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Constructions of intimate partner violence in gay male relationships

A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, November 2013

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SUPERVISED BY PROFESSOR BRETT BOWMAN

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ii Abstract

Although prevalence rates of gay intimate partner violence (IPV) appear to equal heterosexual IPV rates, gay male IPV does not feature strongly in public anti-violence messaging. This relative silence appears to hold even within the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) community. This study addresses this silence. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted and a critical discourse analysis informed by Ian Parker's (1992) perspectives, was used to analyse the results. A review of mainstream and critical discourses of violence show that IPV is usually constructed as an exclusively heterosexual phenomenon and these influenced participants' constructions. Findings indicated that a range of discourses intersect to produce constructions of gay IPV as 'not violence', normative, un-harmful, unintimidating, 'anti-gay', erotic, cathartic and intimate. All of these formations can result in gay IPV being silenced and it was shown that gay mens' constructions of IPV were inextricably bound in gendered, power asymmetry. The study demonstrates how particular configurations of discourse are necessary for violence to become intelligible at all. The implications of these findings are discussed and possibilities for important community intervention suggested.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence, gay men, critical discourse analysis, hegemonic masculinity, violence, partner abuse.

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1 Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) in gay male relationships has received relatively little attention in both academic and mainstream forums despite prevalence rates that appear comparable to rates amongst heterosexuals (Greenwood et al., 2004). Various studies have estimated rates of gay IPV to be between 12% to 36% (Turell, 2000; Greenwood et al., 2004; Stephenson, Khosropour & Sullivan, 2010). Island & Letellier (1991) speculated that intimate partner violence is the third largest health problem facing gay men, after substance abuse and HIV. Knauer (2001) reported that lesbian and gay people are more likely to be assaulted by their partners than by homophobic strangers. Gay male IPV does not however feature strongly in public anti-violence messaging. A further surprising find is that the issue also remains hidden within the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) community itself. Within this community there is limited awareness of same-sex IPV and an absence of support services (Turell & Herrmann, 2008). This is a concern given that South Africa has high rates of most types of interpersonal violence as well as high rates of anti-LGBTI violence.

1.1 Rationale

Despite having a constitution that bans discrimination based on sexual orientation; stigmatisation and homophobia[1] is common in South Africa where post-colonial African hetero-patriarchies claim that homosexuality is 'un-African' (Steyne & Van Zyl, 2009). This compounds the social stigma of victims of gay male IPV. This research therefore contributes to furthering understandings of violence in the South African context. Rates of violence here are extremely high and are seemingly driven by risk factors such as inequality and patriarchy. (Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla & Ratele, 2009). Given the emphasis on understanding the impact of race and gender on violence in South Africa, it is surprising that the gender-based violence sector has been relatively blind to its neglect of researching the place of sexual orientations in

[1] Homophobia refers to discrimination and othering of homosexual people (Steyne & van Zyl, 2009).

its violence modelling. The general blindness to sexual orientation in studies on violence may point to why IPV in gay male relationships is not a public health concern in South Africa.

This study therefore takes significant steps towards addressing the silence around gay IPV. This is no easy task for the body of literature on intimate partner violence seems to have little room for non-normative sexualities. A review of mainstream and critical models of violence prevention shows that heteronormative assumptions underpin its theoretical orientations on a number of levels. Both the invisibility of the issue and the implications of inadequate theoretical underpinnings pose serious challenges for gay male IPV victims. It is thus important to better understand the discursive dimensions of violence, that is, that forms of violence are socially constructed at the intersection of history, time and place. Using this view as a springboard for analysis the researcher considers it useful to contextualise and politicise gay male IPV beyond heterosexist ideologies. Heterosexism refers to an ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatises any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship or community (Herek, 1990). The study also makes a useful contribution towards critical approaches in understanding the complex ways in which discourses intersect with subjects to produce constructions of violence in contemporary South Africa.

1.2. Aim and objectives

In order to address the concerns highlighted above, this study explored the ways in which gay men construct intimate partner violence in their relationships with other men. An analysis of the discourses employed in these constructions sheds important light upon the nuances of gay IPV and furnishes a deeper understanding of the topic.

The following chapter reviews the relevant literature on gay male IPV and outlines the theoretical perspectives that were used to make sense of participants' responses. It locates gay male IPV within broader mainstream and critical

conceptualisations of violence, charting the changing discursive representations of the construct over time and place. What is commonly considered 'violence' is not static, rather it has been shaped across time and place by differing social movements and systems of power. Furthermore, the review demonstrates ways in which particular frameworks 'heterosexualise' violence and a critical discussion of these mechanisms identifies a blind spot in the literature that this study illuminates. The review begins with more mainstream conceptualisations such as those proposed by the United Nations. The ecological model of violence is then unpacked and risk factors that are thought to contribute towards violence at individual, family, community and societal levels are discussed. While ecological models provide a useful descriptive framework for violence, concerns from more critical schools of thought such as critical gender studies, masculinity studies and critical public health approaches are expounded. These include that ecological relationships are often constructed in heteronormative terms, that the majority of research is conducted on heterosexual dyads, that the model lacks explanatory value amongst its levels of organisation and that gender as a risk factor is insufficiently interrogated. These shortcomings flag the theoretical gaps that the present study's critical discourse analytic perspective fills.

The literature review continues with a discussion on critical approaches to conceptualising violence such as feminism and the promises of theory-making in the area of masculinity studies. The feminist movement radically reconfigured the way that violence is thought about by prioritising patriarchy as a social system, and providing one possible way that gender is positioned at the intersection of violence and power. This view of gender while encompassing a more explanatory value regarding IPV than mainstream models, nevertheless essentialises reductive gender role socialisation theories. The implications of this school of thought on gay IPV are highlighted. The arguably more dynamic concept of hegemonic masculinity is then reviewed. It incorporates patriarchal power but allows room for subjects to orient themselves depending on context. The review ends with an overview of the limited repertoire of empirical research on gay IPV and highlights the need for research that focuses on in-depth critical sexuality and gender analysis.

The third chapter presents the research procedure and methods of the study. Following the research question, the theories of social constructionism and critical discourse analysis are discussed. Important for the present study's analysis is that discourse reflects wider systems of power that become taken-for-granted such that oppressive repercussions for gay men experiencing IPV are normalised. Thereafter the steps taken to recruit participants, who the participants were and ethical considerations involved in collecting sensitive data are discussed. The method of data analysis for this type of research is explained in terms of Ian Parker's (1992) work on critical discourse analysis. The chapter concludes with some reflexive considerations on the part of the researcher.

Chapter 4 begins the work of analysing and discussing the findings of the study. Although a range of discourses informed participants' constructions of IPV, heterosexist structures over-determined the range of possibility of discourses employed. Within these discourses subject positions are further over-determined by gender. Thus, the analysis demonstrates the ways in which this talk is both aligned and resistant to the heterosexualising of IPV in the dominant scientific and popular discourses that produce it. This chapter is divided into 3 themes. Under the first, participants' talk treated IPV as practically non-existent. Discourses of repression carry important implications for the visibilising or not of gay IPV. The role of psychological discourses in shaping understandings of IPV draws on foucauldian concepts of governmentality. These have ideological repercussions such as framing the aetiology of IPV as an individual rather than a social problem. In the second thematic grouping, IPV was constructed in the register of 'typical' heteropatriarchy, where gay men replicated gendered power relations. Some talk produced violence as a tool to maintain gendered power relations when the heteronormative conditions for such power relations were threatened. Other participants oriented to heteronormative subject positions in their production of violence through drawing upon discourses of love, romance and monogamy. The role institutions play in maintaining gendered power relations is also discussed. Finally more overt resistance to heteropatriarchal constructions were grouped in the last section of the

analysis, whereby the position of 'victim' was resisted in participants' talk. Here IPV constructions drew on discourses of male aggression, male sex drive and love with some interesting perspectives involving intimacy, eroticism, catharsis and hegemonic codes of fearlessness. In the fifth chapter some important conclusions are drawn from the constructions of IPV discussed in the analysis. Finally, a discussion of the limitations and recommendations that follow from the study is presented

2 Literature Review

2.1 Violence

Violence results in 1.6 million deaths per year (WHO, 2002). The World Health Organisation defines violence as:

> The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (WHO, 2002).

This definition aims to be as inclusive as possible taking into account not just physical violence but also threats and intimidation. It further categorises violence into self directed, interpersonal and collective violence. 'Self-directed' refers to suicidality or self-harm, 'collective' to the actions of one group against another for social, political or economic gain and 'interpersonal' is further broken down into two categories, 'family and intimate partner' and 'community violence'. The primary difference between the two subcategories is whether the people are related, with family and partner violence taking place mostly in the home, and community violence taking place mostly outside the home (e.g. rape or sexual assault by strangers). Although a seemingly universally appropriate definition, what counts as violence has shifted and continues to shift over time and place. In this sense, violence is always framed by context.

Presently the WHO definition is mostly used in the domain of public health and by policy makers. This however has not always been the case. Prior to the women's movement (Martin, 1976), what counted as interpersonal violence was restricted to the 'community violence' WHO category. This was based on a public/private divide in that violence was only thought to occur in public spaces, to be perpetrated by strangers (Duncan, 1996) and to result in observable injuries (Loseke, 1989). In sharp contrast, an idyllic private space was associated with home, domesticity, care and safety. The implications of such a definition were that violence against children and relatives in the home, and 'normal' violence like pushing and slapping which leaves few if any injuries, went largely socially unrecognised, remaining a private and hidden problem (Plummer, 1995). Furthermore, victim-blaming ensued whereby culpability was turned upon the victims who 'provoked' violence (Martin, 1971) or did not behave appropriately in the abovementioned 'dangerous' public spaces (Richardson & May, 1999). Feminist conceptualisations of violence redefined violence in accordance within a new set of thinkable parameters. These new constructions of violence expanded formerly narrow definitions to include such acts as wife beating and marital rape. Another example of the appropriation of socially sanctioned discipline by the violence lexicon is the fact that corporal punishment in South African schools was common practice until it was outlawed from 1996 (Morrell, 2001).

If what counts as violence is shaped by history and culture then it is not surprising that place too, has a significant impact on its definition. While corporal punishment in schools is banned in many parts of the world including most of Europe, Canada, Japan, Russia, South Africa, New Zealand and many others, it is still permissible in many countries in South East Asia, the Middle East and Africa and nineteen states in the United States of America (USA) (mostly those in the south where religious values are more prominent) (Dupper & Dingus, 2008). Thus violence is constructed at the intersection of history, space and place. In this sense constructions of violence reveal as much about the intrinsic elements of the act as they do about the socio-cultural norms in which they are embedded.

2.2 Intimate partner violence

The object of enquiry in this study is intimate partner violence (IPV). Traditional definitions of this type of violence have come from the United Nations (UN) declaration on the elimination of violence against women (UN General Assembly, 1993), which refers to gender based violence to highlight that such violence is rooted in and perpetuates gender inequality in that it is often tolerated and deemed acceptable by social norms, laws and institutions. Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of this type of violence. For the UN, IPV comprises of:

> Physical aggression such as hitting or kicking… forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion, psychological abuse such as intimidation and humiliation, and controlling behaviours such as isolating a person from family and friends or restricting access to information and assistance (UN General Assembly, 1993, p. 24).

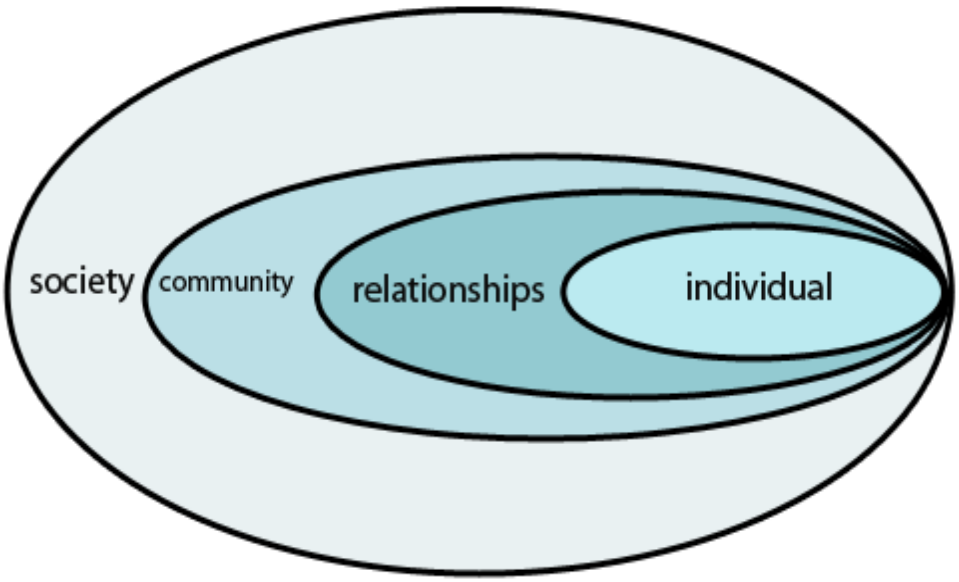
These definitions are overtly geared towards women victims. Occasionally definitions concede that violent women, male victims and same-sex IPV do exist however statistically, the 'overwhelming burden of partner violence is borne by women at the hands of men' (UN, 1993, p. 24) and consequently there is a concerted focus in the IPV literature on women who are abused by men. Definitions from agencies such as the UN adopt a public health approach to reducing violence. "Public health by definition does not focus on individual risk, but rather on the health of communities and populations as a whole… Public health interventions focus, wherever possible, on populations *at greatest risk of injury* (emphasis added) (WHO, 2002)' It would therefore seem that intimate partner violence in gay male relationships falls outside of this focus and is therefore less visible in anti-violence scholarly literature. The following section briefly outlines the dominant models used to understand the causes and consequences of violence. Rather than provide an exhaustive overview of the now substantial literature on violence, the section aims to show that many of these theoretical frameworks are in some ways blind to the various mechanisms by and through which they 'heterosexualise' violence. This

discussion of the critical heterosexist blind spots in the violence literature ultimately provides an entry-point for the current study. The ecological model of violence proposed by the WHO provides a useful structure for reviewing this literature.

2.3 Ecological model of violence

The ecological model is based on the idea that no single factor alone can explain why violence occurs with some people in some situations and not others. This model identifies risk factors that influence behaviour or increase the likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. These risk factors are grouped into four levels nested within each other. These levels are the individual, family, community and societal. According to ecological theory each of these levels accounts for some degree of risk for violence.

Fig 1: Ecological Model Proposed by the World Health Organisation



2.3.1 Individual level risks for IPV

At this point individual level risk factors focus on traits of the perpetrator such as personality disorders (Island & Letellier, 1991; Dutton, 1995; Landolt & Dutton, 1997) anger, resentment, need for power, helplessness, fear, inadequacy and insecurity (Burke & Folingstad, 1999; Prince & Arias, 1994). Alcohol and substance abuse is also associated with IPV (WHO, 2002). While these risk factors have been extensively researched, they have, in most cases been extracted from samples in which information on sexual orientation was not required. For example, Gass, Stein, Williams & Seedat (2004) surveyed 4351 adult South Africans[2] collecting demographic variables of gender, race, age, marital status, educational attainment, income, employment status and location. This study allowed for the possibility that men and women could both be abusers or abused, yet did not ask about the gender of their partners, so if same sex couples were surveyed their figures would not be accurately reflected in the general findings. Another fundamental shortcoming of research at this level is that gender in the broad sense is treated as a descriptive rather than an explanatory category, because in most cases the way in which the variable is implicated in the violent outcome is not sufficiently explored. For example, questions about *how* this complex construct of gender actually contributes to violence is not often measured or interrogated[3]. The current study delves deeper into how gender is implicated in constructions of IPV through analysing the kinds of discourse participants draw on in their talk, and the power implications associated in doing so.

2.3.2 Family-level risks

This level involves the individual's immediate relationships and how these impact on risk for violence. People are more likely to perpetrate violence if they grew up in

[2] These data came from the South Africa Stress and Health study, a psychiatric epidemiological survey of a nationally representative sample, part of the World Health Organisation's World Mental Health Survey Initiative.

[3] This point is further elaborated in section 2.4.3.

violent families (Ceasar, 1988) through such mechanisms as social learning (Ackers, 1998). Other theories that attempt to explain IPV at the family-level have been labelled 'interactionist' in that they focus on the context of conflict between couples. According to Denzin's (1984) stages of family violence, an internal or external stressor may cause an interaction between a couple to be *perceived* as unequal by the violent partner, such that it makes 'him'[4] feel inadequate compared to his own self-image. Following this, he may choose a violent means of re-establishing dominance. Disempowerment theory (Archer, 1994) and social control/ exchange theory (Lockhart, White, Causby & Isaac, 1994) also conceptualise unequal exchanges between couples. There is firstly an assumption of reinforcement in that the outcome of IPV is typically more positive for the violent partner than negative. Also, the violent partner must believe that they are entitled to use force to control their partner and this points to, but does not articulate, wider social conditions that may contribute to this sense of entitlement. While family interaction risk factors could arguably apply to persons of any gender they tend to be conceived in terms of a heterosexual dyad. For example, Denzin's (1984) model of family violence comprises of a male perpetrator and female victim. Furthermore, IPV studies assume a certain kind of monogamous relationship. A partner is assumed to be stable, and long term and this too falls under a heteronormative rubric. It is possible for IPV to occur outside monogamous relationships such as within casual relationships, open relationships or polyamorous relationships but this contextual detail would be over looked in traditional models of family level risk. For example in the Gass et al. (2010) study, participants were asked to refer to their most recent marriage or cohabiting relationship when answering IPV questions. Indeed, the conceptions that guide this level of the ecology are premised on the assumption of the heteronormative nuclear family, including its various conventional substrates such as matrimony and monogamy.

[4] Denzin's original masculine pronoun use labeled the violent partner as a man.

2.3.3 Community-level risks

Community level risks are related to characteristics of community settings such as schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces that increase the risk of violence generally. Factors like high unemployment, low socio-economic status, high population density, overloaded infrastructure, poor service delivery and the presence of a drug trade increase risk (WHO, 2002; Matzopoulus, Meyers, Bowman & Mathews, 2008). Though individual and family levels risks are usually considered in IPV, some studies have found residents of poor neighbourhoods to be at higher risk for IPV, especially in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Benson, Fox, Demaris & Van Wyk, 2003). For example Dekeseredy, Alvi, Schwartz and Perry (1999) found that annual IPV incidence rates of women living in public housing were higher than lifetime incidence rates in the general population. O'Campo, Burke, Lynn Peak, McDonnell, & Gielen, (2005) suggested that unemployment may be related to IPV via alcohol and drugs. The deleterious effects of unemployment can lead people to self soothe in this manner and also to turn to drugs for income which increases access to drugs in the community. As mentioned earlier the link between alcohol/substance abuse and IPV is strong (WHO, 2002). As well as this, high-violence areas can lead to desensitisation and indifference among residents and Police, which in turn can reinforce IPV (O'Campo et al., 2005). On the other hand enhanced social networks, which lower interpersonal mistrust and improve social cohesion, is associated with lower rates of violence (Matzopoulus et al., 2008). O'Campo et al. (2005) attempt to demonstrate this relationship. Their community cluster maps revealed that communication networks such as neighbourhood meetings, churches, police presence, and communication between neighbours were all related to each other. This cluster of items led to residents who would be 'aware of resources' for combating IPV. Finally, this would eventually contribute to an increased likelihood of IPV cessation for neighbourhood residents. Given that homosexuality is often seen as a taboo subject, gay IPV may not easily be relayed through the communication networks in this model, presupposing that these were not gay networks.

2.3.4 Societal-level risks

The WHO (2002) classifies societal-level risks as the general climate under which violence is strengthened or discouraged such as patriarchal socio-cultural norms, or government macro-economic policies that expand social inequality. Poverty and inequality is particularly problematic in South Africa. A third of South Africa's population is unemployed. Poverty prevents access to essential resources. Inequality can lead to frustration, anger and humiliation and so violence may then be used as a tool to create a sense of empowerment in an otherwise deprived population (Seedat, 2009). According to Jewkes (2000), the inability to maintain masculine social ideals such as providing an income in impoverished situations can trigger a crisis of identity. In order to resolve this crisis violence against women may be used as it allows expression of power that is otherwise undercut by economic circumstances. This configuration is based on a male perpetrator-female victim. There is no reason why a crisis in identity that leads to IPV could not be triggered in gay relationships, however this is seldom analysed.

2.4 Critique of mainstream approaches:

While the ecological model provides a useful framework for describing the state-of-the science on violence and violence prevention, it is also subject to a number of theoretical critiques. In the main, these are offered by a critical public health approach and especially critical gender theory, queer studies and more mainstream work on the construction of masculinity. This is because in a very real sense, the ecological model of violence is largely heteronormative on at least three counts. Firstly, the tiered form of the model assumes a relatively conservative relationship of individual to family and family to society. This formulation assumes a particular configuration of these relationships, whereby family is constructed as preponderantly heteronormative and nuclear. Secondly, the majority of studies that inform our understandings of the contribution of risk at each of the ecological levels and their intersections are based on heterosexual populations. Thirdly, although

gender features as a prominent variable in accounting for risk factors, exactly how it does so is not critically explicated. Each of these critiques is further elaborated below.

2.4.1 Heteronormative constructions of ecological relationships

The ecological model seems to be a reasonable way to comprehensively conceptualise IPV on a range of levels. However, when existing theory and data is inserted into the various levels, as the above literature review has done, the model appears to be blind to the implications of homosexual relationships. The ecological model seems to assume that inequality is always gendered toward male/female dichotomies in its modelling of IPV. In this sense it can be seen as heteronormative in that categories of identity are hierarchically binarised. The families, partners, relationships, victims and perpetrators in most of the research reviewed are assumed to be heterosexual, in that inquiry into and implications of homosexual sexuality on IPV is left out of analyses, rendering the data sexuality blind. It is difficult to see where an adult gay male victim (or lesbian perpetrator) of intimate partner violence would be accommodated within this rubric except as a footnote.

2.4.2 The preponderance of studies on heterosexual couples.

Most IPV research is conducted on heterosexual couples. It was not till the early 1990's that the first studies of same sex IPV began to appear (Island & Letellier, 1991; Renzetti, 1992). Presently a small body of literature exists on same sex IPV but it is disproportionately limited relative to the domestic violence literature in general.

This may perpetuate the myth that gay IPV does not exist and if this is the case then there is little rationale for intervening against IPV in same sex relationships. As a result the problem is left to continue unaddressed and exemplifies the way lesbian and gay lives are often marginalized. Furthermore the narrow, unilateral, gendered view of violence is left unchallenged.

2.4.3 Blind to the critical contributions of gender as a fulcrum for violence and power

In the ecological model gender is a decontextualised risk factor. It offers 'patriarchy' in an attempt to explain one way that gender can play out but this too is still 'merely' a risk factor in terms of dominant social norms. A more critical exploration of how gender interacts with violence seems out of the scope of the ecological model. A useful metaphor for this model that originated in cybernetics is that of the black box (Latour & Woolgar, 1986) whereby gender, and other inputs such as race and class feed into the box at one end and outputs such as incidence of IPV come out the other end. The mechanics of just how input variables bring about health effects is rendered invisible inside the box (Shim, 2002). What is it about formations of power within gendered social relations that contributes to IPV? This type of question cannot be easily addressed in ecological models. The function of constructing and closing the black box argues Shim (2002), is to 'construct an intelligible orderly and seemingly certain story about the unequal distribution of health and illness, (pp. 8)' which through discursive practices and increased use gets taken as common scientific knowledge. This process has far reaching consequences such as blanket risk factors becoming seen as the causes of IPV[5]. The current study 'opens up' the black box by interrogating *how* gender relations intersect with power in gay men's constructions of violence within the context of their intimate relationships.

2.4.4 Lack of explanatory value among tiers of the ecological model

Related to criticisms against black box epidemiology is the fact that ecological approaches to health problems cannot account for the ways in which different tiers of the model interact to produce an outcome. The model describes rather than explains how down-stream factors are impacted by drivers further upstream. Critical approaches take this as their starting point in trying to pry open 'black box' variables.

[5] Instead of gender being a related variable it can come to be seen as a causative one, 'he did it *because* he is a man'. Also not taking contextual details into account can lead to inadequately informed interventions.

For example, how patriarchal norms filter down to individual level factors such as feelings of inadequacy, are not entirely addressed by ecological approaches. Discourse theory, often used in critical empirical work in the social sciences, is preoccupied by such interactions and thus offers some potential for further understanding these relationships (Parker, 1992). More critically oriented approaches to violence that attempt to address some of the problems identified in the mainstream literature are reviewed in the sections below.

2.5 Critical approaches

2.5.1 Feminism and violence

The feminist movement was instrumental in highlighting aspects of intimate partner violence that had previously gone unnoticed. One of its key aims was to reframe violence as a political issue based on patriarchy rather than on individual-level traits. The slogan 'the personal is political' cast IPV's predecessor, domestic violence, as a crime against women and therefore a women's issue (Schecter, 1982). Male violent partners were thought to be following cultural norms that prescribed male dominance and female subordination, and battered women were thought to strongly subscribe to a feminine sex-role stereotype (Walker, 1989). IPV was seen as an extreme consequence of traditional marriage (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Patriarchy was described as a social system comprising of social, cultural and political institutions where the intimate connection between domestic violence and this overarching sexist system was emphasised.

The critical insight in feminist theories is the way in which gender is related to power. It becomes a social force and spreads out over multiple socio-cultural institutions including marriage, health, education, the criminal justice system, and science. Feminism critically contextualised gender at the intersection of violence and power. However, in so doing it essentialised IPV as a male to female transaction.

Valuable as this view has been, with astronomically high numbers of heterosexual women still suffering in abusive relationships (Mathews, Abrahams, Martin, Van de Merwe & Jewkes, 2004), viewing partner violence only as something perpetrated by men against women silences violence in same sex relationships in a similar way that viewing violence in a public/private dyad silenced violence in the home. While highlighting the plight of one vulnerable population, other, less numerous, though also vulnerable groups, have become de-prioritised intervention targets. This is not unusual. Homosexuality has traditionally been marginalised, partly through being defined primarily in sexualised terms, and constructed through discourses of abnormality, pathology and dehumanisation (Weeks, 1990), resulting in a long struggle to get lesbian and gay rights recognised as human rights (e.g. Rosenbloom, 1996). Early writers in the same-sex domestic violence field called attention to the inherent heterosexism in feminist gender-based constructs of violence (Renzetti, 1992; Letellier, 1994; Elliot, 1996; Merrill, 1996).

Walker (1979) suggested that lesbian and gay men were raised in heterosexual homes where power differences between men and women fuelled the sex role socialisation patterns used in their own relationships. What this shows is that what is known about IPV is predicated on men behaving violently towards women. The current study therefore is important in exploring how gay men construct their own versions of violence in their intimate relationships. One key theoretical tool in this endeavour is the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987). As a response to the reductionist view of gender confined to more or less fixed roles, the concept of hegemonic masculinity offers a more dynamic way of understanding how subjects might orient themselves within hierarchies of masculinity.

2.5.2 Hegemonic masculinity

The concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987) offers a critique of essentialising gender role socialisation theory. The most common process both mainstream and critical theories have, attempted to account for the way in which

gender and power are transmitted (Cruz, 2003). Hegemonic masculinity refers to the pattern of practice that represents the 'current most honoured way of being a man', which ideologically allows men's dominance over women to continue (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.5). In actuality, hegemonic masculinity is practiced by a minority, because hegemonic codes tend to be aspirational ideals that are practically difficult to achieve by most men. Hegemonic masculinity is nonetheless normative in that all other men, including gay men, are required to position themselves in relation to it. For gay men this relationship can be an uneasy one because it is not only women who are subordinated under the framework of hegemonic masculinity, but also alternate forms of masculinity, such as gay men, who are often constructed as a denigrated 'Other' (Connell, 1987). The theory of hegemonic masculinity is closely related to discourse theory in that it allows for the intersection of time and space by taking gender relations to be historical constructions. Thus hegemonic masculinities come into existence under specific conditions and, importantly, are open to historical change (Connell, 1987). Older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones. How the concept specifically relates to IPV is through enforcement. Although hegemonic masculinity does not *need* to establish itself though violence because it is something that people aspire to through culture, institutions and persuasion, it could be, and often is, supported by force. Indeed violence is a central part of hegemonic constructions of masculinity. The concept has been extensively applied and extended (see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005 for a review). In criminology for example, particular forms of aggression were linked with hegemonic masculinity, not as a mechanical effect for which hegemonic masculinity was a cause, but through the *pursuit* of hegemonic masculinity (Bufkin, 1999; Messerschmidt, 1997). This study has used hegemonic masculinity as one of its analytic tools to explore some ways in which a pursuit of hegemonic masculinity has implications for gay men's constructions of IPV. Wetherell & Edley (1999) suggest that we should understand hegemonic norms as defining a subject position that is taken up strategically by men in particular circumstances. This strategy fits well with the discourse analytic methods used in the current study. Hegemonic masculinity has multiple meanings. Men can move among multiple meanings according to their interactional needs. Men can adopt the hegemony when it is desirable, but the same

men can distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity at other moments. Consequently masculinity represents not a certain type of man, but rather a way in which men position themselves through discursive practices.

Given the theoretical overview provided above, it is unsurprising that empirical studies on same-sex IPV are scant. Very little is known about violence within gay male relationships because there is a constrained repertoire of language to describe 'intimacy', 'gender' and ultimately violence without men, women and heterosexism. Nevertheless, the studies that have taken gay IPV as their primary objects of study are examined below.

2.6 IPV in gay male relationships

Of the few specific studies on violence within gay male relationships, most are limited to the examination of quantitative variables and their correlation to other variables within heteronormative discourses (e. g. Landolt & Dutton, 1997; Felson & Messner 2000). For example a study from the United States by McKenry, Serovich, Mason & Mosack, (2006) found support for Archer's (1994) disempowerment theory. In their study higher masculinity in same sex couples was related to a greater tendency towards aggressive behaviours of control when threatened. Here masculinity was measured using the 24-item personal attribute questionnaire.

The scale used by Oringher & Samuelson (2011), also conducted in the U.S., provided a slightly more nuanced picture of masculinity. Thirty-six items and six subscales determined conformity to masculine norms. Out of these, aggressiveness and suppression of emotional vulnerability significantly predicted perpetrator violence. Trait correlates of gay male IPV were similar to those found in heterosexual IPV and included power imbalance, dependency, jealousy, substance abuse and possessiveness (McClennen, Summers & Daly, 2002).

In Cruz and Firestone's (1998) U.S. American exploratory study, gay men were asked only three questions, how they defined domestic violence/abuse, what kind of

violence they had experienced and why they thought those forms of domestic violence occur in same sex relationships. Findings were organised around the themes relevant to the literature on domestic violence. Power and control featured in most participants' definitions of abuse. A more recent qualitative study by the same author (Cruz, 2003) focused more on the reasons men remained in their violent relationships. The table below describes their coded responses to this question. Financial dependence (18.6%), Naiveté/Inexperience (16.3%) and love (14%) were the three most frequently cited reasons for staying. The remaining factors were hope for change, loneliness, commitment, emotional dependence, the cycle of violence[6] and fear. These results have been included in this review because many of these themes have surfaced in participants' talk in the current study. This study however has analysed themes such as love, hope, and commitment discursively, paying closer attention to the power dynamics implied when participants invoke such themes in their constructions of IPV.

A qualitative study in Canada that focused specifically on contextual issues in gay male relationships seemed to open up new avenues for research (Stanley, Bartholomew, Taylor, Oram, & Landolt, 2006). The authors found varied patterns of violence, mostly as an escalation of conflict, with bidirectional emotional abuse. This suggested issues in attachment and conflict resolution.

Finally it should also be noted that two recent U.S American prevalence studies focused on 'men who have sex with men' (MSM) (Stephenson et al., 2010; Greenwood et al., 2002). These yielded prevalence estimates[7] and correlates between IPV and age, level of education and HIV. The term MSM has been criticised for being deployed beyond its original intentions, which were to study a group with similar sexual behaviour for the purposes of epidemiology (Young & Meyer, 2005). It

[6] The cycle of violence in IPV refers to three phases that repeat, 1. tension building, 2. the violent incident and 3. The honeymoon phase (Walker, 1979).

[7] These prevealence estimates were cited in the introductionof this dissertation.

is not suitable for studying IPV because it decontextualises sexuality in the way gender is often decontextualised in mainstream conceptualisations of violence[8].

From this limited repertoire of gay male specific, empirical research on intimate partner violence, it seems that little has varied compared to heterosexual IPV studies save the sexual orientation of the subjects. However, critical engagement with the role of this orientation has been relatively neglected even in studies that have taken IPV in gay male relationships as their object of enquiry. The present study draws on lessons from past research and addresses this gap in the literature.

In contrast to most gay IPV literature however, two papers from South Africa derived from a qualitative study on narratives of power and abuse in gay male relationships, go further in critically exploring the role of gender in gay male IPV. Henderson & Shefer (2008) presented a case study of an isiXhosa speaking gay man and found themes of heteropatriarchal masculine stereotypes in the form of binarised gender roles. Masculine constructions prized the penetrative role in sexual intercourse and undermined the 'feminine' partner by assigning them traditional gender roles. Henderson (2012) reviewed interview data from 15 gay men in the Cape Metropole and also linked abuse to heteronormative stereotypes comprising a dominant 'masculine' and subordinated 'feminine' partner. Both studies also found examples of challenges to heteropatriarchy such as, resistance to being a victim through financial resources or agency in being able to leave the abusive relationship. The current study builds on the merits of these South African projects by further elaborating on the role of gender in gay male IPV, its continuities with heteropatriarchy and resistances. The current study's use of a Parkerian analysis is perhaps suggestive of a greater focus on power than its predecessors.

By exploring how gay men define and make sense of the violence in their relationships and what discourses are deployed in their explanations, the current study furthers the many ways in which violence can exist and is understood. There is

[8] see section 2.4.3

a need to re-politicise violence beyond heterosexism. This study is committed to contributing to critical understandings of the way that social and material structures intersect with subjects to produce conditions under which a relationship, action and or non-action may be considered violent.

3 Data and Method

3.1 Research Question

The guiding question that informed the research was 'How do gay men construct violence in their intimate relationships?' The following sections outline the research process used to respond to the research question, beginning with the design and theoretical framework. It is important to describe the research process in detail so that other researchers may be encouraged to continue researching this important topic. For example, researchers may believe finding participants who have experienced gay IPV is too difficult, however under the procedure section, the steps taken to recruit participants demonstrates that this task is far from impossible.

3.2 Design and theoretical framework

This research adopted a qualitative approach. This approach was considered appropriate for this study as it places a large emphasis on gathering rich, in-depth, contextual data that effectively illustrates how gay men construct violence, gender and sexuality in their intimate relationships (Parker, 1994). The study is also situated within a strong constructionist tradition. Social constructionism refers to theoretical frameworks, which affirm that people create versions of reality based on cultural traditions, language and social norms (Hosking & Morley, 2004). According to these frameworks, human beings first react to the world, then a consensus or a shared definition of social reality is reached, and finally, that definition of social reality acquires a solid and natural character (Gergen, 1999). In this sense what people say does not just mirror the world, but in some sense helps to constitute that world. The type of social constructionism of particular interest to the proposed study is that

which has been influenced by the theoretical leanings of queer theory (Sedgewick, 1990) and masculinity studies (Connell, 1987). These approaches critique an essentialised view of sexuality and gender identities with queer theory challenging the validity of heteronormative discourses. Research of this type is also committed to a critical paradigm, which assumes that a reality exists but also that it is shaped by ideologies that reflect the interests of dominant groups. Here interest lies in what discourses shape participants' views so as to unmask ideologies and illustrate how IPV in gay male relationships is rendered invisible or possibly legitimised.

3.3 Participants

Six gay men participated in the study. They lived in highly urbanised areas, 5 from the Gauteng region and 1 from Cape Town. Their ages ranged from 25 to 52 years. In terms of 'race', 4 were 'White' and 2 were 'Black' South Africans. Only one participant identified as a perpetrator. Four inclusion criteria were used for participation in the study. Participants had to be over the age of 18. Participants had to self identify as gay men. The participants had to have self-identified as having experienced violence in any past intimate relationship with another man. This was to ensure that the violence did not take place in a heterosexual relationship and allowed for the inclusion of victims, perpetrators as well as people who experienced IPV in non-monogamous relationships. Furthermore, only those who had ended the relationship in which IPV was involved at least 6 months prior to the interview were included in the study. Gay men who were currently in, or who had very recently left abusive relationships were expected to be under stress related to their daily living conditions. The researcher felt, and this was a value judgement on the researcher's part, that these experiences would better suit exploration with someone who would be able to adequately assist them in exiting the relationship if they wished to.

3.4 Procedure

The research project took take place in Johannesburg over a period of 1 year beginning February 2012. Participants were recruited through 4 LGBTI related

organisations. These organisations agreed to advertise the study on noticeboards within the organisation and on in house media such as their websites. The following organisations took part: 'Health for Men', which offers sexual health services for gay men across South Africa, 'Out Wellbeing' provides direct health service for gay men in Pretoria, Gayspeak Ezine is a South African online gay & lesbian news webpage on Facebook and Twitter and GALA is a centre for LGBTI culture and education in Africa based in Johannesburg. The researcher approached these organisations and secured a time to provide a brief presentation to the director during which the study was explained, buy-in sought and the logistics arranged to help promote it. Interested participants contacted the researcher by phone, email and Facebook and arrangements were made to interview them. This purposive sampling strategy is referred to as convenience sampling as people who exhibit the characteristics of interest to this study were invited to come forward because it is unlikely that people who are abused will identify themselves in public. Interviews were conducted by the researcher at a time convenient to the volunteer participant in a quiet, private office. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and were audio-recorded by the researcher for the purposes of verbatim transcription.

Informed consent to participate and to be audio recorded was obtained by requiring participants to read all information provided on a participant information sheet (Appendix B) and then signing a consent form (Appendix C) for participation and recording (Appendix D). Confidentiality was assured. The researcher was the only person who had access to the recordings and transcripts. These were kept in a secure password-protected file on the researcher's laptop. Anonymity of the transcripts was ensured by changing participant's names to pseudonyms. Similarly, anonymity is also guaranteed in the resulting theses and/or publications by using pseudonyms instead of names. The participant's identity does not appear on any transcripts or anywhere else in the research nor was any specifically identifying material used in the research report.

Intimate partner violence is an extremely sensitive issue that involves participants reliving extremely distressing events in their lives. The study therefore required that

a number of steps be taken to address existing vulnerabilities among the research participants. Firstly, the interviews were conducted by the researcher who was in his first year of a Master's degree in Community-based Counselling Psychology. This meant the researcher was currently seeing clients for counselling under supervision and was registered with the HPCSA as a student psychologist. Had there been strong emotional responses he would have been able to support and contain them. There was also the possibility that the interviewees may, in fact, find some relief in talking through these often 'hidden' experiences (Long & Eagle, 2009). Indeed reported reasons for why participants agreed to take part in the study included a desire to aid the gay community, a desire to address the problem of IPV and a desire to talk about issues they have not talked much about. It should be noted that the researcher did not endeavour to counsel the participants but rather a partnership had been set up with the Sophiatown Counselling Agency so that any participant wishing to talk to someone about the feelings invoked by the interview could easily do so. The Sophiatown Counselling agency has two branches in Johannesburg, is open during working hours, one evening per week and one weekend. During working hours counselling is offered by psychologists and social workers and during the weekend and evening by supervised counselling interns. Services are free of charge. This agency was chosen because of their record of working with issues of diversity including the LGBTI community. Alternatively, free telephone counselling phone numbers were provided on the participant information sheet in case the participant did not wish to see someone in person.

The protection of the researcher's mental well-being was also important as secondary traumatisation can occur upon hearing multiple distressing accounts of violent experiences. These potential impacts on well-being were addressed in the researcher's weekly therapy that formed part of his training as a counsellor.

3.5 Data collection

The method of data collection was in-depth semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the best means to gather data for the study

as they have been shown to be effective in capturing how individuals account for and give meaning to their practices (Breakwell, 1995). Semi-structured interviews contain a framework of themes to be explored (Appendix E) but are still flexible, allowing new questions to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. Therefore they allow for rigour of collection but contain flexibility and adaptability to the various responses and discussions that are required for analysis within the qualitative tradition (Breakwell, 1995).

3.6 Data Analysis

The interview data was analysed through a discourse analytic lens. The process of analysis was guided by Ian Parker's (1992) criteria for critical discourse analysis. Specifically, this approach was divided into the 20 following steps. Firstly, interview data were treated as texts. Texts are where one finds discourses at work. In step two, connotations and implications that are invoked by the text were explored. This step was cross-referenced with the research supervisor who noticed different meanings. Parker (1992) refers to two layers of reality in terms of what kinds of objects a discourse can be about. The first, involving step three, is to identify which objects are specified in the discourse (e.g. violence, masculinity), and the second layer of reality, involving step four, is to talk about the discourse as if it were an object itself.

Steps five and six concern subjects that are contained within the discourse. First the types of person that are mentioned in these discourses such as victims, perpetrators or gay men were specified, and then the researcher reflected on what it is possible to say if they were a subject in this discourse. For example it is very difficult for a female to assume an active position in a 'male sex drive' discourse, without sounding deviant.

Step seven involved outlining themes in the discourse by grouping statements in the discourse that coherently fit similar topics. Step eight took into account that there

are different views of the discourse in different cultures so the researcher articulated how a text using this discourse would handle objections to the terminology used.

Another feature of discourses is that they refer to other discourses (Parker, 1992). Therefore step nine compared contrasting ways of speaking, noting the different objects they constituted and step ten identified overlapping parts that seem to constitute the same object in different ways. For example, IPV as reprehensible, IPV as un-harmful or IPV as normative.

Steps eleven and twelve aimed to articulate how discourses reflect on their own way of speaking. Firstly the researcher referred to other texts to elaborate the discourse as it occurs, for example to different audiences, such as IPV researchers writing in academic journals or IPV scientists writing international violence guidelines. Secondly, the researcher thought about the terms used to describe the discourse which will take cognisance of my political stances such as labelling a discourse as heterosexist or not (Parker, 1992).

The historical emergence of a discourse is important for the next two steps (Parker, 1992). This process began in the literature review and continues in the analysis section. Step thirteen looked at how and where the discourse emerged and step fourteen described how the discourse has changed, particularly how the meaning of what counts as IPV has changed.

The final six steps are concerned with critical theory and sought to uncover power relationships. In step fifteen the researcher identified institutions that benefit by the discourses and in step sixteen those institutions that are attacked or subverted by them. Step seventeen focused on what type of persons benefit or lose when the discourse is used and step eighteen required thinking about people who would want to promote the discourse and those who would want to do the opposite. The final two steps spoke to the ideological repercussions of discourses. Firstly by demonstrating how the discourse joins other oppressive discourses (for example 'psychological' discourses and the discourse of 'science') and secondly, to

demonstrate how dominant groups are given voice, while those who employ subjugated discourses have their voices constrained (Parker, 1999).

3.7 Reflexivity

Reflexivity requires researchers to explore their own contributions to the creation of meaning within the research process. The critical paradigm requires the researcher to adopt a political stance. In this case I believe discourses on violence are heterosexist and silence the issue of same sex IPV. This silencing serves the interests of dominant groups in society. Being aware of this, I have therefore made a conscious effort to not let this affect my data collection. The complexities of analysing interview-based data for analysis have been vigorously debated (Speer, 2002). I was therefore aware of and avoided the subtle ways such as nodding, agreeing and prompting when the participants said things that are were in line with my beliefs. Another belief of mine is that IPV is wrong. However I had to be careful not to let this affect the way that I interviewed and respond to a participant who is constructing IPV in a particular way that may not overtly be seen as 'wrong'. Some participants also wanted to say good things about IPV, to construct the violence they experienced as 'normal' and some blamed themselves. I was interviewing gay men. I myself am a member of this category group. Breakwell (1995) claims that interviewees engage in more self-disclosure with someone whom they feel is similar to themselves. As an 'Indian' South African I had to be aware of possible 'race' issues that may influence what participants disclose such as a belief that I would not really understand their situation or the avoiding of racialised perspectives on IPV so as not to offend me.

4 Analysis and Discussion

This study explored how gay men constructed partner violence within their intimate relations. The analysis identified a range of discourses that informed participants' constructions of IPV. Many of these, but not all, seemed to rely on heterosexist structures, which correspond to a body of literature that constructs IPV as a

predominantly heterosexual phenomenon. This analysis therefore focuses on these heterosexist discourses so as to highlight the politics of the term intimate partner violence. Although heterosexist structures could not be said to entirely define the IPV discourses employed by participants, they seemed to overdetermine the range of possibility for these discourses. For example formal scientific and popular discourses construct IPV as something that only occurs in heterosexual relationships and as something that features clear perpetrator and victim subject positions[9].

Within these discourses subject positions are further overdetermined by gender and it is this gendered nature of IPV that often featured in participants' talk. Thus, the analysis demonstrates the ways in which this talk is both aligned and resistant to the heterosexualising of IPV in the dominant scientific and popular discourses that produce it. Three ways in which gay male participants oriented themselves to heterosexist constructions of IPV are explored. First their talk produced IPV between two men as something that is repressed or unacknowledged. If IPV can only discursively exist in a heterosexual relationship then it would make sense that similar acts in gay relationships were not constructed as violent. Second, participants at times adopted heteropatriarchal subject positions such that the abused partner was 'feminised' and the abusing partner was constructed in the language of typical IPV "perpetrator as man". Therefore to enter the conditions of possibility for IPV within this talk, a masculine perpetrator and a feminine victim was required. Third, abused partners demonstrated a tendency to resist aligning with the language of victimhood by highlighting their agency in the face of several instances of violence against them. The analysis also explores the power relationships inherent within the discourses

[9] Exploring how subjects position themselves within discourse corresponds to steps 5 and 6 of Parker's (1992) guide to discourse analysis outlined in the methods section. It specifies what types of person are mentioned in these discourses and reflects on what it is possible to say if one were a subject in this discourse. The idea of subjects occupying positions that are produced within and by discourses, and thus subjected to its rules, exclusions and potentialities was concretised by Foucault (1982). It challenged the notion of subjects as central authors of the way things are represented (Hall, 1997).

and implications of their use. The following section focuses on talk within the corpus where constructions of IPV between gay men were characterised by a discourse of repression.

4.1 Discourses of repression

At times participants' constructs of intimate partner violence fell under a discourse of repression. In this talk, violent acts went unacknowledged or were produced as 'not violent' at the time of occurrence, arguably because IPV discourses render violence between men invisible or at least insignificant in their intimate relationships.

> **Mike, Extract 1**
>
> It took a lot of therapy and a lot of antidepressants and anxiety tablets to get over that, because then I felt the pain of the beating came out later. It didn't come out during the relationship.

Despite describing some severe instances of physical violence (also see Extract 25), Mike claims that the pain of the beatings was not apparent to him at the time they happened, rather it *materialised later in therapy*. He is explicit about making use of a service such as psychotherapy that is often associated with 'treatment' of individuals who have experienced stressful life events, such as abuse. However, he seemed to not see himself as being hurt while the violence was occurring, or he was unable to make sense of the violence in a meaningful way given that IPV discourses construct violence as a heterosexual phenomenon. Jon has a similar difficulty when looking back at his relationship. His most violent experiences took place on the night before he left his boyfriend. They included the boyfriend 'trying to grab the wheel of the car while I was driving', a knife fight, the boyfriend threatening suicide and the boyfriend attempting to strangle Jon. Prior to this he described several occasions where the boyfriend 'would beat himself up, hit himself in the face you know, and er I was quite shocked'. The implication is that the violence was only directed at Jon on that final night. However the following extract indicates that the violence did turn towards Jon earlier in the form of threats:

> **Jon, Extract 2**
>
> And towards the end this violence towards himself started going over into violence towards me. He

never really beat me or anything like that but it was suppressed and geared towards me and I felt threatened by it. It was like I was constantly expecting that he was going to hit me and beat me as well, but that never quite happened, but I felt threatened.

These experiences suggest that the violence *was experienced* as real at the time of happening. By ' geared towards me' in line 2 Jon refers to his account of how violent episodes were usually triggered by the boyfriend perceiving Jon's actions as abandoning, so the boyfriend while beating himself up, was actually furious with Jon such that Jon was 'constantly expecting' to be hit. Despite these experiences, and the direct reference to 'violence towards me' in line 1, Jon cannot bring himself to describe the relationship as one containing intimate partner violence.

Jon, Extract 3

1. P You mentioned two terms. Domestic violence. The other one was intimate relationship
2. violence?
3. I Intimate partner violence.
4. P Intimate partner violence. Yeah so me and my ex boyfriend I don't think we had that. It was
5. it was, bordering on that. It could have gone that way I think if I maintained the relationship.

For Jon it is as if all that had transpired had not really *counted* as violence. The implication is that the violence would have had to be more extreme such as involving physical beating to count as IPV. If Jon were a woman, perhaps emotional abuse would have been a term more available to him. When experiences did start to count as violent, after a *certain period of time*, it necessitated the end of the relationship. Acts that were initially unacknowledged, were later constructed as violence and only after this reconstruction could the participants rationalise ending the relationship. This begs the question of why 'violent' acts weren't constructed as such from the outset and this section argues that it is a function of the discursive formations embedded within scientific constructions of IPV, which exclude the potential for gay IPV. Because violence is only a discursive possibility within heterosexual relations, it excludes the potential for it to be seen as such in gay relations.

This may have important implications for gay men's practices in their response to violence, such as remaining in an abusive relationship for longer than they would have, as Mike and Jon had done, which may increase the risk of emotional and physical harm to themselves (Letellier, 1994). The effects of this exclusion are also material as public health institutions are less likely to recognise gay IPV, and therefore fail to invest in resources for this group. Currently, in South Africa, as the

literature review has highlighted, gay IPV does not seem to be a public health concern. There are very few services available for gay men involved in violent relationships. Only one shelter exists that will accept abused gay men (Bamford, 2010). When compared to the many shelters available for women one starts to see how the now commonly accepted subject position of female, heterosexual abuse victim has resulted in material benefits in terms of support services. It is important to interrogate such examples of what is and is not acknowledged as violence so as to make clear the politics of the term IPV and the way heterosexist discourses that construct it serve to oppress people in subtle ways.

One of the few available avenues of support for gay men who have experienced IPV is to seek individual psychotherapy as Mike had done. The language of psychotherapy and its various discursive features were salient in the corpus implying that psychological discourses have significantly shaped the way IPV has been constructed. It is for this reason that the term repression was used to describe the discursive repertoires used by participants. Importantly, as the above extracts demonstrate, the language of psychology is used to lift violence into participants' awareness. Other studies on heterosexual IPV have also noted the effects of psychological discourses on participants' attempts to 'explain' violence in their relationships (Boonzaier, 2008). In Extract 2 above, Mike reports that he needed therapy and psychiatric drugs to make sense of violence in his relationship and later in the interview he reported that his abusive partner was diagnosed with a mood disorder. Other participants drew on the vocabulary of psychoanalysis. Ryan equates violence with *catharsis* in Extract 21 and Jon constructs extreme violence as something that is *repressed* so that the victim is unable to talk about it. Tumi reports that his abusive partner would often promise to enter couples counselling in an effort convince Tumi that the violence would end. The extracts below also use psychological language to construct IPV as psychopathological.

Jon, Extract 4 & 5

I would always try and calm him down. I see myself as almost a natural psychologist. I would try to find out what's wrong with the person if this sort of thing happens.

I tried to help with what's wrong with him and tried to repair. But I couldn't. I don't have the knowledge to fix what was wrong with him because he saw a psychiatrist *and* a therapist.

Martiens Extract 6

I mean we really tried. I even went with him to a psychologist. I went with him for the first 3-4 sessions. For me I never had an opportunity to go to someone and say listen these are my issues lets work on them.

Mike Extract 7

1. P I said 'Nip it in the bud now. It is workable you can still live with it.' And he refused to do the work. It
2. was work for him. I said 'You can't be fulfilled as a person knowing you have a mental disorder and
3. you're not doing anything about it. And also knowing that you've got, you've got the brain capacity to
4. live with it, to fix it, to accept it. To be a part of your life but don't let it dominate your life.' And he,
5. wouldn't.
6. I Did he feel like he had a problem?
7. P No he said there was nothing wrong with him.
8. I Ok
9. P It was all in denial.

Jon first attempts the expert subject position to 'fix' his partner then later abandons this approach when discovering that more qualified experts, who he believed had particular knowledge, were already treating him. Martiens also reports that his attempts to deal with IPV involved therapy, and regrets that when he himself was violent to his partner, he never had access to a psychologist. Mike tries to convince his abusive partner that he will never be fulfilled unless he fixes his 'mental disorder' but his partner was 'in denial'. This talk reflects how psychology has helped to shape the way violence is currently understood in that psychology exercises power as an expert knowledge system in the human sciences. Rose (1990) argues that psychology has played a constitutive role by providing the language for codifying and classifying a range of social phenomena such as violence, intelligence and adjustment. This has in a sense brought subjects of these discourses 'into being' and subsequently, psychology has assumed the powerfully advantageous, and lucrative, role of studying and treating them. Rose (1990) outlined a process whereby psychology enabled human subjectivity to be translated into the language of government institutions such as schools, prisons, hospitals, courts and so forth. Psychology

constituted subjectivity ('perpetrators', 'victims', 'the insane', 'the juvenile delinquent') as objects that could themselves be studied and rationally managed through particular sanctioned psychological institutions such as clinics, rehabilitation centres and hospitals. Importantly, this process made certain desired outcomes thinkable such as sanity, contentment, fulfilment and happiness.

Rose draws on Foucault's (1978) concept of governmentality, as a network of institutions and strategies that exercise a sophisticated form of power. As a form of control, governmentality is insidious because it *acts at a distance* upon the social relations of the population through disseminating particular ways of speaking, thinking about and interpreting the social. These vocabularies that classify the social are legitimised through their origins in 'truthful' scientific discourses rather than in politically motivated ones. Furthermore, experts such as doctors, psychologists and social workers whose words are publicised, then come to be the sanctioned dispensers of advice on how to manage one's life, teaching people to scrutinise, evaluate and regulate themselves. Governmentality is a form of control that works not through threat or punishment but rather through persuasion of how much better life could be. Rose (1990) asserts that the discursive operations of psychology should not be regarded as ideology but rather as what Foucault called *technologies of self* because people come to impose on themselves particular kinds of subjectivity in efforts to reach the desired outcomes specified in the discourse. We can see the workings of psychological discourse in Mike's talk. He constructs IPV as a pathology of his partner's psyche that needs treatment. Then, from a limited range of sanctioned 'treatments' that a 'perpetrator-of abuse' can employ he endorses psychiatric medication and psychotherapy. This is often not the case in heterosexual IPV where the man, who is *expected* to be physically violent towards the woman, is more readily constructed as criminal and the criminal justice system is endorsed as a form of punishment for his actions. Given that Jon does not construct his experiences as IPV or construct himself as victim of IPV in the first place, it is less straightforward for his partner's actions to automatically be construed as criminal. It should be noted that the interviewer framed himself as a psychologist and thus represented an entry-point into psychological discourses. Given this framing, it is

possible that participants were more comfortable responding in the register of psychology.

These discursive practices point to wider systems of power. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, to classify social phenomena such that those 'experts' doing the classifying come to be the only ones able to 'treat' that which they have created, is to create an advantageous position for such experts. Secondly, treatment options such as prison, therapy or medication locate the problem of IPV within the psyche of the perpetrator and not within wider, societal level[10], systems of power such as gender or medical science. Doing so would require an interrogation of social and political structures on a macro-level, which is more difficult and less preferred by those in power. For example were IPV more commonly treated as a social problem rather than an intra-psychic one, and were interventions targeted at levelling power asymmetries, then perhaps, incidences of IPV would reduce. This seems like an advantageous result, however for those in positions of power who are benefitting from treating, as opposed to eradicating IPV, it is in their best interests to maintain the status quo. Consequently, and as participants' responses have demonstrated, IPV continues to be constructed as an intra-psychic issue (Hook, 2002). This is one way that discourse, through governmentality, implicitly maintains broader ideologies of patriarchy and science, through subjects like Jon himself, making his 'choice' of treatment.

4.2 'He's still the man': Adopting heteropatriarchal subject positions

Constructing the violent partner as 'masculine' and the abused partner as 'feminine' in gay relationships provides possibly the least troublesome means of making sense of violence given the heterosexist constraints of the discourse. Much of the gay IPV literature has suggested that gay men replicate gendered power relations in this way

[10] See section 2.3.4. The ecological model locates societal level conditions such as patriarchal norms and inequality as a general climate under which violence is strengthened.

(Henderson & Shefer, 2008; Cruz & Firestone, 1998; Henderson, 2012). There was evidence in the current study to support these views.

Wandile, Extract 8

1. P In our society it seems a taboo as well, me and him saying like to the public we're openly gay
2. and we are in a relationship? Hell no. I have to be gay and he has to be a man and that's it.
3. The norm that we, it its happening.
4. I And in that way it was kind of
5. P Yeah you're a woman, he beats you, he commands stuff like that. And you shouldn't
6 talk back, you shouldn't fight back.
7. I So is that how you felt? This is what I have to do because it's my place?
8. P At some point I felt like that but. I felt like that at some point because of a social
9. norm, but at the back of my mind I knew that this is not the way it should be. But yeah, I just
10. kept quiet about it. I lived with it.

Wandile articulates the difficulty faced 'in his society'[11] where homosexuality is only understandable within a heterosexist binary, whereby one partner has to be feminised so as to heterosexualise an intimate relationship between two men. To say that two men who identify as men are in an intimate relationship is considered 'taboo' and draws on historical discourses of homosexuality as sexual deviance (Weeks, 1991). Many have written about such discourses of deviance contributing to the more commonplace phenomenon of 'homophobia'. Fyfe (1983) writes that 'cultural homophobia' operates to maintain traditional sex roles. Indeed this transpired in the data because once they had been binarised, gendered discourses on intimate partner violence were employed in order for Wandile to make sense of his experiences. The view of man in this description conforms to widely researched hetero-patriarchal codes of masculinity where men are entitled to control and discipline women while women are expected to subordinate themselves to their male partner's will (Dobash & Dobash, 1988; Holloway, 1984, Wood, 2001, 2004; Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2004). Such a discourse legitimises a particular set of expectations on the part of the man, that 'he beats you, he commands stuff', and prescribes a particular set of practices in response, 'you shouldn't talk back, you

[11] Wandile describes 'his society' as the township of Mamelodi in Pretoria, an under-resourced residential area that was designated for 'Black' South Africans under the apartheid regime. He also generalised that 'it (gendered, heterosexist discourses) happens in most townships and rural areas. Townships and rural areas are home to a large proportion of previously disadvantaged South Africans making the intersection of gender, class, race and sexuality pertinent here in reproducing particular kinds of power relations that may not function as oppressively in other parts of the country.

shouldn't fight back'. In this example the participant adhered to these prescriptions and regulated his actions to keeping quiet and living with it, which aligns to 'traditional constructions of femininity as patient, selfless and long-suffering' (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2004). In this way the discourse perpetuates oppressive power relations by taking away the participant's rights to speak and act against violence, condemning him to on-going physical and emotional harm. This demonstrates how IPV can be reified or 'visibilised' if gender relations assume 1) binaries and 2) asymmetries in relation to those binaries.

What is interesting is that he reflects on the patriarchal discourse itself by referring to it as a social norm. This is an example of how discourses reflect on their own way of speaking (Parker, 1992) often exposing contradictions within the discourse.
Wandile recognises that this social norm 'is not right'. Perhaps another more traditional member of his community, such as a heterosexual man, or Wandile's abusive partner may not refer to the discourse as 'not right', as they stand to benefit by maintaining unequal gendered power relations. Here relational power asymmetry has been analysed between Wandile and his partner, but this discourse can also be seen to replicate wider systems of patriarchal power where the feminine is subjugated by the masculine. Schippers (2006), in line with hegemonic masculinity theorists, argues that hegemonic characteristics only gain symbolic currency when paired with complimentary 'inferior' qualities in women. For example characteristics such as physical strength and the ability to use violence to establish authority which are ascribed to men, only become meaningful when contrasted with 'feminine' characteristics such as physical vulnerability and compliance. "Even if few women and men actually embody these characteristics in relation to each other, the symbolic relationship established through these hierarchical complementarities provides a rationale for social practice more generally (p.91)." Thus Wandile explaining his IPV experience in asymmetrical gendered terms, functions to rationalise the taken-for-granted symbolic relationship between men and women in a way that ensures mens' dominance over women. In short, by constructing IPV as normative in gay relationships when hetero-patriarchal subject positions are adopted, masculine power over the feminine is re-inscribed.

As a counterexample of violence as normative when gay relationships assume asymmetrical binaries, Mike's talk about the violence in his relationship carries a strong acknowledgement of it being taboo. Mike fears people finding out and so endeavours to conceal evidence of violence such as scars and bruises.

> **Mike, Extract 9**
>
> I had fear of, if my parents had found out or any of my close friends had found out.
>
> **Mike, Extract 10**
>
> She thought that he had had pulled me away from my friends. But it was me making a conscious decision not to see my friends cos they would start asking questions. And I didn't want the questions. Because my friends also work in the industry and yes, secrets are kept to a point but they still talk.

.

These extracts point to the wider roles institutions play in perpetuating discourse and their embedded dynamics of power. Here Mike talks about 'the industry' and avoiding people when he had visible marks of violence on his body so as to prevent them from asking 'questions'. It is Mike's fear of how others will react when they notice the evidence of physical violence such as 'bruising and cuts and that sort of thing' upon his body. When asked what was behind the fear that people in the industry would 'talk' he mentioned a fear of loosing work because violence did not align with the image he was supposed to portray at his workplace. So in a way his 'choice' was a forced one through fears of economic losses and loss of reputation. Much research has been conducted on the effects of IPV on workers in organisations and these include job loss, absenteeism, reduced productivity, inconsistent work histories, underemployment, and reduced actual and potential earnings (Swanberg, Logan & Macke, 2005). In a qualitative study of 19 women residing in domestic violence shelters, a key finding was that physical consequences of IPV such as bruises, cuts and ripped clothing was a primary way that violent partners disrupted women's employment (Moe and Bell, 2004). Mike would avoid work if he were unable to cover up his bruises because the physical evidence of IPV was looked upon unfavorably in his workplace. We have already explored in this analysis the negative effects that the silencing of violent experiences has, such as that people are likely to remain longer in their violent relationship, are less likely to disclose violence to those

who may be able to support them and that perpetrators are likely to have their actions go unnoticed for longer. More broadly, institutions of work become complicit in maintaining the conditions under which IPV flourishes and heterosexist ideologies, that preclude the existence of gay IPV, remain unchallenged.

On another level Mike also wanted to keep evidence of violence away from his friends. When writing about gay IPV, writers have expressed concern that even within the gay community there is a relative silence. This may have something to do with violence being taboo in the gay community as well.

> **Mike, Extract 11**
>
> I don't think its really spoken about in the gay and lesbian community. I think its, because we're supposedly the happy people of the world.

Levine (1998) suggests that there is a desire within the gay and lesbian community to avoid 'tainting' celebratory homosexual identities that people have strived so hard to build with IPV, given the historical associations of homosexuality with deviance and disease (Levine, 1998). Kaschack (2001) speaks of a 'lesbian utopia' that doesn't want to believe it is not free of 'heterosexual' ills such as violence. A study on social support among friends in the LGBTI community identified obstacles such as victims not being believed, abusive partners not being held accountable and difficulties trying to maintain confidentiality in close-knit communities (Turell & Herrmann, 2008). If one considers that gay masculinity, as a subordinate masculinity, is kept out of hegemonic masculine codes (Connell, 1995) by virtue of the (false) association of gay identities with femininity, then it is not too difficult to assume that gay men's relationships are expected to be violence free, as violence and aggression falls within the core of the hegemonic.

Some analysts see discursive positions as resources people use in particular contexts such that people have a choice, albeit a constrained one, and this choice is strategic (Stokoe, 2010; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Positioning himself as victim within hetero-patriarchal IPV discourses allows the participant to gain sympathy from certain

audiences. It also serves to explain that he tolerated violence in his relationship because it was beyond his control at the time.

Wandile, Extract 12

I think it was after a year and 2 months that I thought I wanted out and I think he realised that I was planning to leave him and that's when he started to be more violent and possessive so I always wanted ways of ending the relationship but couldn't find any. I'd always find solutions but when I looked at the outcomes I thought 'No I'm not gonna take that risk. Let me look for something else.' You know. Time went by and by and by.

Here Wandile, without any prompting or questioning about leaving, describes how he really tried to leave. There is often an implicit victim blaming rhetoric levelled against abuse sufferers that questions 'why they stayed' in the relationship as if leaving is an obvious and simple solution to the problem (Berns, 2001; Cruz, 2000; Martin, 1971). This is arguably more so for male victims, who, when produced at all, are expected to have more agency in the relationship according to hegemonic masculine codes. Therefore by Wandile responding in the register of heteropatriarchy, he is pre-empting the rhetorical question of 'why did you stay?' by casting himself as victim of a social norm, which he was powerless to act against. He can only accept his victim position if he aligns himself to the questions that are levelled at women.

Extract 8 constructed violence as a 'normal' outcome when heteronormative subject positions are adopted in gay male relationships. The extract below constructs violence as a tool to maintain gendered power relations when the heteronormative conditions for such power relations is threatened.

Tumi, Extract 13

Yeah you see he was the top so he thought he, I think that's also his way of trying to show me who 'the man' is was. Was about being aggressive and being that. Yeah so that's. I guess that's another route about it is that he was <u>trying</u> to show that even though I've got all of this stuff and I'm taking care of him and everything, <u>he's still the man</u>.

Tumi describes his partner as 'the man' implying that he constructs their relationship in heteronormative terms. His partner however cannot claim this position in a taken-for-granted manner as did Wandile's partner in Extract 8. This difficulty is reflected

in words like '*trying* to show' (line 3). Tumi produces violence as his partner over-asserting some hegemonic masculine practices, such as being the 'top'[12] and being aggressive, to compensate for an inability to fulfil another important hegemonic masculine position, that of being the breadwinner. Instead, because Tumi earns more, it is Tumi who takes up the active position in the 'man as breadwinner' discourse giving him room to manoeuvre within the power dynamic in the relationship. The extract reflects the way multiple discourses overlap in constructing violence, as well as what can transpire when a discourse that is expected to supplement others, such as 'man as breadwinner', fails to do so. Here there is a conflict between symbolic and material forms of power.

These two forms of power usually intersect within hegemonic masculinity because the 'masculine' person usually also has more access to financial resources, enabling a highly unequal power dynamic. Indeed Cruz (2003) found that the majority (18.6%) of gay male respondents reported staying in abusive relationships due to financial dependence. Tumi's talk can be seen as a moment of resistance. It disrupts the way that this conventional intersection between masculinity and power works in discourse by threatening to level out power differentials within the binary. The talk suggests that in order to resolve the conflict, Tumi's partner exercises another form of material power, or counter-resistance, that is, his ability to punish through force. Here violence is the last word, closing off possibilities for further action (Foucault, 1982). This serves to maintain the unequal, heteropatriarchal status quo. A similar argument can be found among critical feminist theorists on heterosexual IPV. They have referred to a female IPV victim exercising economic power as thwarting their abusive partner's pursuit of an idealised masculinity. The idea of thwarting the

[12] Being a 'top' refers to the penetrative or 'active' role in sexual intercourse which is ascribed to the abusive partner. Research has equated this particular sexual practice with unequal gendered power relations though not at every level of the relationship suggesting some fluidity in gendered subjectivity (Mclean & Ncqobo, 1994; Walker, 2005). The focus is upon the way men talk about and experience anal intercourse as a relation of power between men. Drawing upon the work of Foucault, a distinction is made between power as domination and power as negotiated between people. The latter opens up the possibility of intimacy and mutual pleasure within fantasies of domination and submission. Some of the men's narratives embraced the idea that the anally insertive partner dominated the receptive partner (Kippax & Smith 2001).

uptake of gendered subject positions was raised by Moore (1994). A feminist scholar, she linked poverty and violence, theorising that an inability by men to meet social expectations could result in a crisis in masculine self-representation. Being 'the man' yet being unable to exercise economic power over ones partner may constitute a crisis that is resolved through violent means (Moore, 1994). This part of the analysis reflects the importance of critical feminist thought on understanding IPV. It is important to take heed of this in attempts to politicise gay IPV in order to highlight that despite occupying the same gender category of 'men', heteropatriarchy nevertheless impacts on some gay men, so they too are vulnerable to forms of IPV usually only conceptualised as impacting on women.

4.2.1 Discourses of love and romance: The romanticisation of IPV

Another way that participants oriented to heteronormative subject positions in their production of violence was through drawing upon discourses of love, romance and monogamy. This finding seems to correspond with Cruz's (2003) study where a large proportion of reported reasons why gay men remained in violent relationships included love, hope for change, loneliness and commitment[13].

Tumi, Extract 14

1. P We were building something something you see together and and I was, I was not gonna be the one
2. that gave up on it so I just kept at it, kept at it.
3. I Like it was important to you to be committed.
4. P It was. It still is. it, there's a, there's a whole, I didn't want to be like other gay people that I'd seen out
5. there that were from one relationship to another all the time. I wanted to prove to myself, that you
6. know. I'm different. So, it was very important for me to stay in one relationship and be committed to
7. one person.

Tumi, Extract 15

1. I And so during these times, you know the fights, getting beaten up, punched. What did you, how did
2. you explain it to yourself?
3. P … I just thought as far as relationships go you know. These are part of the things you go through and
4. you just need to work through them and <u>if you really love someone you just need to make it work</u>
5. somehow.

Both extracts rely on 'love as justification' for remaining in his abusive relationship.

[13] See figure 3.

In Extract 14, Tumi constructs monogamy in heteronormative terms to explain why he tolerated violence in his relationship. He sets up a dichotomy that parallels a hetero-homo binary in which discourses of monogamy and their tenets of commitment and stability are valorised on the one hand. On the other hand he draws on discourses of gay male relationships as transient and constructs them as unfulfilling[14]. Here we can see how discourses of monogamy, gender and gay male sexuality intersect to produce constructions of violence, as something that is tolerable when compared to the instability of not having a partner (Holloway, 1984). Constructing monogamy in this way allows the participant to position himself in the feminine half of a gendered binary from which he can make sense of experiences of violence in his past relationship. From this vantage point certain heteronormative discourses of monogamy, historically associated with Christian ideals about partnership and family (Holloway, 1984) are upheld by beliefs that a woman is incomplete without a man. This implies that it is better to have a man, even an abusive one, than to be alone. Being alone for Tumi is constructed as a form of failure. These discourses also prescribe a particular practice for those adopting the feminine position, that is, that she must stand by her man and strive hard to keep him. Tumi recalls in other parts of his interview how striving for commitment was his task alone, for his boyfriend often had affairs. Tumi thereby positions himself as the 'good wife' in monogamous discourses who disapproves but tolerates her partner's unfaithful practices. In this way the 'work' that must be done to ensure monogamy falls unequally on the 'feminine' partner and further reflects heteropatriarchal asymmetries in Tumi's relationship. What is highly significant about Tumi's valorisation of love, is that given the discussion in the previous section about his material independence, that he was financially supporting his violent partner, 'true love' becomes even more salient in his constructions of IPV. For Tumi, love appears more important than material necessity and this is exemplified in his choosing love over violence.

[14] The assumption that gay male relationships are brief, uncommitted or comprising multiple partners is commonplace in heteronormative discourses though more recently authors have challenged its dominance by exploring the rise of gay adoption, consensual non-monogamy, polyamory and alternative kinship ties afforded through these (Stacey, 2005)

In Extract 15, IPV is mainstreamed as part and parcel of an intimate relationship. It is as if the depth of love can only be understood if it is expressed through violence. This construction aligns with what many feminist researchers have uncovered in womens' talk about abusive relationships where love is constructed as a symbolic battleground (Jackson, 1991, 1993, Towns & Adams, 2000, Wood, 2001). Wood (2001) refers to similar constructions of violence as drawing on a 'dark romance' discourse. Unlike a fairy-tale romance discourse in which everything is 'perfect', a dark romance discourse constructs violence as typical in romantic relationships. Abuse is not a reason to leave. Here the participant is positioned as the heroine who must sacrifice a lot to make the relationship work no matter what. Under such romantic discourses it is natural for women to suffer and endure pain in the name of love (Jackson, 1993). When love is constructed as a battleground then endurance of IPV becomes valorised. It is as if the violence is something that Tumi can help his partner overcome by loving him enough (Towns & Adams, 2000). This discourse aligns closely with that of emphasised femininity (Conell, 1995), where the position ascribed to the woman is that of selflessness and nurturance. In this talk then, the valorisation of violence provides a normative framework for love. As highlighted above with regards to the valorisation of monogamy, the valorisation of violence as a conduit to love makes it difficult to leave the relationship. Furthermore, responsibility for 'making it work' is shifted to the 'feminised' partner who must persist in her attempts to secure the love of her partner. There's is also a promise of better times in the future that bolsters a construction of current violence as tolerable. In such a positioning gendered difference is constituted, despite the relationship consisting of two men, and the unequal power relations that are imbedded in that difference are perpetuated.

The maintenance of gendered power relations does not only take place in the context of intimate relationships. Importantly for critical discourse analysis is that this also takes place in institutions. This finding matches those in the gay IPV literature that describe victims who are reluctant to report to homophobic authorities for fear of discrimination (Pattavina, Hirschel, Buzawa, Faggiani & Bently,

2007). Wandile recalls gender pejorative stereotyping by the Police when discussing his friend's attempts to report IPV.

Wandile, Extract 16

1. I What kind of jokes do they (the police) make?
2. P Like, 'Come see there's a lady here at the front desk. She's here to report a crime about her boyfriend'
3. And when the other one comes he'll say 'where's the lady?' 'There!' 'No I see a man.' And you know
4. stuff like. And its humiliating cos you know the front desk there's a lot of people there and you tend to
5. be joke of the day.

Mike, Extract 17

I would never go to the police as a gay man and say I was beaten up in a relationship because the police will shun it, they will look down on it they wont do anything about it.

Here the Police construct IPV as only possible within a heterosexual relationship by mockingly referring to the gay male complainant as a lady. Furthermore they make a public spectacle of the complainant so that the process of reporting IPV as a crime becomes a thoroughly dehumanising event. This incident exemplifies how the deployment of heterosexist IPV discourses take away the rights of gay men to speak by preventing the reporting of it. Following the ridicule the complainant left the station without laying a charge, and a discouraging ripple effect carried through to others, such as Wandile, who recalled the story as a reason why he would never go to the Police to report IPV. Mike also airs his poor faith in the Police in Extract 17. In this way heterosexist IPV discourses perpetuate themselves as the only way to understand IPV by silencing other understandings. By not laying charges, evidence of gay IPV is not formalised in Police records so Police can continue to construct gay IPV as non-existent. It is troubling that the impossibility of gay IPV happens at the intersections of the criminal justice system despite progressive legislation to the contrary. Not only is discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation unconstitutional in South Africa, more specifically for IPV, there exists the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 (RSA, 1998). This a far reaching piece of legislation that criminalises all forms of IPV across a wide range of relationships previously not protected by the law, such as persons in same-sex relationships, dating relationships and the elderly. This points to a discrepancy between legislation and implementation exposing an area where meaningful community intervention can take place.

Massoud (2003), writing on the 'evolution' of gay rights in South Africa, argues that South Africa's progressive constitution, which came into effect in 1996, did not reflect the attitudes of most conservative South Africans who did not support gay rights. "The government created a gap between its tolerant laws and the conservative social attitudes of its citizens (p. 301)". These citizens include law enforcers, who are subject to heterosexist discourse, for example the Police personnel encountered by Wandile in Extract 16 above. Heterosexist discourse on violence renders IPV that takes place outside of heterosexual, binarised relationships invisible. Gay IPV exists as a potential category in legal codes however this is not taken seriously by law enforcers because there is no space for thinking about IPV without male perpetrators and female victims. Hence the progressive law becomes unenforceable. A similar argument can be made about the scant prosecution of other crimes that lay outside mainstream discursive constraints such as marital rape. Despite being illegal in may countries there nevertheless exists a discourse of invalidation around marital rape such that marital rape is not counted as 'real' rape (Bennice & Resick, 2003). In their review of the marital rape literature, Bennice & Resick (2003) demonstrate that as the victim-offender relationship becomes more intimate, the likelihood that the incident counts as rape decreases, attribution of blame to the victim increases, and the level of perceived harm decreases. These authors chart several overlapping discourses that make it difficult for marital rape to be taken seriously. These include; the perception that 'real' rape is stranger rape, spousal issues are private issues, religious discourses that sanction the provision of sex for their husbands as being a 'wifely duty' and male sex drive discourses wherein men have an overpowering need for sex and hence forced sex in marriage is due to the withholding of sex by wives. These discourses are significant because they can affect law enforcers', juries' and policy makers' beliefs and practices (Monson, Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Binderup, 2000). Given this, there is often a reluctance to acknowledge the spouse who is raped as a victim. Those who have reported their rape have found the Police to be unresponsive (Bergen, 1996). In discursive terms, marital rape is difficult to enforce because people don't believe that the spouse who is raped is a 'real' victim. Without language that clearly delineates clear victim-perpetrator subject positions it is difficult to conceptualize any act as violent. This

highlights the importance of conscientising people about violence that takes place in places where it is not thought possible and provides scope for the mobilization of community intervention.

4.3 Resisting victimhood

Participants agreed to take part in a study about 'violence in gay male relationships' and were therefore obliged, according to the confines of the discourses on violence, to declare that the violence predominantly took place *against* them by their partner. This automatically places them in a victim position, and from this position sense was made of their violent experiences. This position however was often contested; arguably because belonging to the social category of 'men' allows participants to choose to what extent they enact or resist the position of victim (Wetherell & Edley, 1999), a position traditionally reserved for women. 'As a cultural category, the victim is related to weakness, passivity and suffering (Andersson, 2008)', so it is likely that this is seen as an undesirable position that participants would not choose for themselves. Participants used several means of resistance. In the following extract Ryan suggests that certain kinds of violence between gay men are acceptable, natural and erotic.

Ryan, Extract 18

1. P But even hitting each other I think is a really within a kind of. Maybe it's like a Spartan or Greek kind of
2. thing of being in in in a violent situation. Even being in a time of violence. And finding love within
3. that. I think there's always you know and like I said with the sex part. Its um, passionate sex and
4. aggression. There is the thin line. And I think maybe, not all women, but a lot of women, or a
5. stereotypical woman do not associate sex with violence. Lets just say stereotypically. Where we possibly do. I'm not saying. Stereotypically again.
6. I You're saying men?
7. P Men, gay men, find that kissing someone passionately against the wall, knocking them against the wall
8. is really quite entertaining. Gay sex in prisons, really entertaining, really violent. I suppose rape scenes
9. in movies, gay rape scenes are like my favourite scenes because its like that emotional kind of you
10. know, torturing someone to the point of you know, its sexy for some reason for a lot of people. Me
11. included and I think that violence is part of human nature. I think if you have a healthy relationship
12. with it, it would be better.

In this extract Ryan's interpretive repertoire seems to be strongly influenced by a male-aggression discourse. This discourse takes as its primary tenet that because

men tend to be physically stronger than women, violence must therefore be an innately male characteristic; or at the very least, something which should be viewed with greater acceptance and sympathy when expressed by men (Whitehead & Barret, 2001). Ryan then fortifies the legitimacy of the male aggression discourse by constructing it as a product of deeper historically bound gladiatorial discourses. In these there is a sense of a deepening brotherhood, that men had to sweat, fight and bleed together in order to *become closer*. The intersection of these discourses serves to link violence to intimacy. In doing so violence is rendered desirable. This is partly achieved through drawing on discourses of intimacy. In popular discourse, intimacy tends to be enshrined as a highly desirable goal that naturally develops over time in successful romantic relationships (Gaia, 2002; Moss & Schwebel, 1993). To aide the development of intimacy, experts [15] recommend that couples must maintain physical closeness, such as through a sexual relationship, engaging in mutual disclosure and appreciating each other's unique qualities (Jamieson, 1993). Therefore, in Ryan's talk, discourses of violence and intimacy overlap, casting the former in a desirable light. Ryan's account goes a step further by enlisting a further discourse. He constructs aggression as erotic and normative between gay men. Gay sex is seen as rough sex, as something that needs to be conquered. Thus an overlapping male sex drive discourse (Holloway, 1984) is also evoked which suggests that men's sexuality is based on a biological drive, is uncontrollable and implies aggressiveness in the form of pursuit. Holloway (1984) argues that in dominant masculine discourses concerning heterosexual relationships, it is not unusual for men to substitute sex for intimacy so as to mask their own 'needs'[16] for it. To admit to a need would place the man in a vulnerable position in relation to their partner. This would contradict Ryan's efforts to resist victimhood. Instead he conforms to hegemonic codes of masculinity and talks about sex and violence. For critical feminists this talk could be seen as perpetuating subtle forms of patriarchy. Critical feminist analyses of intimacy

[15] A wide range of popular advice is available on how to attain intimacy on television and the internet. For example T.V. clinical psychologist Dr Phill McGraw advises on how to rekindle intimacy http://drphil.com/articles/article/59.

[16] Those who analyse intimacy as discourse itself interrogate the idea of 'needing' intimacy as a social construct.

discourses argue that intimacy is a historically bound construct that serves patriarchal ends in that women are expected to do the bulk of the 'intimacy work' in heterosexual romantic relationships (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993). By investing in intimacy discourses women spend significant amounts of time and energy pursuing the ideological, and frequently unrealizable, goal of intimacy. Under this view intimacy work, or emotional work, is othered as feminine and so is unlikely to feature within hegemonic codes of masculinity. Instead violence is used which, while carrying a more masculine social status, perpetuates the notion that men, in this case gay men, cannot do intimacy work, thereby re-inscribing the patriarchal underpinnings of intimacy discourses. In the final analysis IPV is produced as a fulcrum upon which intimacy can bind two gay men.

Tumi makes a similar positive association between sex and violence in the extract below. He too found violence erotic.

Tumi, Extract 19

So I guess there's also that that thing that shows oh he's testosterone, there's adrenaline, it just becomes sexual. Yeah .. but not if you're lying down not being able to move ha ha ha.

Tumi first naturalises aggression for men along biological lines, emphasising hormones, which is in line with male-aggression discourses before eroticising aggression or masculinity as aggression. These extracts are not to suggest that these participants took sexual pleasure out of being beaten, as evidenced in line 2 of Extract 19, ' but not if you're lying down unable to move' and 'the thin line' in line 4 of Extract 18 implying a boundary between how much violence is permissible. Rather these discursive links allow the participants to position themselves as active subjects within a historically based, naturalised, male sex drive and male aggressive drive discourses thereby resisting the position of 'cowering, powerless victim' prescribed in dominant discourses of violence.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity could also be usefully employed here as a way that gay men who are typically marginalised in heterosexist discourses can lay claim to aspirational masculine ideals by virtue of their gender so as to strategically

resist being constructed as a victim. The 'virile male' can be seen as an aspirational subject position implicated in male sex drive discourses. Indeed many writers have highlighted how men boast of their sexual 'conquests' in order to bolster their masculine image (Kimmel, 1997; Szasz, 1998). These narratives, usually involving accounts of sex with women, further serve to shore up an idealised masculine image by distancing themselves from homosexuality, which is something hegemonic masculine codes fiercely proscribe. What we see in the above extracts however is a use of the 'virile male' position by gay male participants while talking about gay sex. In this way both Tumi and Ryan align themselves with hegemonic subjectivities. It is as if despite possible negative material consequences, they can't help being drawn to aggressive sexual practices because they too are men. Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue that self-positioning among hegemonic masculine codes is something people can negotiate depending on their interactional needs. At times people may adopt hegemonic codes, at other times they may distance themselves from such codes. For the participants above, there was on the one hand a need to denounce IPV as morally reprehensible in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee on a study on IPV. Tumi remarked at the start of the interview that his motivation for taking part in the study was to prevent IPV incidence among other young gay men. To this end IPV had to be constructed as destructive. On the other hand there is a desire to resist the negative self-image associated with victimhood, to justify choosing an abusive partner and to rationalise why they remained with that partner for so long[17]. To these ends the pursuit of hegemonic masculinity is mobilised. The following section explores further the notion of 'choosing' violence.

Another way that some participants in the study resisted being cast as victims was by highlighting their agency by in some ways constructing violence a choice they made willingly.

[17] Recall the implicit victim blaming discourses in IPV of 'Why victims stay' in section 4.2

Tumi, Extract 20

1. P I've always had this thing, even growing up, and with my friends that I was into bad boys
2. I m hm
3. P So he was a bad boy (giggle) because he had this mean streak about him and everybody else thought
4. 'eagh! that one' 'he's always fighting', and I thought 'ah perfect'.

Being attracted to bad boys also draws on male sex drive discourses. When employed in a typical heteronormative way the 'woman' in this discourse passively waits to be 'taken' by a predatory man (Holloway, 1984). Instead Tumi positions himself as the active subject who does the choosing according to his own sexual 'drives'. Furthermore, Tumi, framing his actions as unpopular, describes how 'everybody else' disapproved of his partner precisely because he had a history of getting into fights and thus signified danger. In this sense it can be argued that Tumi's choice of partner constituted the taking of a risk. Several researchers have analysed risk-taking behaviour in men as being part of hegemonic masculinity (Sedite, Bowman & Clowes, 2010). In this light Tumi's choice falls within the pursuit of hegemonic masculinity and IPV is constructed as a risk or challenge in the same way an extreme sport would be.

Ryan makes a more controversial claim regarding the physical violence directed at him. He constructs it as something that he wanted.

Ryan, Extract 21

> And I think for me he was kind of a cathartic, I think there was something in that release. Maybe it was like a drug and that could have been something that was fun for me and an addictive personality so I'm saying there's always an exchange kind of in a way. I wouldn't be like, 'Oh no it's not my fault.' I was wanting something. If it's a punch what does that mean to me. So I see it that way. And it might be difficult for some people to believe that. I I don't wanna change peoples beliefs. But that's how I see it and I'm pretty comfortable with the violence that occurred. Not I'm pretty like, I've moved on. I'm happy. It was a time in my life that's over now.

Here violence is produced as a symbiotic social exchange. The participant gains something positive out of it. Violence is not just something done 'to' him against his will. One of the payoffs of violence is catharsis, which aligns to certain (psychologised) discursive practices such as the expressive use of violence (O'Niell, 1998) to release pent up emotions. This ties into traditional masculine discourses

that suggest that men are incapable of expressing emotions, which implies that violence is therefore necessary to accomplish this task. Perpetrators of IPV often describe their abusive actions as an accumulation of frustration, a temporary loss of control, or as unstoppably volcanic (Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2004; Andersson & Umberson, 2001). Martiens constructs IPV as a build up of pent up emotions.

Martiens, Extract 22 and 23

I'm very hectic when it comes to certain things. Um when I get frustrated I get snappy. And you know it develops and it becomes aggro. Up until the point that it becomes a little bit of abuse etcetera. So um, so that pattern basically continued.

I don't know the abuse might have been due to emotions not being able to talk about it and being bottled up and I didn't know how to talk about it.

Such modes of explanation often serve to justify, minimise or reduce responsibility for the violent partner's actions. What is interesting is that when Ryan (Extract 21) employed this discourse, he reverses the prescribed subject positions associated with this way of constructing violence. Instead of his boyfriend gaining cathartic release through inflicting violence upon him, he is gaining cathartic release by being its recipient (line 1). This manoeuvre functions to replace the position of victim with that of a voluntary receiver.

Ryan demonstrates awareness that he is transgressing the constraints of the discourse when he flouts prescribed subject positions. For example he softens the assertion that there is 'always an exchange' with 'kind of' and 'in a way' and also by saying that some people will find his views difficult to hear. Previous attempts to challenge the position of 'victim' in the IPV literature by women (Frith & Kitzinger, 1998; Gavey, 1999; Profitt, 2000) or suggesting a bi-directionality of violence (Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohlling, 1994) have been met with concern from some feminist writers who fear that this reconstruction would diminish the severity of other victims' experience and play into the hands of perpetrators who are interested in deflecting culpability. There is no easy solution to this dilemma. The critical project of this study is to uncover the various ways gay men construct violence in their

intimate relationships so as to produce a more nuanced view of violence that goes beyond heterosexist ideologies. In that respect, including examples where victims do not construct themselves as victims is important. A discourse of 'violence as chosen', in part, produces a subject who is in control, who wields a share of the power and can command social respect by aligning his subjectivity with hegemonic forms of masculinity. Furthermore producing IPV as cathartic justifies violence in the register of psychology. The same language that is used in perpetrators' constructions of IPV to minimise culpability, is reversed and used by gay 'victims' to minimise powerlessness.

Another way participants resisted the position of victim was by constructing violence as unintimidating.

Mike, Extract 24

1.P And I'm thinking like now there's a hole in my head and as I pulled my head up he did it again and said
2. why aren't you bleeding?
3. I It must have been like really terrifying.
4. P Terrif- I didn't have fear or anything then. I had fear of, if my parents had found out or any of my close
5. friends had found out.

Mike claims the horrific experience he has narrated in Extract 24 was not personally scary at the time, instead fear of social stigma by way of other people's reactions were more fearful for him. It might seem unusual for Mike to report that he did not experience fear while having his head repeatedly bashed by his violent partner however in light of resisting the subject position of victim, it would make sense to draw on hegemonic masculine codes of fearlessness. In relation to fearlessness and sport Messner (1992) writes that young men exhibit fearlessness in the face of physical confrontations and accept the harm associated with violence as 'natural' injury. It is often argued that many hegemonic codes of masculinity caution men to hide the expression of vulnerability so as not to appear weak (Goodey, 1997). This has already been evidenced in the present analysis whereby participants' aspirations to hegemonic masculinity involved highlighting their agency and resisting victim positions. In a similar thread to the use of hegemonic masculinity in interaction, Sattel (1992) argues that reporting of fearlessness can constitute an intentional

manipulation of situations where threats to ones masculinity occur. “Boys can actively decide not to offer their feelings of fear and vulnerability to each other (and their mothers, girlfriends etc.), in order to retain some semblance of control and power in relation to others (p. 354)”. In this light Mike’s report that he didn’t feel fear when being beaten compliments the argument that he is drawing on hegemonic codes of ‘fearless’ masculinity to assume a more powerful position in relation to his violent partner, which serves to diminish the undesirable position of victim. While presenting himself in a more favorable light however, fearlessness can function to prolong time spent in the violent relationship, increasing the likelihood of personal harm. Others have argued that mens’ fearless ‘bravado’ actually puts them at greater risk of injuries, both physical and emotional (Messner, 1992). In terms of gay IPV, constructing IPV as not scary, further perpetuates the myth that IPV between men does not have to be taken too seriously because as ‘men’ they can handle the “not-too-scary” violence. This could be a contributing factor in reducing the visibility of gay IPV in public health data and crime statistics.

This completes the analysis section of the report. Having looked at the various ways that gay men in this study constructed IPV and how these relate to discourses of gender and of violence as well as the ensuing implications, an attempt to synthesize and extend upon these is made in the concluding section of the report.

5 Conclusion

The results of this study go some way towards providing a richer understanding of gay intimate partner violence. Social activists and critical writers have highlighted a frightening ‘silence’ on the subject of gay intimate partner violence and this study has been able to elucidate several modes by which discourses intersect to construct gay IPV as ‘not violence’, normative, unharmful, unintimidating, ‘anti-gay’, erotic, cathartic and intimate. Rooted in constructions of gender and sexuality, the gay men interviewed for this study, automatically problematized, to some extent, the constraints of a discourse that constructs IPV as an exclusively heterosexual

phenomenon. However, the discursive repertoires employed in these gay mens' constructions of intimate partner violence were nonetheless often over-determined by the heterosexist structures upon which scientific and popular discourses of IPV are based. This finding corresponds to several preceding studies and they carry important implications for power relations in society. However, there were some novel differences in the results of this study.

Some participants did not seem to have any difficulty in aligning themselves with mainstream discourses of IPV. These gay men replicated hetero-patriarchal subject positions within their own intimate relationships. In its most literal exemplars the abusive partner was described as 'masculine' and the abused partner as 'feminine'. Under this configuration IPV was constructed as part of a 'normal' relationship. Being a normal, even expected element of a heterosexualised gay relationship meant that there was no need to talk about it, and this illustrated the first way that gay IPV is silenced. Constructions of IPV as normative also functioned to justify participants remaining in their violent relationships, as they felt powerless to do otherwise. This evokes a pervasive discourse of victim blaming that is commonly levelled against women in heterosexual IPV literature. As a counterpoint some participants constructed IPV as taboo at work and among their friends. These constructions reflected that violence was socially unacceptable in some contexts. Gay relationships for example were constructed in the literature, and by some participants, as utopian, celebratory, violence–free spaces. While occupying a space where violence is unacceptable appears favourable compared to one where violence is normative, it nevertheless prevented participants from openly disclosing that violence was being inflicted upon them. Thus this second mechanism behind the silencing of gay IPV stands in a negative relationship to the very understanding of violence as pervasive and damaging.

An interesting complexity was introduced when the heteropatriarchal expectation of 'man as breadwinner' was disrupted. In this scenario two forms of power, material and symbolic, came into conflict and in such instances violence was justified as a form of resistance to 'emasculation'. It appeared that similar constructions appear in

heterosexual IPV literature whereby violence is used when hegemonic masculine codes come under threat, however there was a sense that IPV as response to a disruption of heteropatriarchy was less reprehensible in the context of two men because heterosexist discourses are more tolerant of violence between them. In summary, the replication of heteropatriarchal subject positions show how IPV is made visible through binarised, asymmetrical gender relations. Continuing in this theme, heteropatriarchy was evidenced in a repertoire of discourses on love and romance that romanticised IPV. Some accounts idealised monogamy and commitment with participants choosing to remain in their abusive relationships in pursuit of these goals despite the occurrence of violence. This position was contrasted with a portrayal of 'typical' 'un-monogamous' gay relationships as transient and un-fulfilling. Other participants drew on a dark romance discourse in which IPV was constructed as a normative framework for love. Under this construction the abusive partner as 'prince' necessarily has a dark side that must be endured. Here love is represented as a battleground and IPV thus becomes valorised. The discourses in this section placed gay men in the subordinate position of a heterosexualised dyad similar to one in which women often find themselves. The ideological repercussions correspond to feminist critiques of patriarchy in which the feminine is consistently subjugated. Gay participants had to endure the 'normative' instantiations of violence, were responsible for all the emotional work in their relationships, and had to negate their economic superiority or face the physical consequences. This is highly significant because despite occupying the category of 'men', some gay men are as affected by gendered power asymmetries as women are and therefore it is important for gay IPV to be given equal status in public health policies.

It was not always possible for participants to neatly align themselves with heteropatriarchal discourses. Several extracts showed that participants found it difficult to locate their experiences within a heterosexist male perpetrator/female victim dichotomy. These extracts demonstrated how difficult it is for some gay men to construct IPV as something that applies to their relationships with other men. As a result many experiences that would fall under mainstream definitions of violence,

did not count as such in the eyes of participants and instead were coloured by psychologised discourses such as repression. Acts that were initially unacknowledged were only later (both in real time and the interview) constructed as violence and only after this reconstruction could the participants rationalise ending the relationship. This discursive grouping can be viewed as a third means by which gay IPV is silenced in the literature. If violence is repressed, then it is not available to speak about. This reflects the discursive formations embedded within scientific constructions of IPV as an exclusively heterosexual practice. This was also evident in the last discursive grouping that resisted the victim position such that the victim perpetrator positions required for violence lost logic and coherence.

Victim status comes with many negative connotations and, is also found to be resisted by women in a small portion of heterosexual IPV literature (Jackson, 2001; Kitzinger & Thomas, 1995; Gavey, 1999)[18]. It was anticipated that gay men, by virtue of hegemonic codes of masculinity, would find victimhood even less desirable and therefore would endeavour to exercise their agency in choosing alternate subject positions. Indeed a variety of means were deployed to articulate this resistance. IPV was described as natural and acceptable. In contrast to violence as taboo in gay relationships, some participants eroticised violence and constructed it as normative between gay men invoking historically bound, naturalised discourses of male aggression, male sex drive and gladiatorial combat. These discourses overlapped to produce a version of IPV as a fulcrum upon which intimacy could bind two gay men. While carrying a more masculine social status, and serving the function of resistance to victim status, the notion that violence is necessary to 'accomplish' intimacy perpetuates the notion that men, in this case gay men, cannot do intimacy work, thereby re-inscribing the patriarchal underpinnings of intimacy discourses. This corresponds to feminist critique of masculinity, that masculinity cannot be used discursively without exercising forms of oppression because it is based on asymmetry that always requires a subordinate feminine other (Schippers, 2007). In

[18] An alternate, more empowering, though not 'new' term of 'survivor' has been used in heterosexual IPV (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988).

this case, intimacy is womens' work. Some participants highlighted their agency by pointing out how they intentionally chose their violent partners based on their partner's aggressive characteristics, rather than passively waiting to be chosen. This construction drew on discourses of risk-taking because the danger surrounding the abusive partner seemed apparent *before* they entered the relationship and instead of being a deterrent, was rather constructed as thrilling. Another interesting construction was of IPV as 'symbiotic exchange' in which one participant in this study asserted that he benefited from IPV through cathartic release. Again gendered discourses were invoked but through an interesting reversal. Ordinarily, the understanding that it is natural for men to be unable to express emotions is used to justify perpetrators' use of violence. Instead the participants in this study described being beaten as a cathartic experience for himself for he too was experiencing an intolerable build up of emotion, which he was unable to release in other ways. In this way his position of victim changes to 'voluntary receiver', an important formulation resulting from this study and one, which certainly merits further research. Lastly, an effective way to reject an image of the cowering, helpless victim was to construct IPV as 'unscary' by drawing on hegemonic codes of fearless masculinity.

The participants' efforts to resist victimhood raises an important question: can violence exist without victims? It would seem outwardly that it is very difficult to think about any practice as violent without clear, gendered, asymmetrical, victim-perpetrator roles. Indeed gay men who resist the position of victim can be seen as a fourth mechanism through which gay IPV is silenced. The discursive logic that follows is that: "I'm not a victim, therefore this cannot be violence, therefore there is nothing to disclose". There is no easy answer to this question. Classic psychological formulations on those who don't see themselves as victims may suggest that the 'victim' is in denial. Rape researchers have referred to those who do not label their rape experiences as 'unacknowledged victims' and then sought other means of *proving* that these subjects really are victims such as by measuring their trauma symptoms (Littleton & Henderson, 2009). This seems to reflect a fear held by some feminist authors, that diminishing the status of 'victim' could dilute other victims' experience and make it easier for perpetrators to escape blame. It is not within the

scope of discourse analysis to think about underlying truths, rather the analysis as a whole has demonstrated that discourses need particular kinds of configurations in order to make sense and violence needs a victim and it needs a perpetrator. When these are problematized the concept of violence itself becomes increasingly unintelligible.

Hegemonic masculinity in this analysis serves to link patriarchal power systems with gay men's actual agentic choices in relation to their constructions of IPV. Aspirational codes of masculinity were treated as positions subjects chose in particular contexts and not others. Constructions of IPV cannot therefore be separated from hegemonic heteropatriarchal discourses of masculinity. As a form of discourse however, masculinity in all its forms reflects wider systems of power that become taken-for-granted such that subjects act apparently without coercion. Many of the participants located their constructions of IPV within broader institutional repertoires. References to scientific discourses were shown to produce gendered, binarised subject positions of victim and perpetrator that were inherently heterosexist in that they excluded a possibility for gay IPV. More than identifying this configuration of intersecting discourses, my analysis also demonstrated how these subject positions influenced the way gay men made sense of IPV. A very precise instantiation of this was the use of psychological language to construct IPV in many extracts. A closer look at psychology's influence on social phenomena such as IPV allowed for an exploration of the productive nature of discourse and its links to governmentality and systems of power. Specifically, the conditions for the language of perpetrator and victim, catharsis and repression are all availed to the participants via the diffusion of psychological discourse. The very material consequences of this availability were evident in some participants' wholesale construction of anti-depressants and therapy as the most powerful means for addressing the almost inescapable aftermath of violent abuse.

Constructions of gay IPV are inextricably bound by mainstream and scientific discourses of violence, whether closely aligning to them, attempting to resist them or occupying a space on the margins in relation to them. All of these formations can

result in gay IPV being silenced. As 'normative' gay IPV is unremarkable, as 'taboo' it is consciously hidden, as 'repressed' it is unconsciously hidden, and when victim status is rejected then it is unclear whether gay IPV constitutes violence at all. What is important to note is that these come with important implications. Firstly it is very difficult to seek help and be seen as requiring help both by the person being abused and by those around them. Many participants in this study remained in their self-identified abusive relationships for longer than they would have because of this difficulty. This undoubtedly suits the interests of the violent partner who can continue inflicting IPV knowing implicitly that their practices are sanctioned by a range of supportive heterosexist discourses. In other extracts, IPV was minimised such that state institutions of public health or the Police failed to recognise gay IPV resulting in fewer material benefits for gay men than for heterosexuals who experience IPV. Considering the appalling instances of institutionalised heterosexism narrated by participants at the hands of the Police, where a gay man was publicly ridiculed while trying to report gay IPV, this call for gay IPV to be taken seriously is long overdue. Despite progressive laws to the contrary, conservative attitudes still remain strong among law enforcers. These are influenced by mainstream discourses of IPV that allow no space for thinking about IPV without male perpetrators and female victims. Herein lies the crux of this critical project. History has shown that previously unthinkable social phenomena such as domestic violence, corporal punishment and marital rape have come, with varying degrees of success, to be mainstreamed in popular discourse. This has resulted in material benefits such as access to justice for those who have suffered. This study joins this body of research in demonstrating precisely how particular forms of violence are produced under specific forms of interlinking discourses. In so doing it demonstrates just what configurations of discourse are required for violence to become 'thinkable' at all. This is important because in surfacing the discursive mechanics of IPV, such a category of violence becomes available to those that may identify their experiences as such. Finally, this study implies at least the beginnings of evidence-based advocacy for understanding gay IPV as a practice that is worth taking seriously.

5.1 Limitations

The current study is exploratory. There appeared to be no previous research on the way gay men draw on or resist scientific and popular IPV discourses in thier own constructions of IPV. Much data was gained from in-depth interviews with 6 gay men however interviewing more participants could potentially shed yet more light onto the discursive nature of IPV.

The method of using interview data to 'capture' discourse is perhaps not ideal as the interviewer has a part in constructing the narrative. More efforts to compliment the data set with other sources of discourse would have been beneficial.

In an attempt to foreground heterosexist discursive practices *in action*, gender asymmetry necessarily became a focus. Alternate important foci such as race and class could have also been highlighted. Initially it was believed that attaining participants would be very difficult and so concerted attempts to source participants from underprivileged backgrounds or to source specific numbers of participants from different 'racial' groups was not undertaken. The sampling procedure however proved effective. After the research had been completed participants were still volunteering to take part. Thus the inclusion criteria may be narrowed in future research.

5.2 Recommendations

The aim of this study was to politicise gay IPV beyond heterosexist ideologies. The premise was that if mainstream discourses posit that IPV is a heterosexual, gendered male to female phenomena then how would conventional understandings of violence accommodate for it in gay intimate relationships? Based on the findings it seems that interventions strategies need to be geared toward visibilising gay IPV so as to counteract the idea that IPV doesn't exist in gay relationships. If people were more aware of how common gay IPV is they would be more open to talking about it.

Interventions should take cognisance of the fact that many gay men may choose to distance themselves from the position of victim in pursuit of hegemonic masculine

aspirations and so a middle ground could be to borrow from heterosexual IPV's reframing of victim as 'survivor', someone who has actively done everything right, for they are still alive. Given that participants' constructions of IPV were often bound up in gender, interventions that target the breaking down of specific discourses such as 'bravery' may reach more gay men. For example a man confessing that he was embarrassed to tell anyone because he was a 'man' may appeal to some who do not consider their experiences as IPV.

This research will help garner attention and support to get gay IPV onto national and regional health policy agendas so that it is taken as seriously as IPV in other relationships. A recommendation is to conduct a thorough prevalence study in South Africa however, to more clearly delineate the extent of gay IPV without relying so heavily on overseas, particularly U.S. statistics.

It is useful to highlight the implications of heteropatriarchy and gender asymmetry within gay mens' violent relationships so as to demonstrate the links with other groups who oppose heteropatriarchy. This research has shown that much of the same power relations are at play regardless of the sexuality of the couple and that advocating for gay IPV is not necessarily distilling the effects of patriarchal systems of power. More research is needed if oppressive mainstream conceptualisations of violence are to be challenged.

In a very real sense, this analysis of the construction of violence has attempted to interrogate the frequently cited risk factors for violence uncovered by 'black box' epidemiology. The study has demonstrated that gender-as-risk-factor for IPV operates in complex ways and is *always* related to forms of power. In this sense the contents of these boxes show how discourses intertwine with subjects to produce at times predictable, at times novel and at times highly complex constructions of IPV. In doing so this study compliments the small but growing body of literature that seeks to politicise gay IPV beyond its heterosexist applications.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Good Day,

My Name is Yolan Moodley. I am conducting research as part of a Masters degree in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to interview men about their experiences and views around violence in their past intimate relationships. The interview will take about an hour long and will take place in my office at the university, at a time convenient to you. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Should you agree to participate, I will conduct the interviews myself. I will be able to hear your story with the utmost sensitivity and care. With your permission the interviews will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy of data collected. I will be the only person who listens to the recording and I will be the only person who listens to the recording and it will be kept in a password protected file on the researcher's laptop until the research is complete when it will be erased. Anonymous transcripts will also be kept in the same secure location for five years, as they may be needed for research publications. Your identity will be kept secret. That means that nobody except myself will know your identity and that I will not use your name anywhere on transcriptions of the interviews or in the research report. While questions do ask you to report and reflect on your experiences no personal information that will identify you will be used. At the end of the study a one-page summary of the results will be made available to participants upon request. I will also write a report that will be available at the university library and may be published in academic journals.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may also choose not to answer any question at any point. There are no risks in participating in this study, apart from possible distress upon talking about past experiences. If you should find yourself distressed I can refer you to the Sophiatown Counselling agency. I have a close relationship with them and they are happy to see people from this study. They are experienced with LGBTI issues and issues of violence. I can fill out the intake form for you at the end of the interview and a counsellor will contact you within 24 hours. Alternatively you may call any one of the free counselling services listed below. If you would like to discuss the research further feel free to contact me.

Kind Regards,

Yolan Moodley (Researcher) phone: 0825611848 email: yolan@yolan.co.za

Counselling services:

Sophiatown Counselling Agency (in-person, free)	researcher will contact on your behalf
South African Depression and Anxiety Group (telephone counselling, free)	(011) 262 6396
Lifeline Johannesburg (telephone and in-person, free)	(011) 728 1347
Emthonjeni Centre Wits (In-person, Sliding Scale)	(011) 717 4513

7.2 Appendix B: Consent form (Interview)

Consent Form (Interview)

I _____ consent to being interviewed by Yolan Moodley for his study on intimate partner violence in gay male relationships.

I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- I may refuse to answer any question I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time by instructing the researcher that I I would like my data deleted from the database.
- No information that may identify me will be included in this research report and my responses will remain confidential.
- There are unlikely to be any risks or benefits for participating in this study.
- Direct quotations from the interview will be used in the report.

Signed _____

Date _____

7.3

7.4 Appendix C: Consent form (Recording)

Consent Form (Recording)

I _____ consent to my interview being tape recorded by Yolan Moodley for his study on intimate partner violence in gay male relationships.

I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will only be seen or heard by Yolan Moodley and his supervisor.
- All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.
- My identity will be protected and tapes will be kept safely in a locked cupboard so that nobody has access to them.

Signed _____

Date _____

7.5 Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Explanation for interview:

This research is interested in gay men who have had some kind of experiences of violence in their intimate relations with other men.

1. Tell me about your experiences about this topic?

2. What else comes to mind when you think about this?

Possible prompts depending on what has already been mentioned

- Was there anything else that resulted in physical pain such as a bruise?
- What about being forced to do something you didn't want to/ forcing them to do something they didn't want to?
- Was there any emotional pain?
- How did you cope with the above?
- How long did this last?
- What did your partner have to say about it?
- Did anyone else know about it?
- What was their take on it?

- How do you make sense of … (however the participant talked about violent experiences) ?
  or How did you rationalise what was happening in your head?

3. What about other experiences in your past relationships? (use above prompts to expand description)

4. How are these experiences connected (if at all) to being a gay?

5. 4. How are these experiences connected (if at all) to being a man?

6.. What kind of reactions did you get from other people?

7. What do people in the LGBTI community think about this stuff?

8. Have you ever head of the term ‘intimate partner violence’ ? If so what do you know about it?

9. What about domestic violence? What comes to mind?