wide variety of victimisations within and across multiple relationships with dating partners, peers, adults and family members (Finkelhor, 2007, 2008; Hamby et al. 2012; Radford et al. 2013). Further investigation is required to explore this issue more fully.

Discussing the findings on young people's understanding of teenage intimate relationships

The focus group data provided in-depth insights into the ways that young people define intimate relationships and the qualities and behaviours they consider should take place within them. These findings move forward the extremely limited evidence base within the UK as little is presently known about young people's own perceptions of intimate relationships. It highlights the terms that young people use to describe different types of intimate relationships and the qualities and behaviours they associate with each, echoing aspects of definitions found in existing research (Collins et al. 2009, Diamond et al. 1999). The findings show the importance of these relationships in young people's lives, which is especially significant considering the dearth of research in this area and what is known about early relationships shaping encounters into adulthood (Tracy et al. 2003; Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Collins et al. 2009).

In the literature review it was noted that the divergent ways that intimate relationships in adolescence have been defined and conceptualised can be problematic when it comes to disentangling one relationship from another (Collins et al. 2009, Rosen, 2004, Manning et al. 2000, Diamond et al. 1999). The focus group findings support this to a certain extent as some participants found intimate relationships slippery to define because of the fluid, blurred boundaries and overlap between different types and stages of relationships.

The relationship types and stages that were outlined by participants in the discussions reflect aspects of Collins et al.'s (2009) distinctions between romantic relationships and romantic experiences in adolescence. However, findings from the focus groups highlight limitations in Collins et al.'s (2009) conceptualisation which appears to be too broad to capture the nuances of different kinds of intimate relationships. Three of the four distinctions made by Diamond et al. (1999) (sexual relationships, dating relationships and romantic relationships) in their typology of intimate peer relationships reflect the motives, characteristics and functions associated with different varieties of intimate relationship by young people in the focus group discussions. My research fills a gap in the research literature regarding how teenagers themselves define and understand intimate relationships with a tentative model of teenage intimate relationships (Figure 8).

Less serious   →   *More serious*

CASUAL ENCOUNTERS

Friends with benefits, sex buddies, open relationships

Defined by their sexual nature, not exclusive.

Casual encounters

Committed relationships

COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

Going out, long term relationships, marriage

Exclusive, committed relationships with clear rules, boundaries and expectations.

TRANSITIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Friendships, dating

Exploratory encounters and relationships.

Figure 8 Model of teenage intimate relationships

This model captures the distinction made by participants between causal encounters and committed relationships, which has not previously been fully explored or conceptualised within the research literature. At the intersection of the two distinct types of intimate relationships are transitional relationships which are relationships in and of themselves, but which can share some of the characteristics of both casual encounters and committed relationships. Like casual encounters, transitional relationships are unlikely to be exclusive. They may involve one off encounters or 'dates' which may not develop into anything more

committed, and the relationship ends. Transitional relationships may move towards the committed phase through exploration and mutually developing feelings between partners as they get to know each other, usually by going on multiple dates. This model is based on young people's terms, meanings and definitions, providing a way of understanding these relationships from their perspective.

The different expectations of young men and young women in regards to the nature, qualities and outcomes of casual encounters highlight a gender difference in the meaning of these types of relationships. Whilst there was consensus amongst most young men that casual relationships are emotionally detached and purely sexual in nature, the meaning and motivation for these types of encounters were, on the whole, much more complex for young women. The hope of something more meaningful developing expressed by some female participants was in direct contrast to most of the male participants who perceived sexual intercourse as an end in itself. The different meaning of these relationships by gender is not captured in the distinctions made in the literature, highlighting a further limitation of existing conceptualisations and a gap within the evidence base (Collins et al. 2009, Diamond et al. 1999). Using the tentative model of teenage intimate relationships explained earlier, Figures 9 and 10 below illustrate the way young men and young women in the focus group discussions understood the process of intimate relationship development.
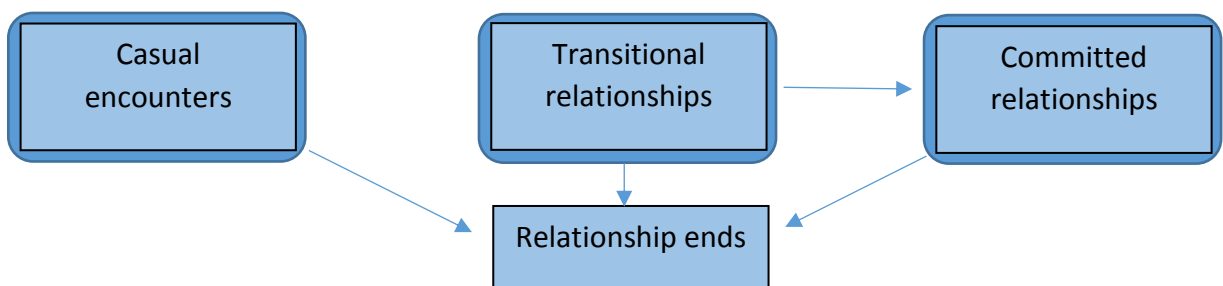
Figure 9 Process of intimate relationship development - young men
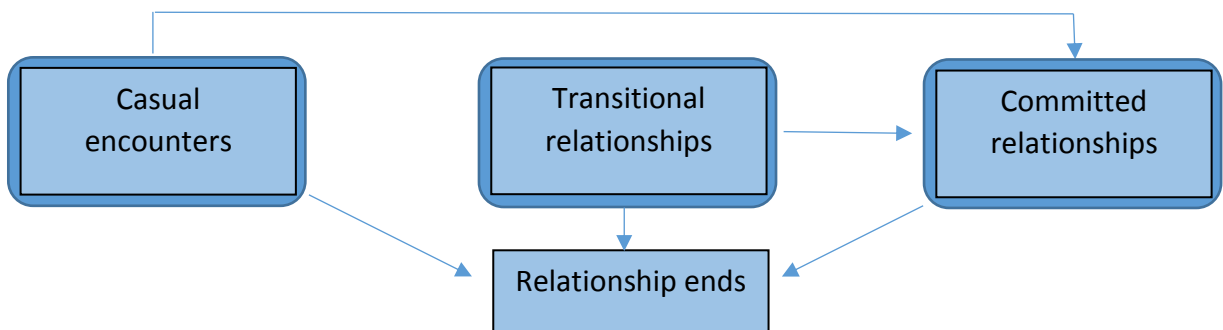
Figure 10 Process of intimate relationships development - young women

Information about young people's intimate relationships gathered in the survey also highlights more about the nature of teenagers intimate relationships. Young men were more likely to be in an intimate relationship of some type with a partner of the same age or younger whereas girls were more likely to report having an older partner (52%) or a partner of the same age (39%). These findings are in line with the literature which suggests that girls, particularly those who mature early, are more likely to associate with older boys (Statin & Magnusson, 1990; Bowen & Walker, 2015; Archibald et al. 2003; Barter et al. 2009). Age differentials are known to create inequalities between partners in relationships and these findings therefore highlight how young women may be at increased risk of experiencing multiple forms of partner violence because they are more likely than boys to be in a relationship where there is a power imbalance due to the age gap between themselves and their partner (Barter et al. 2009).

The findings on young people's understanding of teenage intimate relationships underscore the need for researchers to acknowledge the significance of these relationships in adolescence and develop a fuller understanding of how they are defined and what they mean to young people. The tentative model developed from my research provides a starting point from which to do this.

Discussing the findings on young people's views, understandings and conceptualisations of teenage intimate partner violence

Consistent with the research literature, the focus groups showed that young people's understanding of gender identities were central to the way that they viewed what intimate partner violence is, who perpetrates it and why (Chung, 2005; Sears et al. 2006; McCarry, 2009, 2010; Lombard, 2012; Bowen et al. 2013).

In the discussions participants explained how a male gender role is typically associated with strength, dominance and power, which is in line with views of young people found in other European (Bowen et al. 2013) and UK studies (McCarry, 2009, 2010). Some young people recognised that these characteristics are stereotypes and suggested that young men who are victims of violence from a partner may conceal their victimisation because they feel pressured to live up to a stereotypical masculine gender identity, this is in keeping with the findings of Bowen et al. (2013). The role of peers was critical in this process because behaviour in front of male peers was perceived as a way that boys could establish or prove their masculinity, this was also found by McCarry (2009; 2010) in her research. Female gender identity was associated with beauty, looks and soft and gentle characteristics. In contrast to participants in McCarry's (2010) research who focused upon men and women's different roles in the paid labour market to differentiate male and female gender identities from one another, in the present study some female participants talked about and policed the behaviour and appearance of celebrities and other young women. Drawing upon the

differences between male and female gender identities, participants explained how female gender identity stereotypes can make female violence appear more acceptable in certain circumstances and enables girls to hide their own perpetration of violence. This is consistent with Bowen et al.'s (2013) research where female violence was considered acceptable because females were perceived as less powerful than males.

The impact of the peer group was also important for young women and differed drastically to the role of peers for young men as young women's peers were perceived as providing emotional support. The different impact of the peer group for boys and girls understanding of gender that were highlighted, advance the literature with regards to the significance of the peer group disaggregated by gender (McCarry, 2010). These findings also provide insights into gender identities more broadly which are not always captured in research into this phenomenon. Existing research tends to focus more upon the meaning of male gender identities and their relationship to intimate partner violence, rather than looking at how both male and female identities are understood and interrelate. My research clearly shows how young people understand gender identities relationally, meaning that one gender identity cannot be fully understood in isolation from the other.

Supported by findings in the research literature, young people used a range of terminology to refer to different kinds of violent behaviour reflecting their awareness that violence encompasses a range of sexual, physical and emotional/psychological acts and behaviours (McCarry, 2009; McCoy et al. 2011; Sears et al 2006). Terms were however found to mean different things to different young people and this reflects the issues identified within the literature regarding the lack of uniform definition of teenage intimate partner violence in policy, research and practice (Bowen & Walker, 2015; Lombard & McMillan, 2013). This finding therefore calls into question the applicability of existing definitions.

Violence was also found to take on different meanings to young people depending upon the context in which it was perpetrated. For some young people, whether or not an act of violence was perceived as acceptable or justified depended upon the perpetrators prior relationship experiences, the intent of the violence (e.g. retaliation) as well as their gender. In keeping, in many respects with Bowen et al. (2013) and Lombard (2012), female violence was considered to be more acceptable and less serious by some young people on the basis that girls are physically unable to hurt or injure a male partner. The significance of context to understandings of violence is in line with previous studies which also found that the meaning and context of the violence shaped the way young people defined and understood the phenomenon (Lombard, 2011; Bowen et al. 2013; Hird, 2000; Sears et al. 2006; McCarry, 2009, 2010).

Gender was used by young people to judge whether or not behaviours should be considered violent and to justify the use of violent behaviours in some circumstances. This supports the

findings of existing research which indicate that young people's perceptions of stereotypical gender identities and roles feed into acceptance and tolerance of partner violence (McCarry, 2010). Recognition that violence against women/girls is wrong illustrates how socially ingrained this message has become. A potentially unintended consequence, however, is the creation of a gender double standard which enables and legitimises female violence whilst violence perpetrated by men is condemned and male victimhood is constrained. This gender double standard therefore reinforces particular ideas about perpetrators and victims which is in line with other research looking at young people's attitudes towards violence (Lombard, 2012; Bowen et al. 2013).

The findings on 'what happens next' after a young person experiences violence from a partner provides an account of the process through which a young person might seek help. In keeping with the findings of Cossar et al. (2013), there was a sense that young people had to realise and recognise things were not quite right in their relationship before they could do anything about it. There were perceived barriers to this realisation and sense-making occurring, (e.g. control or violence as a sign of love, thinking violence is acceptable because of its normalisation growing up) which is consistent with findings from UK research with disadvantaged young people (Wood et al. 2011). The role of friends and peers in making sense of violence and supporting a young person to seek help is, to a certain extent, consistent with what was found by Wood et al. (2011), Ashley and Foshee (2005) and Bowen et al. (2013). A perhaps unexpected finding was that parents and carers were perceived as being someone a young person could turn to. This is in direct contrast to what was found by Bowen et al. (2013) in their international study where 11-17 year olds considered parents as being unapproachable. Perhaps the growing autonomy and move towards adult functioning occurring in the older age group makes them feel more comfortable talking to parents about their relationships.

A further divergence from the literature was the emphasis placed upon turning to and seeking help from the police. Existing research suggests that young people tend not to seek help from professionals due to fear, being embarrassed or feeling that they wouldn't be believed (Wood et al. 2011; Sears et al. 2006). However, many of the young people in the present study indicated that they would tell the police first because they could offer immediate, protective support. Whilst other professionals, such as counsellors and teachers were briefly referred to, the police were talked about and emphasised in much more depth. These findings suggest that young people may seek help from those agencies which they perceive are able to actively intervene in and stop the violence, rather than engaging with services which might be able to offer help, support and advice on an ongoing basis. Further research into who young people could and would turn to, tell and seek help from would enable researchers to better understand this process and inform the design and delivery of prevention and intervention services.

Taken together, the findings on young people's views and understandings of teenage intimate partner violence provide evidence to suggest that current legal, policy and research definitions do not adequately capture the way that intimate partner violence is understood or experienced by young people. This finding will be taken forward in the next section where a more in-depth discussion of the limitations of existing definitions will be provided and suggestions will be made about how this pressing issue might be addressed.

11.3 Contribution to knowledge

Firstly, the findings of this research increase our understanding of what teenage intimate relationships are, involve and mean from the perspectives of young people. These findings have been used to produce the tentative model of teenage intimate relationships. Intimate relationships are themselves important developmental milestones in adolescence and are known to directly influence relationships into adulthood (Collins, 2003; Furman & Simon, 1999). However, the tendency for researchers to mistakenly assume adolescent intimate relationships are trivial and transitory means there has been limited research into their formation, nature and course (Collins, 2003; Bowen & Walker, 2015). The model of teenage intimate relationships is situated from young people's point of view and is based on their own terms, meanings and definitions. It provides a way of understanding teenage intimate relationships from their perspective and the meanings of these relationships differentiated by gender.

Secondly, this research contributes to the field a detailed account of how a sample of older young people within the UK experience, understand and make sense of teenage intimate partner violence. Research in this area has tended to draw on school based samples (Hird, 2000; Burman & Cartmel, 2005) of young people between the ages of 13 and 17 (Fox et al. 2013; Barter et al. 2009, 2015) but little attention has been paid to the views and experiences of the older 16-19 year old age group, who are known to be more likely to experience violence from a partner than any other age group (ONS, 2015). In addition, 16-19 year olds fit within the present policy definition of domestic violence but are less likely to be referred to, or receive, a child protection response and who are, as a result, likely to fall through the gap between child protection and domestic violence services because of their age (Home Office, 2012; Sharpen, 2012). The findings of this study therefore extend the limited evidence base about this age group. The findings highlight how the nature and extent of young people's victimisation from a partner changes as they move into adulthood. Violence victimisation appears to be similar to adults' experiences of violence from an intimate partner which become increasingly gendered with age, with men perpetrating violence and women as the victims. These findings confirm the need to assess the effectiveness of research and policy definitions as well as practice responses in addressing the age specific issues of this group.

Finally, the research makes a theoretical contribution to debates regarding the role that gender plays in shaping the way that teenagers understand what constitutes violence. The qualitative findings show how some young people draw upon stereotypical gender traits to explain and justify who does what to whom and why. Some of the young men and young women also clearly understood what constitutes partner violence, of particular interest was the sensitivity shown by some of the male participants to what is right and wrong in a relationship and their willingness not only to share this with their peers but to explain and defend their points of view. What particularly stood out was how alive some of the young people were to the impact of gender stereotypes upon the way that partner violence is viewed within society. The consequence of which, it was argued, created opportunities for young women to perpetrate violence and constrained young men from telling or seeking help.

11.4 Implications for policy and practice

In addition to their theoretical contribution, the findings of the present study highlight some policy and practice based issues which, it is argued, need to be addressed to equip young people with the knowledge to enable them to enter into healthy and fulfilling relationships and recognise unacceptable behaviour. The first point relates to improving the quality of sex and relationship education in schools in order to work towards preventing teenage intimate partner violence. The second point suggests changes to policy and practice definitions of teenage intimate partner violence in order to enable effective recognition and responses to this problem.

1. Improving the quality of sex and relationships in schools

The urgent need for good quality sex and relationships education (SRE) was highlighted in the focus group discussions where some young people demonstrated a lack of understanding about what constitutes violence and considered partner violence as acceptable in certain circumstances. To address this issue and to work towards prevention of partner violence and improvement of young people's wellbeing, it is suggested that the quality of sex and relationship education (SRE) in schools needs to be improved.

Presently, sex education is compulsory in all state funded schools, however, parents have the right to withdraw their child from all or part of SRE. There is no statutory requirement for independent schools (Academies and free schools) to provide SRE (Brook et al. 2014). It is known that at least one third of schools may be leaving some young people vulnerable to exploitation and violence because they are not currently providing high quality SRE (Ofsted, 2013). The findings of this research therefore reinforce and support the Department of Health's ambition for high quality SRE for all young people. Attention needs to be paid to the provision being delivered in independent schools who do not have to meet any statutory requirements regarding SRE. By improving SRE, schools can ensure that their

young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to enable them to enter into healthy relationships, recognise unacceptable behaviour and know where to turn for help and advice. Based on the findings of this research it is suggested that SRE be age-appropriate and in keeping with the values of the school (Brook, 2015). This will enable independent and state funded schools to fully integrate SRE into their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme and link it to other subjects (Brook et al. 2014).

The present study has highlighted that within the SRE curriculum, discussions about relationships, exploring healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviours and intimate partner violence would be beneficial. Talking about gender roles would offer young people the opportunity to critically explore gender stereotypes and how these relate to intimate relationships. This is particularly important as stereotypical gender role expectations have been identified, both within the analysis of discussions in this study and in other research into this issue, as shaping the way that young people understand their world and their perceptions of how they, and the people around them, should behave. The significance of peers was also highlighted in the present study, so providing information about how young people can support friends as well as exploring who young people can talk to and where they can get help might also be beneficial (Cossar et al. 2013).

The most appropriate time to begin delivering this curriculum is in early adolescence (11-12 years old) as this is before young people enter into intimate relationships and before they have explored and solidified ideas about relationships, gender and identity. It is also a time when young people may be more susceptible to prevention work. At present, prevention has tended to be ad hoc and one off, it is suggested therefore that in order to be most effective prevention needs to be ongoing throughout the secondary school years. Content needs to be tailored for each specific year group to ensure that it is age and developmentally appropriate. Prevention work may be more effective with single gender groups of young people, as in the present study participants seemed to open up more and discuss issues more freely in single gender groups.

2. Rethink the current government definition of domestic violence

The findings of this research have illustrated that although young people's relationships share some of the qualities of adult intimate relationships, there are adolescent specific issues which are not recognised or addressed in the current cross-government definition of domestic violence. From 2013 the age that the current definition applies from was reduced from 18 to 16, however, it was apparent within the focus group discussions that young people enter into intimate relationships, potentially including a sexual component, well before the age of 16. This means that the risk of violence by or against a partner can occur before young people reach 16. This raises the question as to whether young people under the age of 16 are therefore covered by practice and services working to support those

experiencing partner violence in line with the current definition. Prior to the change in the definition of domestic violence, it was acknowledged that young people experiencing violence from a partner routinely fell through the gap between child protection and domestic violence services (Home Office, 2012; Sharpen, 2012). This issue, along with what is known about the prevalence of violence in younger teenagers intimate relationships, support the need for an amended definition which recognises the experiences of young people who are under the age of 16.

In addition to being limited to young people who are over the age of 16, the current definition does not recognise the role that gender may play in young people's experiences and understanding of intimate partner violence. Gender differences in young people's experience of violence were highlighted in the present study with proportionally more young women than young men reporting physical, sexual and emotional victimisation by a partner. Gender was also found to underpin the way that some young people understand and make sense of partner violence; including who they perceive does what to whom and why.

It is clear that to improve the protection of young people from intimate partner violence, a definition needs to take into account gendered and age-specific issues in order to effectively address young people's experiences in practice. The findings of this research provide support for Firmin's (2013, p. 50) working definition of peer-on-peer abuse which she defines as:

> Physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised within young people's relationships, characterised by inequalities of power, and influenced by gendered hierarchies, within and external to their relationships

A change in definition would need to be accompanied by national guidance and training for practitioners so they are able to recognise and effectively respond to young people experiencing violence from a partner.

To support the development of a more effective definition which captures young people's experiences/understandings and is meaningful to them, further research should be carried out to inform definitions and prevention work. Nationally representative samples may help to clarify whether and in what ways violence in young people's intimate relationships is gendered. Finding out more about the way that young people view and understand their intimate relationships as well as looking in tandem at development, transitions, relationships and violence to see how these interconnect and interplay will help to gain a fuller understanding of this issue and ensure definitions are sensitive to the specific needs of young people.

11.5 Limitations of the study

There are several limitations within the present study. Firstly, the majority of young people who completed the survey had partners of the opposite sex (87%) and although sixteen participants reported a same-sex partner this was too few to draw any firm conclusions about their experiences. Likewise, some of the focus group participants indicated that their partners were of the same sex, however, the visual clips shown within the discussions depicted only heterosexual relationships. It is therefore likely that young people's responses to these videos offer less understanding about violence in same sex relationships. Although the research did not focus exclusively on heterosexual relationships, the nature and extent of violence in teenage same sex intimate relationships needs more exploration.

With regards to the survey, a number of limitations arise as a result of the definition of violence, method of data collection and sample that was used, although it should be stressed that these issues are recognised as being inherent in research attempting to measure this phenomenon. The questions used in the survey defined each form of violence in a certain way; therefore only particular behaviours constituting each subtype of violence may have been captured. Attempting to measure the impact of the violence using a quantitative method might also be considered a limitation (Fox et al. 2013). That being said, the use of questions derived from Barter et al.'s (2009) research enabled direct comparisons with the present study. A further limitation with regards to the content of the survey was that participants were not asked to report their own perpetration of partner violence. This information may have thrown more light on the extent to which teenage intimate partner violence is gendered through analysis of who uses these behaviours and why. Although the online method of data collection yielded good response rates, it was not without its drawbacks. The survey was intended to be a case study of a specific shire county within the East of England; however the sample was much more dispersed across the UK. A second issue related to the use of an online method is that this relies upon a young person having access to the internet and a means to complete the survey as well as being able to understand the questions. Certain groups of young people may therefore be omitted from the survey sample. A final limitation is the self-selecting bias that may have arisen which might have had a knock on effect upon the results.

The qualitative study was limited by the composition of the sample. Five of the eight focus groups took place at the same vocational college. The lack of diversity in the sample was in part due to the difficulties faced in attempting to negotiate access to young people at colleges and youth projects. Seeking to gather young people to participate in a group discussion is in itself challenging and this was further compounded by trying to organise single gender focus groups. Whilst it is not possible to generalise from so geographically limited a sample it is interesting to note the links and parallels between the subjective truths of the young people within the sample and the existing evidence base on this phenomenon.

11.6 Ideas for future research

Widening the remit of the research may provide a more comprehensive understanding of young people's experiences, views and understanding of teenage intimate partner violence. On this basis the following ideas are recommended for further research into this topic.

1) Looking at perpetration as well as experiences of violence may offer an opportunity to gain a fuller understanding of this phenomenon. A survey could be used to gauge the prevalence and impact of experiencing violence and rates and reasons for perpetration. An online survey supplemented with paper responses may counteract some of the issues identified in the present study and enable data from a larger sample to be gathered. Follow-up qualitative interviews would enable young people to elaborate upon their responses which in turn would offer more in-depth insights into the ways in which violence is used and experienced by different groups of young people. This would offer an opportunity to further explore the extent to which teenage intimate partner violence is gendered.

2) The use of focus groups in the present study worked well in engaging teenagers to explore and discuss this topic. Focus group discussions could also be used to gather young people's views and understandings of partner violence to complement the data gathered on experiences and perpetration. It is recommended that a larger number of focus groups be conducted with a more diverse sample of young people to ensure that a range of perspectives are captured.

3) Further exploration of violence in same sex teenage intimate relationships may provide insights into whether and in which ways violence is experienced, perpetrated and viewed differently to violence in opposite sex relationships.

4) An exploration of the role of sibling violence and subsequent experiences and/or perpetration of teenage intimate partner violence may help to identify the potential ways in which siblings might shape teenagers experiences within their intimate relationships.

11.7 Conclusion

This thesis has made a modest but significant contribution to understanding the ways that young people view and understand partner violence in addition to providing insights into the nature, frequency and impact of violence in older teenagers' relationships. Through seeking the perspectives of young people, the research is situated within the context of

adolescents' social worlds meaning that teenage intimate partner violence is understood and explored from young people's perspectives.

The research has provided further insights into the extent to which violence in teenagers' intimate relationships is gendered. It has reinforced the need to consider prevalence rates alongside the perceived impact of the violence in order to fully appreciate the different ways that young men and young women experience violence.

What this research has clearly reinforced is that a considerable number of older adolescents will experience some form of violence from a partner before they reach adulthood. Gender clearly plays a critical role in teenage intimate partner violence, the present study shows convincingly that girls more often experience a range of violent and abusive behaviours than boys, and that the experience of violence has a more negative effect on young women than young men. A gendered qualitative analysis has shown the complex ways that gender plays out in young people's understandings of violence. Gender stereotypes were used to justify or explain male perpetrated violence by some young people. What was especially enlightening was the critical awareness shown by some of the young people with regards to the ways that they explained how stereotypical gender roles feed into socially ingrained ideas about the gendered nature of violence and how this in itself may have detrimental consequences with regards to recognition and help seeking, particularly for young men.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Project Branding and Social Media

To make the research accessible and appealing to young people it was branded 'The Teen Relationship Violence Project' (TRVP) with a distinct logo and appearance. The branding was used consistently throughout the research on posters, leaflets and flyers. Branding was also used on project specific accounts that were created on social networking sites (SNS) Facebook and Twitter.

SNSs are popular among teenagers and young adults, with take up and use highest amongst young people in the 16-24 age range (Ofcom, 2014). They allow online participation via a 'network of senders and recipients' and can be accessed in a variety of ways including on a PC or laptop or via mobile devices such as tablets and mobile phones (Hogan, 2008, p. 142). Due to the popularity and use of SNSs by young people I decided to set up project specific accounts as an additional way for young people to access information and to support traditional forms of participant recruitment.

Facebook

On Facebook I created a project specific page; I managed this page from my personal Facebook account. The link between my personal account and my project page was not visible to anyone apart from me. Pages can be customised and this allowed me to add my branding to the cover image and page avatar. The page contains an 'About' section where I included information about the research. Pages have a publisher box for typing in text updates, sharing web links and other media such as images and videos. Anything that is posted in the publisher box is published to the page 'wall/timeline'. Facebook users can 'like' a page, when users liked the TRVP page my posts from the page would appear in their 'newsfeed'. Facebook users (individuals and other pages) are able to 'share' the content I post on my page meaning that users who may not have 'liked' the page can see the posts I make when friends and pages[13] share them in their own newsfeed. Users who like the page are only visible to the page administrator (me). Facebook as a company provides page 'insights' which provide measurements on the page performance and this includes anonymised demographic data about the page audience, how the page is being discovered and what users are responding to.

Twitter

I also set up a project specific account on Twitter. The project branding was used as the account avatar, enabling users to recognise the project. Unlike Facebook, Twitter limits the amount of information you can post. The space for the project biography was limited to 160 characters so I had to summarise the relevant project information very briefly. Because Twitter is a form of free micro-blogging users can only send and receive short posts (tweets)

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[13] Pages allow individuals, organisations and brands to communicate broadly with people who 'like' them. Information about the page and posts are 'public' which means they are generally available to all Facebook users. Page owners create and share their own posts from the page and can also share posts from other pages, this means that page posts appear in the news feed of people who like the page (Facebook, 2014).

which are limited to 140 characters. Anything I 'tweet' appears in the project Twitter feed. Twitter users can follow an account; when users followed the project account my tweets would then appear in their Twitter feed. Twitter users are able to share somebody else's tweets that they have seen in their Twitter feed (retweet). When a user retweets an original post it is visible to all their followers who can then retweet a tweet without following the account the original post was sent from.

Appendix 2 - Online questionnaire

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

This questionnaire is part of my research project which is looking at young people's intimate relationships.

Before you decide to take part it is important for you to understand what the research is about and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. If there is anything that is not clear or that you want to find out more about please contact me, you can find my contact details at the bottom of the page.

Purpose of the study

The questionnaire is about you and your experiences of intimate relationships, whether it's a serious long-term boyfriend or girlfriend, or a more casual partner or a one-off encounter. I want to find out about the sorts of behaviours you have experienced in your intimate relationships, how this made you feel and if you told anyone about what happened to you.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decide to take part you will be asked to complete a questionnaire about you and your relationships. This will take around ten minutes to fill in.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary; it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part.

What will happen to the information you give me?

I will use the information you give me within my doctoral research. Any personal information that is collected about you during the research will be regarded as strictly confidential; this means it will be kept private.

Thank you for reading this information sheet, and if you decide to, participating in my study

Vicki McDermott
PhD Researcher
School of Social Work and Psychology
University of East Anglia
NR4 7TJ

Participant Consent Form

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather information about your experiences within your relationships. Any information obtained in the study shall remain confidential, in other words no one will have access to the information you provide except me. Your answers will only be seen and used by me; therefore you are kindly requested to report your answers as honestly as possible.

Your participation is highly appreciated and will be of great value to my research.

Participant Consent:

If you agree to take part in the research please tick the box at the end of each statement

	YES	NO
I have read and understood the participant information sheet		
I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study and my participation in it		
I understand the purpose of study and the nature of the questions have been explained to me		
I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason		
I agree to take part in this study		

Participant signature: Date:

Participant initials:

Questionnaire

Section 1: Your relationships

1. Have you ever had a boyfriend or girlfriend?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

2. Was/is your partner:

☐ Male   ☐ Female

3. Do you currently have a boyfriend or girlfriend?

☐ Yes   ☐ No (go to question 12)

3.a What is the length of your current relationship?

_____years_____months

3.b What is the age of your current partner?

……….

4. Have any of your partners ever used physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting or holding you down?

☐ No   ☐ Once   ☐ A few times   ☐ Often   ☐ All the time

5. Have any of your partners ever used any more severe physical force such as punching, strangling, beating you up or hitting you with an object?

☐ No   ☐ Once   ☐ A few times   ☐ Often   ☐ All the time

6. In how many of your relationships has this happened?

☐ None   ☐ One   ☐ Several   ☐ Many   ☐ All

7. After the first time you experienced physical force did the behaviours:

☐ Stop   ☐ Stay the same   ☐ Get worse

8. How did the violence make you feel?

☐ Scared/frightened   ☐ Angry/annoyed   ☐ Humiliated   ☐ Upset/unhappy

☐ Loved/protected   ☐ No effect   ☐ Thought it was funny

9. Have any of your partners ever (please tick):

	Never	Once	A few times	Often	All the time
Made fun of you					
Shouted at you/screamed in your face/called you hurtful names					

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Said negative things about your appearance/body/friends/family					
Threatened to hurt you physically unless you did what they wanted					
Told you who you could see and where you could go					
Constantly checked up on what you were doing, eg by phone or texts					
Used private information to make you do something					
Used mobile phones or the internet to humiliate or threaten you					

10. In how many of your relationships has this happened?

☐ None ☐ One ☐ Several ☐ Many ☐ All

11. After the first time you experienced the above behaviours did they:

☐ Stop ☐ Stay the same ☐ Get worse

12. How did your experience of the above behaviours make you feel?

☐ Scared/frightened ☐ Angry/annoyed ☐ Humiliated ☐ Upset/unhappy

☐ Loved/protected ☐ No effect ☐ Thought it was funny

13. Have any of your partners ever pressured you into kissing, touching or something else?

☐ No ☐ Once ☐ A few times ☐ Often ☐ All the time

14. Have any of your partners physically forced you into kissing, touching or something else?

☐ No ☐ Once ☐ A few times ☐ Often ☐ All the time

15. Have any of your partners ever pressured you into having sexual intercourse?

☐ No ☐ Once ☐ A few times ☐ Often ☐ All the time

16. Have any of your partners physically forced you into having sexual intercourse?

☐ No ☐ Once ☐ A few times ☐ Often ☐ All the time

17. In how many of your relationships has this happened?

☐ None   ☐ One   ☐ Several   ☐ Many   ☐ All

18. After the first time you experienced the above behaviours did they:

☐ Stop   ☐ Stay the same   ☐ Get worse

19. How did this make you feel?

☐ Scared/frightened   ☐ Angry/annoyed   ☐ Humiliated   ☐ Upset/unhappy

☐ Loved/protected   ☐ No effect   ☐ Thought it was funny

Section 2: Family and friends

20. Have you ever seen your parents/carers being threatening, violent or abusive towards each other?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

21. Have you ever seen your parents/carers being threatening, violent or abusive towards another child or young person?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

22. Have your parents/carers ever been threatening, violent or abusive towards you?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

23. Do your friends use aggression or abuse against their partners?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

24. Do your friends use aggression or intimidation against other young people?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

25. Do you know anyone who has experienced violence within their relationship?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

26. Is there anything else you would like to say that you haven't already said on the survey?

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Section 3: About you

Please tell me a little more about yourself, this information will be really useful to the research. All the information you choose to supply is strictly confidential.

Please tick the boxes that best describe you

27. What is your gender?

☐ Male   ☐ Female

28. What is your date of birth? ___/___/___

29. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (Please tick only one box)

☐ White British   ☐ White Irish

☐ White other   ☐ Mixed white and Black Caribbean

☐ Mixed white and Black African   ☐ Mixed white and Asian

☐ Asian or Asian British Indian   ☐ Asian or Asian Pakistani

☐ Asian or Asian Bangladeshi   ☐ Asian or Asian or Asian British other

☐ Black or Black British Caribbean   ☐ Black or Black British African

☐ Black or Black British other   ☐ Chinese

☐ Chinese or other Chinese   ☐ I do not wish to state

☐ Other (please specify)_____

30. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

31. Who of the following, if any, do you live with? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ Mother   ☐ Father   ☐ Step-mother   ☐ Step-father

☐ Mother's boyfriend/partner   ☐ Father's girlfriend/partner

☐ Sister(s)   ☐ Brother(s)   ☐ Step-sister(s)

☐ Step-brother(s) ☐ Half-sister(s)   ☐ Half-brother(s)

☐ Grandmother   ☐ Grandfather   ☐ Foster parents

☐ Partner   ☐ None of these

32. Do you have any children?
☐ Yes   ☐ No (go to question 6)

37.a If Yes, how many children do you have?

....

37.b and what are their ages?

....

33. Which of the activities below best describes what you are doing at present?

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☐ Employed full time   ☐ Employed part time   ☐ Self-employed (full or part time)

☐ Voluntary work   ☐ On a government supported training scheme

☐ Full time education (at school, college or University)

☐ Part time education (at school, college or University)

☐ Unemployed and available for work   ☐ Permanently sick or disabled

☐ Looking after the home or children   ☐ Other (please specify): _____

34. What is your main source of income?

☐ Earnings, wages, salary, bonuses   ☐ Income from self-employment

☐ State benefits (e.g. incapacity benefit, child benefit or tax credits)

☐ Interest from savings/investment   ☐ Rent from property

☐ Student loan   ☐ Other income (e.g. maintenance payments, grants)

35. What is your postcode? (This will not be used to identify you)

…….

Thank you for taking part in my study

If you would like more information, help or advice about abuse in relationships below are the details of a range of national and local support services. All calls are treated confidentially.

Appendix 3 - Example focus group information sheet

UEA
University of East Anglia

Understanding young people's experiences and views of partner violence in teenage intimate relationships

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

I am a postgraduate student at the University of East Anglia (UEA). My research is looking at young people's experiences and views of partner violence in teenage intimate relationships.

You are being invited to take part in a group discussion with other young people to explore your views of partner violence in teenage intimate relationships. Before you decide to take part it is important for you to understand what the research is about and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. If there is anything that is not clear or that you want to find out more about please ask me.

About the research

The purpose of the focus group discussion is to explore your views, understandings and attitudes toward partner violence in teenage intimate relationships. You are being asked to discuss your views of, and ideas about, the use of partner violence in teenage intimate relationships. You will NOT be asked out about your personal experiences of abusive behaviours in your intimate relationships.

What do I have to do?

If you decide to take part you will participate in a focus group discussion with 5-7 other young people. The focus group will probably last for about one hour, maybe a little longer. You will be asked to comment on and discuss television and film clips. Before you agree to take part it is important for you to understand, that although the focus group should be enjoyable there is a possibility that the topic may upset you. At the end of the focus group I will provide you with a hand-out containing contact details for agencies where you can get help and support if you would like it.

Your participation in the focus group is voluntary; it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. You can decide not to be involved in the discussion at any time and without giving a reason.

With your permission, the focus group will be digitally recorded. Once the recording has been written up, it will be wiped clean. Only I will have access to the recording.

What will happen to the information you give me?

I will use the information you give me in my PhD research – this is a long piece of writing explaining what my research is about, how I did it and, importantly, young people's views of partner violence in teenage intimate relationships. I would like to use the comments you make in the focus groups as quotations within my research and other pieces of writing. To protect your privacy and confidentiality any comments you make will be anonymised which means that I will not use your real name in the research.

All the information you give will be strictly confidential. This means that your comments are private between you, me and the other young people who attend the group discussion. Young people who attend the group discussion will be asked to keep the conversation private. All personal information will be kept somewhere safely where only I can access it. However, if you tell me something which makes me think you or others might be at risk of immediate danger I have a responsibility to talk about this with you privately at the end of the focus group and possibly pass this on to your College Welfare Advisor. If you do not wish for a piece of information to be passed on, do not disclose it.

What does your involvement mean to the research?

Participating in a research project can be a rewarding, enjoyable and interesting experience. The information I gather from you during the research is important in helping to build a fuller picture of teen relationships and in increasing understanding of how young people view and understand partner violence in teenage intimate relationships.

Participating in the focus group may raise questions for you about your relationships. If you have any concerns or worries or would like reassurance, advice, information or help a list of local and national support services will be provided at the end of the focus group.

My contact details

Vicki McDermott – PhD Researcher
Email: v.mcdermott@uea.ac.uk
Office telephone: 01603 591817

You can also contact my research supervisor, Marian Brandon, via email:
m.brandon@uea.ac.uk or telephone: 01603 592054 (Office hours)

Thank you for reading this information sheet, and if you decide to, participating in my study

Appendix 4 – Consent form

Participant Consent Form

Please complete this agreement to acknowledge that you have received enough information about the intentions of this research;

I have received and read the participant information sheet	
I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this research project and my participation in it	
The purpose of the group discussion and the nature of the questions have been explained to me	
I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer particular questions, and that I can leave the group discussion at any time	
I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason	
I consent to being tape recorded during the focus group session	
I agree that quotations from this focus group can be used in the final research report. I understand these will be used anonymously	
I agree to take part in this research project	

Participant signature: Date:

Participant name (or initials):

Researcher signature: Date:

Appendix 5 – Focus group schedule

<u>Arrival</u>

- Welcome participants as they enter the room
- Provide each young person with an information sheet, 2 consent forms and demographic questionnaire
- Direct young people to refreshments
- Invite them to be seated or to chat around the refreshments

<u>Focus group session formally begins</u>

a) *Introduction*

- Welcome participants and thank them for attending
- Introduce myself
- Review purpose for the session and participants involvement
- Provide a brief overview of the focus group process

b) *Consent*

- Talk through consent form with participants
- Explain circumstances under which confidentiality will be broken and what will happen
- Opportunity for participants to ask questions about consent and/or the focus group. Participants can leave if they feel uncomfortable with content
- Ask participants to sign two copies of consent form

c) *Ground rules*

- Establish ground rules to encourage positive participation
    - *Be polite, courteous and respectful of other members and their point of view*
    - *Listen to what others have to say*
    - *Avoid conversations and interruptions when someone else is talking. Do talk to each other, but not over each other as I wont be able to hear what you're saying on the recording*
    - *Don't take contrary views personally*
    - *Reiterate confidentiality – keeping discussions private*

         o   Ask young people to introduce themselves

d) Begin discussion

We are meeting to talk about your views, opinions, and feelings about behaviours that might happen in intimate relationships.

- To begin with, when I talk about dating/romantic/intimate relationships what sort of relationships are we talking about?

- What are appropriate behaviours to have in romantic/intimate relationships?

- What are not appropriate behaviours to have in romantic/intimate relationships?

- What are harmful relationship behaviours?

We have talked a little bit about the different types of relationships that teenagers might have and also about the sorts of behaviours that you think are and aren't ok in relationships.

I'm going to show you some clips, some from tv programmes and others from films and tv ads. I would like you to discuss the clips. Question prompts: what sorts of behaviours do you see? What's going on? Is this acceptable or unacceptable behaviour in a relationship? Why?

TV Clips

1) Waterloo Road, Series 7, Episode 14 (05/10/2011)

During an argument Vicki repeatedly punches boyfriend Ronan at school.

2) This is Abuse ad campaign clips(2010/11)

Scene 1 – Bedroom

Boy and his girlfriend are watching tv, he asks if she wants to have some fun whilst her parents are out. His girlfriend says no and he tells her he'll "tell everyone she's frigid". She gets a message and looks at her phone, he asks who it is then snatches her phone off her and throws it across the room. He tells her it was her own fault, she says "am I not allowed friends then" and he pulls her hair and says "I thought I was your mate?".

Scene 2 – Party

Boyfriend puts pressure on his girlfriend to have sex. She tells him she isn't ready so he uses the threat of "telling everyone she's frigid" and that "everyone's done it" to pressurise her.

Scene 3 – School

Boyfriend takes his girlfriend's phone off her and tells her she can't talk to anyone unless he says so. He tells her she's pathetic and asks her if she's going to "cry to all her friends?"

Scene 4 – Takeaway

In the takeaway with her boyfriend a young girl is offered a chip by one of his friends she says 'no thanks'. Her boyfriend then ask her "what she's doing looking at his mates and giving them the big come on" he tells her she's "nothing…a tart…" and that "someone needs to teach her a lesson".

3) Crush

A short award winning film about Gillian a 16 year old girl who meets 19 year old Jack through her best friends boyfriend. The film explores Gillian and Jack's relationship.

Crush Scene 1 (16.53)

Gillian is late to meet Jack after her shopping trip. He asks her to show him what she has bought and he tells her he doesn't want her to wear her new dress without him there. He snatches a bag with new underwear in and tells her to put it on, Gillian won't. He then asks her if not then, when? She says "After Ayre".

Crush Scene 2 (22.28)

Jack is going through Gillian's phone after her trip to Ayre. He sees a photo of her with another man and another photo of her wearing the dress he told her not to. He hits her then verbally attacks her. Gillian says she loves him, he asks her to show him that she does. The scene ends with him sliding his hand up her leg.

- Ending question

Given everything we have discussed during the past hour or so, what stands out as most important to you? Is there any point you would have liked to comment on further?

- Summary

A summary of the group's main points is provided. Is my summary of our discussion accurate or are there important points I have not mentioned?

- Final question

Is there anything we have missed? Are there other questions that need to be discussed in reference to appropriate and inappropriate relationship behaviours?

e) Debrief

o Describe how results will be used

o Inform participants if (and how) results will be made available

o Discuss issues that may have arisen for young people during focus group (debrief)

o Provide each young person with support services handout

f) Focus group ends

o Thank young people for taking part

o Remain in the room until everyone leaves

Appendix 6 – Protocol for disclosure

Due to the nature of the research it is possible that certain information disclosed may cause confidentiality to be broken. Outlined below are the circumstances under which confidentiality will be breached and the protocols to be followed:

Risk to the safety of the young person *(e.g if they are experiencing violence)*

- *Protocol:*
- Speak privately with the individual after the focus group
- Encourage them to seek help/support/talk to the gatekeeper
- Offer to pass on what they have shared on their behalf

Risk to the safety of other young people who may be endangered by the young person's behaviour *(e.g. if they are perpetrating violence)*

Risk to the health, welfare or safety of children (Children Acts 1989, 2004) *(e.g. if the young person has children who may be at risk of harm)*

- *Protocol:*
- Speak privately with the individual at the end of the session explaining what I will do next and why (involving others, passing on info)
- Encourage young person to seek help
- Inform gatekeeper of disclosure

In addition, if disclosures are made I will contact my supervisor to alert them/keep them informed and I will keep a record of any disclosures and the steps that were taken.

Participants will be explicitly told of these circumstances at the start of the focus group and will be told that the researcher has a legal duty to disclose this information so that if they do not wish this to be passed on they should not disclose it. Part of the risk of this occurring is minimised as participants are not being asked to comment on their own experiences of violence in their intimate relationships.