CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITIES UNDER ABUSIVE CONDITIONS

by

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This thesis is presented for a degree

Master of Arts by Research

The University of Western Australia,

Department of Anthropology

2003
Given the preponderant identification of men with aggression and women with victimization in western culture, how do men who are abused by women understand their masculinity? This study explores the question of how men construct and re-construct self-representations under conditions of abuse within a cultural framework. In Chapter 1, Introduction, I introduce the interdisciplinary theoretical approach and methodology. In my approach I have adopted social construction theory from Sociology of Knowledge; Cognitive Anthropology which applies psychological models to understanding culture and human behaviour; and Attachment Theory from Evolutionary Ecology. My methodology includes my having interviews with eleven men, who provided life history accounts from early childhood to adulthood. Of particular interest to this study are the self-representations these men provided of their masculinities in relation to being a victim in abusive situations with women as perpetrators. The ethnographic material collected is integrated throughout the study. In
Chapter 2, *Cognition and Attachment: A Perspective*, I provide a detailed explanation of the psychological models, in particular, schema theory and I explain how I have applied and integrated this theory into my study. The interrelationship between the *extrapersonal* world structures and *intrapersonal* mental structures, as explained by psychological anthropologists, are significant in understanding culture and human behaviour. I also present an outline of Attachment Theory and demonstrate its importance and relationship to schema theory and my work. In Chapter 3, *Defining Abuse*, I discuss abuse in relation to social construction theory and present various public and private definitions and perspectives of abuse. I look at how I understand the interrelationship between social constructions and schema and attachment theory. I explore this interrelationship with reference to the self-definitions and self-representations, as presented by the men who participated in this study. In Chapter 4, *Constructing Masculinities*, I present a range of approaches adopted in explaining and defining how masculinities are understood at both the public, and private levels. I explore these in relation to schema and attachment theory, and their cultural significance to the men in my study. In Chapter 5, *Reconstructing Masculinities of Men’s Experience of Abuse*, I discuss and reflect on the participants’ construction and reconstruction of their self-identity and self-representation before, during, and after the situations they described as abusive. I do this by examining the material I collected during interviews, looking for any shifts in self-definition and
self-representation. In Chapter 6, Conclusion, I present a brief overview. My analysis of the interviews conducted for the study suggests that the diverse and complex extrapersonal influences and experiences, inter-woven with the intrapersonal interpretation that occurs at the cognitive level, are significant in the construction and self-representation of masculinities under abusive conditions. As I understand the material, individuals make sense of their day-to-day experiences through schema – mental constructs - which are developed throughout the life cycle through the interaction and interrelationship of the public and private worlds. The cultural schemas men construct inform how, at the intrapersonal level, they self-re-construct and self-represent their masculinities under abusive conditions within the private and public arenas. My analysis also suggests that the attachment system, and the quality of infant attachments with primary caregivers, impacts on the self-construction of their “realities” and subsequent behavioural responses. Positive or negative attachment experiences during childhood impact on public and private constructions about relationships in later years with romantic love partners.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are born, so to speak, twice over; born into existence, and born into life; born a human being, and born a man...and this critical moment, short enough in itself, has far-reaching consequences.

Rousseau, Emile.

I dedicate this study to my husband Peter and my three children, Laura, Julian and Sarah.

I wish to acknowledge and thank all friends and colleagues who over the last six years have listened, supported and assisted me in the production of this thesis. To Dr. Charles Waddell for having faith in me in first place. To my supervisor, Associate Professor, Dr. Victoria Burbank, sincere thanks for her faith in me and her patience, guidance and assistance, both professionally and pastorally. I particularly appreciate and thank her for her honesty, sincerity and caring nature, all of which made my journey a stimulating, exciting, satisfying and safe passage. Dr. Burbank provided me with important intellectual stimulation and challenge. I also thank her for introducing me to cognitive anthropology. My appreciation goes to Dr. Michael Pinches as a second supervisor. I thank him for his professional guidance and support and readiness to make himself available whenever I needed and getting me over the line. I am also grateful to Associate Professor, Dr. Jim Chisholm for allowing me to attend some very stimulating post graduate discussions in the School of Human Biology and thereby introducing me to attachment theory. Many thanks go to Dr. David Indermaur, Director Crime Research Centre, for
his invaluable time and faith in the initial development of my study and now at
the end providing me with ideas and avenues to present my work. To Dr.
Cheryl Lange, sincere appreciation for her reading of my study with an
impeccable eye for detail, sensitivity, honesty and professionalism. Thanks to
Associate Professor David Morrison, Psychology for his friendship and frank
and sincere advice supporting me in bringing my work to fruition in the final
stages. Thanks to Professor Michael Levine for encouraging me to write.
Thank you to Jill Woodman who has known me as long as I have been in
association with the Anthropology Department for her experience and
administrative knowledge. Jill always knows which form to fill. I have
appreciated her kind words, her faith and encouragement in my work. To
Marianne Taylor for her on going administrative and collegial support and
ever ready smile. Thank you to my colleague, Frank Gemmiti for nurturing my
interest in attachment theory and providing moral support, particularly in the
latter stages of my work. Thanks also to Professor David Trigger for his faith,
direction and support. Overall to all my colleagues and friends in the
Anthropology Department who over the years have shared their own fears and
aspirations and have so patiently listened and supported my learnings. My
appreciation also goes to the Department of Family and Children’s Services
for providing me with information and statistical data. Thank you to Stuart
Hicks for encouraging me to stay with my “study of love” rather than go with
a “study of convenience”. To Ric Gornik and Bob Mitchell thanks for
listening at those times when thinking out loud was important to making
common sense of it all. Thanks to Terry Ancliffe who reminded me of the
importance of writing and sharing my findings and knowledge.
Unfortunately, I cannot name the eleven participants who shared some very sensitive and painful experiences with me providing me very rich ethnographic material without which this study would not have been possible. I learnt more than I imagined from your ethnographies – a sincere and heartfelt thank you to you all.

To Peter Jackson, my husband, friend and confidant who has been a tower of strength for me throughout, carrying more than his load with our children, encouraging me every bit of the way with absolute faith and trust. Thanks for allying my fears, apprehensions and self-doubts and nurturing my passion. I certainly could not have pursued this labour of love without your dedicated and ever trusting support.

Laura, Julian and Sarah, my beautiful children, thank you for understanding and helping mummy with her thesis. I will always remember the patter of your little feet making their way into the office in the early hours of the morning with “Good morning mummy. Are you working on your thesis?”

I hope I have not forgotten to acknowledge anyone. I want to also thank the many authors whose invaluable readings provided the intellectual stimulation and support in the production of this study. Finally, I want to give a special thanks to Professor Clayton Robarchek and Associate Professor David Buchbinder for their role as markers of my thesis, providing invaluable critical feedback and positive suggestions for improvement.
INTRODUCTION

There is a long tradition among anthropologists of including psychological approaches in their understanding of how human behaviour is shaped by culture. This is explained as occurring through human thought that has been impacted upon by life experience (D’Andrade 1995; D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; Strauss & Quinn 1997; Burbank 2000). Their aim is to come to a clearer, even though more complex understanding of human behaviour by investigating and analysing the relationship between extrapersonal world structures and intrapersonal\(^1\) mental structures (Strauss & Quinn 1997). It is this approach to cultural anthropology that takes my interest and has provided me with a set of tools, to assist me in interpreting the ethnographic data I have collected for this study.

In the process of understanding culture, within the context of the approach I have adopted, I pursue a similar line of thinking as that of D’Andrade (1995; 2001). I begin by adopting the definition of culture provided by Goodenough and used by D’Andrade (2001): ‘Culture [is located] in the minds and hearts of

\(^1\) Further ongoing and explanation and discussion of the extrapersonal and intrapersonal structures will be provided in subsequent chapters.
men (D’Andrade 2001 p.243). This definition succinctly encapsulates my perspective on and personal understanding of culture.

The Approach – Theoretical Models Applied

My study is an investigation into the topic of women abusing males, applying a cognitive anthropological perspective (D’Andrade 2001, 1995; D’Andrade and Strauss ed.1992; Strauss and Quinn 1997; and Quinn n.d.). It provides information given by males describing their life situations from early childhood and youth to present day adulthood, with particular emphasis given to situations of abuse by women. In researching male victims of abuse by women, my aim is to gain some insight into the impact that this particular type of abuse has on the masculinity of men at a cognitive level. My question in this study is:

*Given the preponderant identification of men with aggression and women with victimization in western culture, how do men who are abused by women understand their masculinity?*

I assume these processes of understanding are underpinned by cultural factors that give abused men the “rationale” that assists them in making sense of their relationships with other individuals. Cultural factors also impact on their self-identity as men. Applying an emic approach in working with the participants who took part in this study provided me with the opportunity to present a self-representative perspective. This perspective, I believe, is important in

2 I think we can safely assume that Goodenough used the terminology “men” in its generic sense, which includes “women”.

3 As I will discuss in Chapter 3, Defining Abuse, literature in this field provides overwhelming evidence that men are both more predisposed and more likely to be the perpetrators of violent and abusive acts (Archer ed 1994; Justice & Justice 1990; Ferrante et al 1996).
understanding how cultural cognitive frameworks are created and established in human relationships, and how individuals make sense of their everyday life experiences through human relationships (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998).

My work is informed in a large part by three theoretical efforts within the social and behavioural sciences. Cognitive anthropology plays the main role in understanding how, at the psychological level, we understand culture and behave as a consequence of that understanding. Attachment theory provides me with an understanding of the importance of early life stage experience in relation to the cognitive processes, which can then stimulate and influence behaviour throughout the remaining life cycle. I also use the social construction of reality model (Berger & Luckman, 1966), which is the central focus of the sociology of knowledge. This model assists in explaining how the cultural construction process takes place, both in the public and private spheres. The interaction and interrelationship between the public and private spheres of society inform us about their objective and subjective existence. Berger & Luckman (1966) explain that

… these aspects receive their proper recognition if society is understood in terms of an ongoing dialectical process composed of the three moments of externalization, objectivation and internalization (p. 149).

They further go on to explain

The individual, however, is not born a member of society. He is born with a predisposition towards sociality, and he becomes a member of society. In the life of every individual, therefore, there is a temporal sequence, in the
course of which he is inducted into participation in the societal dialectic.

The beginning point of this process is internalization: the immediate apprehension or interpretation of an objective event as expressing meaning, that is, as manifestation of another’s subjective processes which thereby becomes subjectively meaningful to myself. This does not mean that I understand the other adequately…but his subjectivity is nevertheless objectively available to me and becomes meaningful to me, whether or not there is congruence between his and my subjective process.

…internalization in the general sense used here underlies both signification and its own more complex forms. More precisely, internalization in this general sense is the basis, first for an understanding of one’s fellowmen and. Second, for the apprehension of the world as a meaningful and social reality (pp. 149-150)

I use the social construction model to assist me in demonstrating the relationship between the cultural definitions and constructions of the concepts of abuse and masculinity.

I attempt to demonstrate the relationship between social construction and cognitive theory, and their role in the development of cognitive frameworks. These cognitive frameworks are the tools, which play the pivotal role in the process of constructing, defining, stimulating and dictating human behaviour. (D’Andrade 1995; D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; Strauss & Quinn 1997).

Cognitive anthropology is the study of the relationship between human society and human thought’ (D’Andrade 1995 p.1). The experience of masculinity

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4 See Chapters 3 and 4 for discussion.
clearly has input from both extrapersonal (human society) and intrapersonal (human thought) experiences (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997; ed. D’Andrade & Strauss 1992). I use cognitive anthropology to suggest how the men in my study, as members of their social and cultural group, conceive and think about the events and experiences that make up their world. I rely on schema theory (D’Andrade 1995; D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; Strauss & Quinn 1997) to provide me with an understanding of the cognitive processes, which inform individuals at the intrapersonal level about the extrapersonal world in which they live and interrelate. Schemas are mental constructs. These constructs are created or developed as a result of the cognitive processing of information. This information includes anything from learning to read or dance, to understanding complex scientific formulae or making sense of the complex concept of marriage and its role in a cultural and social context. In the subsequent chapter on Cognition and Attachment: A Perspective, I will explain schemas and their role in understanding culture and behaviour in more detail.

I also look at how and what these men extrapolated as meaning/s from the extensive array of cultural knowledge presented to them (D’Andrade 1995). I use the term ‘meaning’ as proposed by Strauss and Quinn, who explain that their definition ‘combines aspects of earlier behaviourist (meanings are defined by their stimuli and responses) and ideational (meanings are ideas in people's heads) approaches’ (1997 p. 5). Throughout the study I include personal accounts provided by participants. These accounts emphasise their thoughts on their affectional relations. In particular, these relations are perceived from the view of being a man and being abused by a woman.
I refer to the cognitive systems, that operate in our minds producing our thoughts and directing our daily actions or inactions in every day life situations, as individual “cultural” cognitive frameworks (See ed. D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997). I call these individual cognitive frameworks, “cultural”, as culture, internalised at individual levels, provides us with the substance or foundations with which we develop our thinking, our memories, our emotions and our behaviour (D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997).

Cognitive theory tells us that what we absorb visually and through our other senses in any given experience, will impact on our perceptions and consequently reactions to circumstances in future scenarios (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997). At the very least, I hope to provide some insights into the individual cultural cognitive frameworks by which men allow themselves to be abused by women, more specifically by romantic partners. My aim is also to present some estimation of the impact these abusive situations have had on the participants in their current life circumstances.

I would like to remind the reader that in adopting a cognitive approach, I am interpreting the situations as related to me by participants in my study. My interpretations are also open to some form of personal ‘bias’, as I too have a specific individual cultural cognitive framework through which I make sense of my world and the information that I experience and absorb from a variety of scenarios, as a person and as an academic. In relation to my study specifically, I too have experienced a set of circumstances and situations whereby I have constructed a particular perspective and cognitive framework of abuse and masculinity. However, I have tried always to remain cognisant of maintaining at
least the ideal of an objective perspective as an academic and providing my readers, if not with ‘shared meanings’ (Geertz 1978), with some ‘approximate understandings’ (Burbank 1994) in the analysis of the ethnographic material I have collected.

In this study, I explore the divergent yet also shared or approximate individual “cultural” cognitive constructions the participants carry within themselves in making sense of their everyday life situations and experiences. For example, even though the situations defined as abusive by the participants to the study often differed, there were some common themes in the type of abuse and circumstances in which abuse was identified. All participants presented as sharing an understanding of what it is to be hurt or abused in some type or form.

I assume that the construction of our cultural cognitive frameworks begins with the relationships developed with our primary carers (Bowlby 1969; Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Strauss & Quinn 1997). Attachment Theory describes the quality of the relationship between infant/child and primary carer or carers (Bowlby 1956, 1969; ed. Cassidy and Shaver 1999 and Chisholm 2000). It defines the quality of this relationship as being either secure or insecure. Attachment theorists explain that the quality of this relationship impacts on the child’s psychological and emotional development (Bowlby 1956, 1969; Cassidy and Shaver 1999 and Chisholm 2000). I use Attachment Theory to suggest links between cognitive frameworks, attachment experience and the participants’ cultural constructions of masculinities under abusive conditions. Attachment theory provides insights into how an individual’s “cultural” cognitive constructs develop from early childhood through to adulthood through the interactions and
the relationships developed with primary carers (Bowlby 1966; Cassidy & Shaver 1999); how the experience of abuse in relationships in the early years of the life cycle can create a greater vulnerability to abusive experiences in adulthood relationships. Attachment Theory explains how biological maturation impacts on psychological maturation throughout one’s life cycle. As one matures biologically, psychologically the experiences gained impact on the cognitive understandings of oneself and the surrounding environment, people, society and culture. Paul Gilbert (1994) talks about the psychological impact abusive life experiences have on an individual:

"Early life has a very major impact on biological as well as psychological maturation. Distortions introduced early into a biological maturation process can prove very difficult to repair later in life (p. 375)."

I argue that both early and later life experiences of abuse have implications for men’s self-representative views as men – their manhood, their masculinity. Gilbert (Archer 1994) supports this thinking when he notes that considerable research indicates

"…serious male violence is often seeded in childhood. Families transmit cultural values and aspirations and these vary cross-culturally, especially with regard to the acceptance of violence and promotion of pro-social behaviour. But they also provide the context for biopsychosocial maturation and the formation of identities and gender scripts (p. 376)."

The purpose of my study is to better understand the dynamics of the individual cultural cognitive frameworks under which men tolerate being abused by
women, specifically romantic partners. In this context, I am concerned with the self-construction and self-representation of identity as a life process (Gregg 1998), and with constructing identity as an ongoing process in the life cycle (Stauss & Quinn 1997).

My hypothesis is that men who move into an abusive relationship with women as romantic partners have observed and gained an experiential understanding of a relationship and “mating style” that makes them predisposed to an abusive relationship. I am not implying that there is some kind of abnormal or dysfunctional thinking here. Instead, I am implying that the understanding that has been developed since childhood predisposes these men to tolerate abuse as they have defined it.

In looking at “constructing masculinities under abusive conditions”, I ask how a man self-identifies as a man within his social and cultural realities, when abused by a woman, in particular, when the abuser is a woman who is his wife or partner in a romantic love relationship. I found the description for the romantic love relationship provided by Hazan and Shaver (1987) useful to my study in as far as it described the type of relationship between a man and a woman I was studying. They describe it as ‘a biosocial process by which affectional bonds are formed between adult lovers’ (p. 511)\(^5\).

I ask what impact, if any, does being abused by a female romantic partner have on a man’s sense of self-identity within the construct of his self-sense of manhood, his masculinity? Contemporary constructions of masculinity and

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\(^5\) Hazan and Shaver (1987 p. 511) describe these affectional bonds similar to those formed between “human infants and their parents”.
femininity assist me in coming to some understanding to this question. I assume that being abused by women influences how the men who took part in the study self-define as men. These men had constructed self-definitions of being a man prior the abusive romantic love relationships. I explore how they re-construct their self-definitions and understandings of masculinity after the abusive situations (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998; Quinn n.d.).

Notwithstanding the preponderance of women as victims in abusive relationships (Archer 1994; Scutt 1990), my study is also a response to the growing interest and research of men as victims in abusive relationships, where the perpetrators are women (Cook 1999; Archer ed 1994). To date there has been little investigative work on the abuse of men by female perpetrators. Most studies in this area lie mainly in the field of child abuse (Berger et al 1990; Cook 1997).

Many researchers, in particular feminist writers, have researched the question of marital abuse or abuse between two adult people who form ‘affectional bonds’ (Hazan & Shaver 1987 p.511) from a range of perspectives. When investigating the dynamics of abusive relationships and why women stay in them the most popular model is the patriarchal model (Scutt 1990; Gelles 1987 and Easlea 1981). In Chapter 3, I provide a brief overview and discussion on abuse generally and more specifically on male abuse. I review a range of views on its definition and construction and provide information on women as female perpetrators in affectionate relationships with men. I also include personal accounts of male abuse as recounted by the participants to my study. I present

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6 One of the participants to my study, Harold, experienced abuse from both genders and notes the impact they have made on his subsequent relationships throughout his life span.
their reflections on how they understand or make sense of the abusive experiences and their own self-representations as men in situations with female perpetrators.

In my study, I am also interested to see whether the perception of a man’s relationship to an abusive woman, is different to that of one in which she is not abusive, and different again to one where there is mutual abuse (see also Cook 1999). At both public and private levels shared social and cultural definitions of abuse are in operation. The definition I use of abuse is that provided by the men I interviewed, that is, a self-definitional approach. These men defined what was abusive to them and why it was abusive to them. An example of the observations that this self-definitional approach produced, is provided by one of the participants, Robert, when comparing his first (abusive) wife and his second (non-abusive) wife:

I do think there was something of a relationship model between my mother and father, which put me on the back foot, when it came to my relationship with my first wife. I think I allowed to put myself in my mother’s role. In my second marriage, I’m becoming like my father. I think I married my father the first time and my mother the second time. Because Mary encourages me to go off and sing and do concerts and I have underestimated what I can do and she encourages me. Whereas, my

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7 There exists extensive literature that describes these varying scenarios in abusive situations. The bibliography provided as part of this study will give direction as to some of the sources of the diverse scenarios of male-female abuse.

8 Hence, I sometimes refer to the women who the men defined as abusive, as the “self-defined” abusive partners.
Text provided by Robert and other participants to this study during interviews make available ‘material for the reconstruction of cultural understandings’ (Quinn n.d. p. 9). These texts are important as they provide information and access to aspects of the participants’ relationships with women in abusive situations, and how these experiences impacted on their self-sense of masculinity and overall self-representations. As a psychological anthropologist, Quinn (n.d.) tells us that interviews can be made to,

…. reveal the cultural understandings underlying that discourse, that would not otherwise be voiced by any people under any other circumstances, in any discourse type. That is to say, some cultural knowledge that we as researchers want to retrieve would remain forever untold if not for the interview as a stimulus to its revelation (p. 11).

Quinn (n.d.) also informs us that ‘the premise behind interviewing was that people’s talk on a subject is the best available window into its cultural meaning for them’ (p.16). The discourses provided by the men who participated in the study provided examples of self-representative cultural cognitive frameworks in relation to their experiences of abuse and their construction and re-construction of masculinities (Gregg 1998; Strauss & Quinn 1994; Quinn n.d.).

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9 Robert “held the baby” literally as he was the primary carer for his two children while his wife pursued her career.
In my study I have adopted the term “masculinities”. As opposed to “masculinity”, is because masculinity has many interpretations and perspectives, from both the private and public spheres (Connell 1995; Berger et al 1995). It is from this wide range of perspectives of masculinity, as recognised and defined in interpersonal gender relationships, that we recognise the broad range of masculinities as they occur in culture and society (for example, Connell 1995; Berger et al 1995). In relationships, different perspectives arise at different points in time or situations, giving a man any number of masculine identities, such as father, husband, brother, work colleague. The self-perceptions of men that arise out of these diverse situations relate to their self-constructions and self-representations. Connell’s (1995) comments on this issue more clearly express what I am trying to explain:

Masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition. This holds regardless of the changing content of the demarcation in different societies and periods of history. Masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation…. It is gender relations that constitute a coherent object for knowledge for science. Knowledge of masculinity arises within the project of knowing gender relations…. masculinities are configurations of practice structured by gender relations (p. 44).

Connell’s (1995) notion that ‘masculinities are configurations of practice structured by gender relations’ (p. 44) aligns to the methodological approach I have adopted in my study. All participants who took part have described how
they felt being abused by a woman. In Chapter 4, *Constructing Masculinities*, I discuss the definition and construction of masculinities, providing personal accounts as related by participants to my study. I begin the chapter with an overview of construction theory (Berger and Luckman 1966), together with some other discussion on culture (Geertz 1966; Burbank 1994; Yanagisako & Delaney 1995), as a precursor to understanding how masculinities become defined through construction theory. As a cognitive cultural anthropologist it is the individual “cultural” construction of masculinities that I am particularly interested and concerned in presenting.

**Methodology**

The emic, phenomenological approach taken in this study was important, as my main concern was with participants’ self-perceptions and self-representations in relation to their abusive experiences. I explained to the prospective participants that I was an anthropology postgraduate student interested in understanding how people make sense of their lives. I said I was interested in how they processed their feelings, emotions and experiences. I also explained that I had been working in the field of abuse for many years and that I was interested in understanding how men feel when they had been abused or hurt by women\(^{10}\).

I collected eleven case studies. In selecting participants, diverse methods were used. After conducting a radio interview in 1998, in which I described my thesis topic and some reasons why I was pursing this study, two men contacted

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10. When I was manager of a women’s refuge in the early 1990’s, residents of the refuge had described scenes of mutual abuse. The women described their feelings regarding these situations, but, my curiosity was raised as to the feelings of the men in these scenes.
me and indicated they wanted to participate in my research. The remaining participants self-selected, after responses and conversations I had with them in my various workplace situations\textsuperscript{11}. My “normal” workplace environment is in a middle class, white collar, professional milieu and hence, participants reflect this profile. The majority of participants could generally be classified as being from middle class backgrounds\textsuperscript{12}, even though three participants self-identified as originating from ‘working class’\textsuperscript{13} backgrounds.

Eight of the eleven men who participated in the study agreed to a second interview and a further two men agreed to a third interview. These second and third interviews took place over a four-year period. In the interviews, I utilized a semi-structured interview schedule\textsuperscript{14} with the intention of attaining some kind of uniformity in data collection. These semi-structured interviews included a number of open-ended questions. I developed a set of questions and prompts, which I used as a guide for myself during the interviews. I asked a similar set of questions of all participants and attempted to gain information from all of them about how they felt about themselves as men when hurt or abused by women. Notes were taken of these interviews with the participants’ permission. Ten of the eleven participants gave me permission to audio tape their interviews. I also asked for information about their place of birth and their family and social status. For example, I asked all participants to describe their

\textsuperscript{11} I have worked as a consultant in short and long term contract positions over the last ten years, mainly in the corporate public sector.

\textsuperscript{12} This is generally how they self-identified their class status

\textsuperscript{13} The term ‘working class’ was that used by participants themselves in their self-identification of class positioning.

\textsuperscript{14} Copy of interview schedule is located in Appendix I.
relationships with their mothers and their fathers. I ensured that within this framework of my questioning there was plenty of opportunity for participants to provide whatever anecdotal information they wanted in relation to the question being asked or the scenario they were describing.\(^{15}\) I told them that I was not there to judge, take sides, approve or disapprove, but just to listen (See also Gregg 1998; Anderson & Jack 1991).

Of the eleven men who took part in the interviews, five were born in England, one was born in Scotland, one in New Zealand, one in South Africa and three in Western Australia. Joseph, born in Scotland and Ralph born in England came to Australia as migrants before the age of ten. The others born outside Australia, arrived as mature adults after the age of twenty. The participants’ ages at their first interview ranged from thirty five to forty five years.

Ten of the eleven participants are currently working in what would be classified “professional white collar jobs”. The types of work the men who participated in the study were involved in at the time of the interviews\(^ {16}\) included, academic research and teaching, photography, public sector policy and administration, training and development, the military, child care and information technology. All except one participant have undertaken post secondary school studies. Three of the participants self-identified their family background as ‘working class’. The remaining eight participants described their family backgrounds as professional or semi-professional.

\(^{15}\) Questions outside those included in the set of questions and prompts were included. This was mainly for purposes of clarification.

\(^{16}\) I do not want to be too specific about the types of jobs the participants held as it may compromise their anonymity.
Arnold’s father was a public servant and engineer and gave the impression that his mother was a “home maker”. Brian’s father was a sailor and his mother a “home maker”. Matthew’s father ‘worked for an insurance company’ and his mother ‘worked as an admin person in a doctor’s surgery’. Robert’s father was a school principal and his mother ‘was at home full time’ until Robert was 7 years old and then ‘she went back teaching part time’ and by the time he was 16, she was a ‘school principal’. James’ father was a doctor and his mother ‘a print worker’. Paul’s father was an engineer and according to Paul, his mother was “…a real homely type; she loved her flowers and her garden. She preferred to work inside the house, mainly, baking and making preserves …’. Joseph explained that his parents ‘started farming in Scotland’ and then ‘came to farm in Geraldton’. Graham explained that his father worked in the ‘traditional industry, worked with coal and railways’ and gave the impression that his mother was a “homemaker”. Allen said his parents ‘had a news agency’ and in a later interview noted that his father was once a member of the Australian air force. Allen noted in a second interview that his mother was ‘very social liberal orientated, left of centre, academic background but traditional’.

In relating their stories, the participants provided insights into the meanings they placed on their own particular description, understanding and perception of masculinity\(^\text{17}\). The information provided included experiences in early childhood and youth to the present day. Taking a leaf from Gregg (1998) I did not ‘seek to reconstruct a developmental history but to see the text as a set of

\(^{17}\) Chapter 4 on Constructing Masculinity is intended to provide my interpretation and insights into the debate of Masculinity vs Masculinities.
self-representational “story segments” (p.127). The participants and I explored what the men defined as abuse and why they defined the situations they described to me as abusive. We also explored the impact these abusive incidents had on them as men – their manhood and masculinity.

During the interviews, some of the men said they were able to express feelings they had never or rarely before felt comfortable enough to discuss. Anderson and Jack (1991) note that it is often difficult to provide individuals with the ‘opportunity to discuss the complex web of feelings and contradictions behind their familiar stories’ (Anderson & Jack 1991 p.13). Anderson and Jack talk about this in relation to how women discuss their life situations. I found that in listening to the men’s stories, they also presented complexity of feelings and sometimes contradictions. Anderson and Jack explain what they perceive happens to women in the following way:

A woman’s discussion of her life may combine two separate, often conflicting, perspectives: one framed in concepts and values that reflect men’s dominant position in the culture, and one informed by the more immediate realities of a woman’s personal experience…. women often mute their own thoughts and feelings when they try to describe their lives in the familiar and publicly acceptable terms of prevailing concepts and conventions. …. How do we hear the weaker signal of thoughts and feelings that differ from conventional expectations? (p. 11)

My experience when interviewing the men who participated in this study felt similar. The following are examples of participant’s responses as to why they
participated in the study. James reflects some of the feelings the participants felt when he said: ‘Yeah, when I heard your interview on the radio, I kept thinking yeah that’s right and I felt I just wanted to call you and share my situation’. The sense was that this was one of the first or few times that his story had been listened to seriously and given any credibility. Someone had recognised and validated his experience. Allen provides his view of the current Western Australian Family Law Court system. It was a big issue for him and he raised it every time we met. In describing his experience with the legal system, Allen wanted someone to hear his frustration, anger and anguish, particularly in relation to his daughter. Allen never felt that the people running the legal system really believed him:

> Just because a person is a mother doesn’t mean she should have more rights than the father or even grandparents who have a part in the child’s life.

He describes his anger and bitter frustration with professionals in the family law system in the following way:

> I’m very, very angry about how some professional people can become involved. They become players in this nasty game. Unless one party throws his hands up, the child then suffers, really suffers. ……Having an imbalance in the process as there is one or other person gives up and as it is mainly the father who gives up, it’s almost like a stalemate, you’re getting nowhere…it’s an industry and survives on all of this. It is not in their interest [the industry] to have a less adversarial process. It is in their interest to have as much acrimony as possible.
Ralph reflects a slightly variant view to those of other men who took part in the interviews:

…. but as an adult you pick it up very quickly, you become isolated the moment you begin to talk about it [the abuse]. You have few people that become really sympathetic, who are perhaps a little bit more informed and who understand the anger and pain when you’re talking, and it doesn’t scare them, and it doesn’t scare them seeing the tears in your eyes. They don’t feel uncomfortable with it, like most people do. Most people recoil from it and so you feel like you’re unclean.

Ralph presents a view of being personally slighted by people’s reactions to his abusive experiences. His sense of feeling unclean brings to his mind a sense of guilt and wrongdoing, despite being, the victim. James, Ralph and Allen all indicated that their personal experiences of abuse are not always publicly acceptable in terms of prevailing concepts and conventions’ (1991 p. 11). In fact, all three have presented scenarios of feeling isolated in their pain, not dissimilar to the experiences of many women who have been the victims of abuse (Ferrante et al 1994; Scutt 1990; Marino 1984).

As I noted earlier, eight of the men I interviewed took part in a second interview. There was a two to three year break between the first and second interviews. Two of them met with me for a further third interview, which took place within six months of the second interview. These second and third interviews assisted in clarifying issues and circumstances related in their stories. It was also to see how they had progressed and if any new or changed situations had occurred that could be of some consequence to the study. It also
provided both the participants and myself time to reflect on the information they provided, and the situations they related during their interviews. These second and third stage interviews provided me with the unique opportunity of obtaining data that I believe has provided this study with a greater degree of depth and richness than had the participants only undertaken one interview.  

The men found talking about their experiences useful from the perspective of “coming to terms” with their situations and even making sense of how circumstances evolved. For some of the participants it was the first time they had reflected on thoughts, feelings and emotions about their life experiences. One participant, Joseph, on his second interview, revealed that he realised that he had never seen his parents touch or kiss, nor did they ever verbalise the strong moral values he was taught to uphold. Allen had a ‘no hitting’ policy with his daughter, but not until the third interview did he think about whether he would have had the same policy had she been a boy. Robert did not reveal, until his second and third interviews, his realisation that his own self-expression of masculinity was at its strongest through his voice, when he was singing. These revelations support Quinn (n.d. 2002 p. 12) who explains that ‘exhaustive interviewing…. would yield a body of discourse rich enough for recuperation of the cultural schemas embedded in it.’ Throughout the study I attempt to explore these cultural constructions from a position of self-representation (Gregg 1998). In particular, I attempt to identify how these self-

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18 Nine of the men who participated in my study were also curious as to how I was going to utilise the ethnographic material I gathered during interview. I offered to them an explanation as described in this chapter and samples of my work in particular, where I had used their ethnographic material. All were interested in obtaining a copy of my finished work which I plan to send them once it is finalised.

19 Joseph did not want the second interview audio taped.
representations are constructed and how they become an integral part of an individual’s cultural cognitive construct.

My study does not have a profile of the women involved in the situations related by participants. However, the participants’ texts provide a vivid picture of women who abuse men, as seen by men who think they have been abused. It was a conscious choice on my part not to actively seek responses from the female partners. I wanted to investigate the perceptions the men I interviewed had on masculinity and abuse only from a self-reflective perspective. The following are some examples of the profiles of women that emerged.

Ralph describing one of the carers at Fairbridge:

I’d go home from that and again I’d be in trouble, and I had duties every day, and that included (for me being the youngest), things like polishing the floors, and they [female staff] would get those big blue and white footy socks and they would stick them up my arms and legs and tie them around my wrists and my knees so I’d be on all fours on the floor polishing the floor, and this woman would be standing over me with her legs apart shouting at me that I’m not doing it well enough and that happened I don’t know how many times, but it happened a lot.

Arnold describes a female colleague with whom he was in a ‘frustrating’ relationship, in the following way:

I thought about this a lot. She’s younger than me. She’s generation X. She’s questioning, analytical. She’s in quite a senior managerial position and I think she’d grown up with a bit of a sort of generation X
attitude, they’ve got an answer for everything and certainly she’s learnt the language of political correctness and how to exploit that in the workplace. And I’ve noticed that from some of the comments she’s made in classes..she’s a very astute political animal. And this issue of you never feel you are having a conversation with a human being. You’re either being analysed or she's coming out with a practical programmed response to a particular situation because that’s how her upbringing or training told her she should respond.

In Chapter 2, Cognition and Attachment: A Perspective, I will explore the relationships the participants had with their parents and seek to find some corresponding with their descriptions of their parents and their attachment relationships.

Finally, as part of the methodology, I gathered information and statistical data from the Department of Family and Children’s Services on cases of abuse of males by females. The Department of Family and Children’s Services provided statistical data in relation to the department’s definition of abuse and its incidence by gender of perpetrator and gender of victim. This information was obtained, in an attempt to demonstrate that men are “officially” considered victims of abuse when the perpetrator is a woman in contemporary Western Australian society. I wanted to provide the view and definition of abuse as presented by a public institution, a public institution which currently operates in the society and culture, where the men who took part in the interviews reside. I have included this information in Chapter 3 on Defining Abuse. The use of this data is not comprehensive across all government
departments and community organizations that may have victims and perpetrators of abuse present for assistance. The statistics I obtained are instead indicative of current statistical information as collected and collated by one government department that provides support for victims, perpetrators and families involved in abusive situations. I also discuss abuse in relation to social construction theory and present various public and private definitions and perspectives of abuse. I look at how I understand the interrelationship between social constructions and schema and attachment theory.

In Chapter 4, Constructing Masculinities, I present a range of approaches adopted in explaining and defining how masculinities are understood at both the public, and private levels. I explore these in relation to schema and attachment theory and cultural significance to the men in my study.

In Chapter 5, The Reconstruction Process, I discuss and reflect on the participants’ construction and reconstruction of their self-identity and self-representation, pre-abuse and post-abuse. I do this by examining the material I collected during interviews looking for any shifts or changes in self-definition and self-representation.

In Chapter 6, Conclusion, I present a brief overview of my study, bringing together the main points and aspects of the study as they relate to my question and hypothesis.

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20 Appendix 2 provides statistical data from the Department of Family and Children’s Services
In this chapter my aim is to show how the integration of the models I have adopted provide insights into how men make sense of their experience of being abused by women.

Applying the social construction of reality model (Berger and Luckman 1966) was the first stage of understanding how people come to ‘know’ or perceive their ‘reality’ (1966 p. 27). Understanding the cognitive processes of how we come to ‘know’ our ‘reality’, assists us in explaining situations we witness day-to-day situations upon which decisions we take are formulated and acted upon (1966; Berger et al 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997). This complex process takes place in the mind, is where people develop and create a self-perception, and a perception of the world around them. The social construction of reality provides a backdrop to understanding how individuals come to ‘know’ and construct their personal and public worlds, their ‘reality’, within a cultural framework (Berger and Luckman 1966; Berger et al 1995; Scott 1995).

I argue that masculinities and abuse as cultural experiences are constructed from a multiplicity of internal and external cultural and social influences interacting with internal cognitive processes (Connell 1995; Berger et al 1995; D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997; Gregg 1998; Rasmussen; 1998). My main concern is with the private or intrapersonal representation of the public or external (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997) construction, self-
definition and self-representation (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998) of men in abusive situations. Social construction and cognitive theory have assisted me in understanding how people build, maintain and change their phenomenological world and the consequences that world has for their lives (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998).

Social construction provides information as to what features make up our social and cultural environment. These have been constructed by the interrelationship of the public and private spheres of life (See Berger and Luckman 1966 for discussion). These constructs, through life experiences, are at some point processed at a cognitive level. In processing this information, individuals develop or create mental constructs – schemas, which hold the information. This stored information is what individuals use and apply in any given situation to direct their responses and behaviours. These responses and behaviours can be understood as the way individuals self-interpret and self-represent in these situations (Berger & Luckman 1996; D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997).

It is through studying the cognitive frameworks of individuals that we come to gain a genuine understanding of their perspectives on their life situations (Hart 1992 p.192). It is through these self-representations that we come to a better understanding of the cultural and psychological processes that impact on human behaviour (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998; Burbank 1995; D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997). It is within a framework of cultural knowledge and practice that self-representation occurs (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998). In this thesis study, these self-representations provide insights into how the
broader public perspective of masculinity takes shape and the role that cultural
cognitive frameworks have had in the creation and development of these self-
representations.

Self-interpretation through the development of schemas, plays a significant
role in how people make sense of situations. It also plays a significant role in
how men make sense of situations of abuse, experienced with women as
perpetrators (cf D’Andrade 1995; D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; Strauss &
Quinn 1997; Gregg 1998). When James, was told by his parents one should
‘never hit a woman’ and that ‘it takes a real man to step back from an
argument’, he processed and adhered to those ‘cultural items’ (D’Andrade
2001) or “instructions” quite literally and his mind created a schema to support
them (D’Andrade 1995; D’Andrade 2001). Here there appears to co-exist a
contradiction between personally accepting abusive behaviour, yet not
engaging in abusive behaviour as perpetrator (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss &
Quinn 1997; Strauss & Quinn 1997, Gregg 1998). In the case of James, the
internalized public construct of ‘a man should never hit a woman’ appears to
render him vulnerable to being abused by women at the same time that it
instructs him never to hit or abuse a woman in that manner himself. The
interrelationship between the extrapersonal and intrapersonal has expressed
itself in James’ own unique form of masculinity in an abusive situation.

Robert provides another such example when he talks about his own feelings
about the public and private constructs of men in sports and the
interrelationship this has to his own self-representations. In a detailed account
of the “ideal male” being the “sporting figure”, Robert provides a good example of this extra and intrapersonal interrelationship. He explains:

…because I don’t think I exude a particularly masculine persona. I am very tall and I think I have an almost apologetic demeanour but not a person who fills all the room. But singing - gives me space, gives me space, physical space. In replacement I think of physical space that I don’t have, because I’m not the male sporting macho type. And those people do exude that. It’s a real thing and you can see them in the photographs as well, sporting photographs. Big strong, fat (pointing to shoulders), obviously athletic space, nurturing the younger lads.

The cultural constructs of men, as perceived in the public sphere, may differ significantly or align to those of the self-representations of men in the private sphere. Even though Robert recognises “sporting figures” as the public representation of masculinity, he feels masculine when he is singing. He talks about masculinity in the sense of taking space. He explains how this ‘taking of space’ occurs for him when he is singing. He expresses how he relates this public sense of space when he describes his feelings of singing a Nat King Cole number at a wedding. He said: ‘And those are probably the times in which I felt more masculine than at any other time’.

The intrapersonal and extrapersonal, whether different or congruent, have sense and meaning21 from a self-understanding and self-representative perspective (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998; Lewis 1983). This is because

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21 I adopt Strass & Quinn’s (1997p6) definition of ‘meaning’ that which is ‘evoked in a person by an object or event at a given time’. I will provide further discussion on ‘meaning’ in Chapter 4, A Cognitive Perspective.
these public and private individually self-internalised experiences and understandings impact on each other in constructing and creating the self-perception and self-representation in the individual’s mind. When they become congruent, they make sense. The self-representations, which the participants to this study provided of themselves in abusive situations with women, provide insights into the processes\(^{22}\) employed in the “self-reconstruction” of masculinities under abusive conditions (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998; Lewis 1983; Quinn unpublished ms 2002).

**Cognitive Anthropology**

Over the last twenty years or so, cognitive psychology has taken over from the ‘behaviourist notion that all ideas are just passive reflections of what we perceive or experience (McCormack & Pancini 1994 p. 12). Instead, cognitive psychology has been interested in understanding how the ‘mind actively processes experience: how the mind controls and influences what we can see or what we can know and what we remember’ (p 12). How the mind works in absorbing information and how it organizes that information, provides the key as to how and what information is retained and how it is applied to assist in day-to-day function and overall survival.

**Schema Theory**

Drawing on cognitive psychology, cognitive anthropology uses schema theory in its explanation of how an individual understands or makes sense of and

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\(^{22}\) If one views the construction process as dynamic and organic, then self-construction becomes self-re-constructed given any situation or experience, which has such an impact as to modify or change existing mental constructs or schemas (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997; Quinn unpublished ms 2002).
rationalises his/her life experiences. This explains how through schemas individuals develop social and cultural identities (Strauss & Quinn 1997 pp. 27-28). These individual cognitive frameworks, drawn from personal experiences, are laden with feelings and emotions. These factors play an integral role in decision-making processes and subsequent actions and behaviours of individuals (1997 pp.94-96). Individuals’ understanding of their “personal reality” is based on what they see and experience through all their senses (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997). The meanings and interpretations given by these experiences and perceptions lead to self-identity, self-representation and resultant behaviours (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997). To this end, ‘the concept of schema is of central importance in much work in cognitive anthropology’ (D’Andrade & Strauss 1992).

In a recent work Quinn (n.d.) provides clarification to the discussion on schema theory. She explains:

A schema is a generic version of (some part of) the world built up from experience and stored in memory ... Although schemas can change, those built on repeated experiences of a similar sort become relatively stable, influencing our interpretations of subsequent experiences more than they are altered by them. To the degree that people share experiences, they will end up sharing the same schemas—having we would say, the same culture (or sub-culture). The social world is constructed in such a way that many of our experiences—the language we speak, for example or the way we are brought up as children, or the built environment we
inhabit—are indeed shared. Hence, many, many of our schemas are cultural ones (p. 6).

Quinn (n.d.) goes on to add that

Schemas…can be as various and complex as the experience from which they are derived. The same is true, of course, for cultural schemas, which do not differ from other schemas except that they are built up from experience that has been shared (p. 6).

This view of schema is extremely pertinent to my study. As I understand it, if abuse and masculinities are shared experiences then individuals hold personal cultural schemas of them, although, individual self-interpretations of abuse and masculinities can occur at any point in time in any number of scenarios.

How we understand culture becomes important to this discussion. In as far as, our understanding of how we understand experiences to be “shared” or “approximately understood” and how we then label these as “cultural”. I share the view held by Strauss and Quinn (1997) that, ‘in order to understand culture we need to understand the human mind’ (Strauss & Quinn 1997 p. 9). As I noted in my introduction, it has been important to understand and define what I mean by culture using a cognitive perspective in understanding masculinities and abuse. I have relied heavily on the works of D’Andrade (1994; 2001), D’Andrade and Strauss (1992), Strauss and Quinn (1997) and Burbank (1994; 2000). Their explanations and discussions help me make sense of the ethnographic material I have collected using an emic approach and a phenomenological and self-representative perspective.
The works of these authors assist in providing my overall approach with a foundation to take my discussion to understanding that culture as ideas is originally constructed, created and defined in the early years of an individual’s life span. This occurs mainly through his or her relationships with primary carers (Bowlby 1969; Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Chisholm 1999; Strauss & Quinn 1997). It is the situations and experiences that individuals have with their primary carers that put ideas into the mind creating the cultural cognitive framework that the individual then carries as schema albeit constantly modified throughout the rest of his or her life (Bowlby 1969; Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Strauss & Quinn 1997). I will further expand on the importance of the role of primary carers in the following section on Attachment Theory.

My understanding after reading the works of D’Andrade (1995), D’Andrade and Strauss (1992) and Strauss and Quinn (1997), is that every individual’s cultural cognitive framework provides the knowledge that he or she needs to know in order to function on a day-to-day basis. This cognitive process assists the individual in making sense of the cultural messages, that is, the ideas presented and transmitted through everyday life experiences. This intrapersonal cognitive nature of culture becomes a large part of the individual’s self-representation.

This is to say that schemas become central to the cognitive development of the individual’s self-representation. A significant fact about schemas is that, ‘most, if not all, of the activation processes occur automatically and without awareness on the part of the perceiver-comprehender’ (1995 p. 122). In abusive incidents, verbal insults are regularly experienced, then the activation
process of response occurs automatically, without awareness. To return to James: he presented how he was trained/socialised by both his mother and father to believe, know and understand that under no circumstance does a ‘real man’ ever hit a woman. When he found himself in a situation where a woman was hitting him, he responded to this conditioning automatically and would not hit back under any circumstances. He was a ‘real man’, she, a woman. His schemas – his personal cultural cognitive constructs reinforced his response and behaviour with thoughts like, ‘I was afraid that if I snapped I could hurt her’.

Meanings given to masculinity and abuse are both psychological states and social constructs. The socialisation process gives us insight into what individuals as learners internalise from these experiences at different points in their lives (1997 p.8). Robert, for example, when talking about cricket being a “gentlemen’s sport” for the middle class in Britain and soccer for the working class, said:

I mean in the British middle class there isn't a great need to be involved in sports or interested in sports as a man. That’s never stated or written. I’d say the working class is much better off, if you [the working class] enjoy the soccer and play the soccer, then that gives you [the working class] an identity.

This may or may not be a reality in the thinking and individual cultural constructs of the majority of Englishmen. Collectively, if self-perceptions at the private level are shared perceptions, then they can be considered shared or approximately understood at the public or extrapersonal level (Strauss &
Quinn 1997 pp. 3-11). The two levels interact to create a socially and
culturally accepted perception, that is, one shared or approximately understood
by a “significant” number of individuals. Robert expressed what he believes is
a socially and culturally accepted perception about British masculinity.

The messages the participants in this study received throughout their life span
about the public view of men and abuse, and the private messages they
received about themselves as men and abusive situations, created the
“personal cultural reality” about their understandings of their extrapersonal
and intrapersonal world structures.

These men clearly demonstrated that they had learnt how to be men from a
variety of male models and intrapersonal gender relations. Even though
Brian’s father was away months on end as a naval officer Brian notes that he
never really felt he missed having a male figure around:

> There were a lot of men around me. Because I played Little Athletics, I
> played football. There were a lot of men at those places and at school
too. At athletics there was a lot of parents. Mum was one of them. There
were also fathers that used to come down at training. There was a
different person at each event. Shot putt, discus, whatever; there was a
lot of interaction with men there and at football clubs that I played. At
school I still remember my primary school teachers three of them were
men. In years 5, 6 and 7 I had male teachers. At least half of all my
teachers were men. So I suppose there was a strong male influence there.
Another participant to this study describes how he understood women influence his construction of a male identity. Harold grew up in what he called a working class English family and as such shares his beliefs about how ‘women make men’ by supporting male culture within the working class structure:

The girls and the women support the male culture, they make men, you know I mean, “I’ll stay at home, and you get out to bloody work mate. You bring in the bacon”. You know, they make the boys and the women very hard.

How these men processed the information and then translated it into their own personalized form of masculinities differed in substance although they may have held ‘approximate understandings’ in overall content. Brian, when he left high school, worked in a number of different jobs. Interestingly while working in a clerical position he noted:

During that time I sort of decided what I wanted to do. I was playing football and I had a lot of interaction with children at football club and a lot of older men. And the children used to come along to training …. and I had a lot of interaction with the kids. I think that’s what made up my mind I wanted to work with kids. That’s when I enrolled into the Child Care Certificate course. I also did some volunteer work with the Youth Support Scheme.

Brian’s childhood, adolescent and teenage experience interacting with men in sport and through the education system seemed to give him a sense of direction as to what career path he eventually undertook later in life. Harold
instead rebelled against his working class cultural setting and went on to tertiary studies and an academic career.

With respect to masculinity, the participants in this study all came from a “common cultural milieu”\(^{23}\). There were or at least appeared to be some ‘shared meanings’ or an ‘approximate understanding’ as to what it meant to be a man, to be masculine and what defined abuse in various situations\(^{24}\). The men all appeared to have a general “appreciation” of what it was to be a “masculine male”. All noted they modelled themselves on what they considered male models. Oftentimes this model was their father. The fact that Brian’s and Harold’s fathers were regularly absent from home due to the nature of their work, did not mean that they could not understand or construct a model of a man on which to base their own masculinity. Their relationships with other men and women assisted in the process of constructing a self-representation. This is where the intrapersonal interacts with the extrapersonal in the development of a personal cultural cognitive construct and framework.

This leads me to the concept of “meaning” and how I have applied it to my study. “Meaning” is central to cognition and its implications to cultural interpretations of individuals. Strauss and Quinn (1997) note that ‘meanings are established prior to the individual’s learning of them” and that “meanings are both psychological states and social constructions’ (p. 16). We perceive the concept of “meanings” in this context to be how the individual chooses to understand or make sense of an object, a place, a situation, or an experience.

\(^{23}\) Broadly described as Anglo-Celtic in origin.

\(^{24}\) Please refer to Chapters 3 and 4 for discussion.
In this sense meanings reflect the individual’s thoughts, feelings and motivations, including out of awareness psychological states…meanings can only be evoked in a person’ (1997 p. 20). In applying a self-representative approach, the meanings the men who participated in my study gave to their experiences of abuse and construction of masculinities in the situations they described as abusive, reflect the cultural schemas they hold from their own personal perspective (Strauss & Quinn 1997). Strauss and Quinn (1997) note:

‘We cannot explain cultural meanings unless we see them as created and maintained in the interaction between the extrapersonal and intrapersonal realms. The force and stability of cultural meanings, as well as their possibilities for variation and change, are the outcome of this complex interaction (p. 8).

They also explain that a ‘cultural meaning’ is a frequently recurring, widely shared interpretation of some kind of object or situation aroused in people that has resulted from some kind of similar life experience (p. 6). They note that to ‘call it a cultural meaning is to imply that a different interpretation would be evoked in people with different characteristic life experiences’ (p. 6). In reading this, I thought about the participants to this study who seemed to generally accept being hit by parents as a child as routine discipline. For example, Brian explains that ‘there was physical discipline. I got a smack on the bum with a wooden spoon. I suppose it was when she [his mother] felt it was absolutely necessary’. Allen describes punished by: ‘dad with his hand. Mum rarely gave it to me with the belt’. James explains his mother smacking him in the following way: ‘I always deserved it. I always knew it wasn’t a smack for nothing. Here
we are given a sense that the participants knew or understood the “meaning” behind this type of discipline.

Strauss and Quinn (1997) explain that ‘we are constantly producing meanings based on whatever schemas, however incomplete or partial—we have at the moment’ (p. 82). Thus ‘interpretations also depend on the learner’s history of experiences and can change over time’, and importantly ‘these changing experiences will change the connection weights’ (p. 83). For Strauss and Quinn, meaning ‘is one’s interpretation of a particular situation’ (p. 83).

The participants who took part in my study, all talked about having been abused by a woman, at some stage in their lives. Even though their experiences may not have been identical, they were shared from the perspective of the abuser having been a woman. They also appeared to self-identify certain personal behaviours as a result of this particular type of abuse.

The participants all defined abuse in the context of their personal situations and hence, their intrapersonal interpretations and reactions to those situations differed. The meanings they place on their situations nevertheless are of a cultural nature due to the ‘interaction between the extrapersonal and intrapersonal realms’ (Strauss & Quinn 1997 p. 8). Even though Paul and James may have shared experiences and schemas, in as far as being abused by a woman, their intrapersonal interpretations or, reactions to the experience differed widely (Gregg 1998 p. 135). Paul hit back, but James did not. The point at which their intrapersonal interpretations align with extrapersonal interpretations is where the cross-section of shared cultural meaning occurs. Both men believed they were stronger than any woman and that they could
cause “real” physical harm, whereas a woman could not, notwithstanding the fact that they said they had been “hurt” by the abusive behaviour, even physically. The men are interpreting these situations within their own intra and extrapersonal learned and experienced cultural context. They are interpreting these situations within their own personal cultural cognitive framework (Gregg 1998 p. 135), applying their own cultural schemas (Strauss & Quinn 1997; D’Andrade 1995).

It is not unusual for individuals to hold conflicting schemas about cultural practice or activity (Strauss & Quinn 1997). In Robert’s first marriage he saw himself being like his mother, the submissive one in the relationship. He talked about being supportive of his wife’s career and other social needs in his first marriage, very much in the way his mother was towards his father. In his second marriage, Robert sees himself like his father, the dominant partner. He talked about being the supported partner with his career and other personal interests, such as his singing. It could appear that there is an inconsistency or conflict in Robert’s schemas surrounding his role as a romantic partner in a relationship. This could be seen to be due to the diverse roles his own parents played in their own relationships and the way he mirrored these roles in his relationships (Ch. 4).

It is thought that conflict and inconsistencies in schemas are created in the early years of life when individuals are forming or creating schemas for the first time and are then supported by continual inconsistent or conflicting information (Strauss & Quinn 1997 Ch. 8). These schemas hold cultural properties that are transmitted to substantiate or deny particular beliefs and
behaviours and could indicate a conflict of values. Values play an important role in directing human behaviour. Underlying the cultural properties transmitted to generations are the values underpinning the practices that are passed on through schemas (Strauss & Quinn 1997 p113). Once these values are transmitted in the early years of the life span, they can become quite durable (1997).

According to this perspective, culture provides some kind of stability and durability in human practice and behaviour. As Strauss and Quinn (1997) note:

Much of the world is organised in exactly such a way as to ensure that people in the same social environment will …experience many of the same typical patterns. This modal patterning is broadly characteristic of human social life, a requirement of many of the practices by which people interact with each other, share knowledge, coordinate common activities, collaborate in common ventures, play the established roles expected of them and otherwise conform to the laws of their government and the conventions and values of their fellows as well as model and explicitly teach these common laws and values to others (pp.123-124).

The enactment of schemas is important in imparting knowledge and ideas, and in day-to-day interactions (1997 p.126; D’Andrade 1995). Allen explained that he has a ‘no hitting policy’ when it comes to how he disciplines his daughter, although his father hit him as a form of discipline. Allen observed that he never saw his father hit his sisters and that perhaps this may have had something to do with his thinking and belief. It is possible that not seeing his father hit his sisters was an enactment of the schema Allen created about
hitting female children and his daughter as a form of discipline. Allen’s behaviour appears to have been influenced by his self-understandings regarding his father’s behaviour about hitting women.

Negative social schemas play a significant role in understanding conflict and inconsistencies in schemas, in particular, when looking at the question of abusive behaviour, as it is then that conflict and inconsistencies become emphasised. Negative social schemas hold negative metaphors as prompts to behaviour (Strauss & Quinn 1997). A repeated negative situation reinforces negative feelings and emotions towards a particular person or object. For example, every time Violet either rejected Allen’s affections or “forced” him into a love-making situation, which he said ‘made me feel powerless’, it reinforced his negative feelings and emotions not just about Violet, but about romantic love relationships per se. Negative social schemas (1997 p. 91) can lead people to avoid situations, which may help them obtain disconfirming evidence, simultaneously reinforcing negative schemas. For example, men who experience abusive behaviour from a partner may continually put themselves into relationships with women who are abusive towards them. This reinforces the perception that a woman can be or is abusive. Alternatively, like Allen, they may decide to avoid romantic intrapersonal relationships in a bid to avoid abuse and pain. They may also decide to go into a relationship with “deadened” and damaged emotions. With regards to the men who participated in this study, some of their negative social schemas seem to have impacted upon them, leaving long-term “scars”. Others appear to have had a short-lived negative impact with emotions more easily “healed”.
The following are some further examples of negative schemas about romantic love relationships held by the men who took part in the study. Allen had been in a romantic love relationship that he described as abusive. When I asked him if he was looking to getting into another relationship, he replied:

Me in a relationship… I don’t think it is possible. I don’t think I’ll ever be able to shut the door - reconcile. I’ll always be very, very distrustful… if you can’t have total trust with your partner then what’s the point…. It’s like a catch 22… as if I do totally trust I’m left vulnerable. At times I think it would be nice to have a close relationship with another. I’ve lived by myself now for many years… Angela is the only one I lived with in a partner relationship. … experience of living with anyone like a husband and wife… only ever experience and since it’s been strictly on my own…. I left mum and dad to share situations then to living with Violet, which was like a nightmare to living on my own. It would need a sea change in my thinking to be prepared to live in a domestic environment where there was my partner and myself.

Joseph had been in a marriage he described as abusive. Joseph feels his ‘dreams have been dashed’ by his negative experience with his first wife. In the following piece of text he is describing his feelings about getting into a more permanent romantic love relationship with his current partner, Jane:

…. if I turned round to her and say “Would you marry me?” she would say “Yes” straightway. I have no inclination of doing that at all so I feel like I have kissed my dreams goodbye and just get on with my own life.
Whatever happens let it happen. Dreams have been dashed, so it’s a bit difficult.\textsuperscript{25}

These examples demonstrate the impact negative schemas can have on individuals’ lives and how they can cause shifts in behaviour or reinforce a particular cultural schema. Both Allen and John feel negative about the possibility of finding happiness in another romantic love relationship. The durability and stability of a particular cultural schema is important to this study as it indicates the sustainability of that schema in other situations that are, or appear to be, the same as the original (Strauss & Quinn 1997).

This leads me to looking at the durability of schemas. Durability is an important quality of schemas as it supports the longevity of cultural schemas. How this durability is reinforced assists us in better understanding the cultural schemas themselves. Enacting or acting out schemas, as seen in some of the examples provided above by participants, demonstrates the durability and stability of schemas. Enacting schemas supports the cognitive processes, which reinforces their positioning and connection to behaviours. Strauss and Quinn (1997) explain that

‘part of the reason why cultural understandings are durable in the individual is that they rest on neuronal connections that are not easily undone. …There is a neural basis for associative learning. (p. 90)\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{25} In more recent communications, Joseph told me that his partner has had a son to him and that he and Jane were now thinking about getting married. Having a child of his own seems to have made a difference to his earlier viewpoint.

\textsuperscript{26} For further discussion see Strauss and Quinn 1997 Ch. 4
Linking this understanding of neural basis for associative learning with the ‘role of emotional arousal’ make schemas durable and can ‘explain the indelibility of schemas learned in infancy, if we assume that early experiences tend to be linked to exceptionally strong feelings related to survival and security. To the degree that such early experience is widely shared, the durable schemas shaped by this infantile experience will be cultural schemas (p. 90).

This is important to my study as I am trying to demonstrate that attachment in early childhood plays a crucial role in the development of an individual’s behaviour for the remainder of his or her life span (Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Bowlby 1969). Children learn by observation and experience gained through interaction (Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Bowlby 1969). Hence, I see the role of modelling in developing early childhood schemas as playing a pivotal role in the development of behaviour. Strauss and Quinn (1977) tell us that modelling supports the durability of schema because it assists its reproduction (1997). This brings to mind Allen who never saw his father hit his sisters and so adopted a policy of not hitting when it came to disciplining his own daughter.

The historical durability of schema, their reproduction from one generation to the next, is an important property of schema (1997). Another is that people are motivated to replay their schemas over and over, and as such, reproduce patterns of experience from previous to future generations (1997). Participants to this study, such as Paul and Arnold, talked about being like their fathers when it came to describing how they viewed and behaved around women.
This seemed to provide them with their personal sense of manhood: their masculinities.

In relation to abuse, Ralph talked about repeated situations of women hitting and abusing him as child and adolescent. Allen also describes abuse he received from women as a young child and then as an adult male. The bullying that occurred in the lives of some of the participants also demonstrates an example of replaying schemas and so reproducing patterns of experience. Certainly abuse and violence are not new concepts to our world, but ones that have long held their own in the test of time for various evolutionary and psychological reasons (see Archer 1994).

The concept that some practices are “natural” (Yanagisako & Delaney 1995) such as man assuming the role of breadwinner, makes male as “bread winner” more acceptable and less likely to come under scrutiny, and thus such supports its durability (Strauss & Quinn 1997 p. 111). This is important when a practice is accepted over generations, as it may be considered “natural” to the family and society in general (Yanagisako & Delaney 1995). These “natural” practices begin at home, so to speak. This leads me to introduce Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), which furthers my understanding about the growth and development of the cultural schemas and self-representation of my informants.
Attachment Theory

Through my readings on Attachment Theory, I began to realise that cognitive processes begin to shape schemas from birth (Bowlby 1969; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Chisholm, 2000). This theory not only made sense, but also provided me with the “missing link” to understanding two aspects of self-interpretations, self-representations and behaviour. Firstly, this theory underlines the importance of the interaction and interrelationship between the extrapersonal and intrapersonal worlds of individuals from the early stages of their life span. Secondly, empirical efforts guided by it demonstrate that the cognitive framework developed in the early stages of the life span impacts on individuals’ beliefs, ideas and behaviours for the remainder of their lives (Bowlby 1969; Ainsworth 1967, Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Chisholm, 2000; Strauss & Quinn 1997).

Attachment theory as developed over the last fifty years, began with Bowlby and Robertson (1952) after the Second World War when they were commissioned to work with young children who had lost their primary carers, that is, their mothers and fathers (Cassidy & Shaver 1999 p. 3). John Bowlby and his colleague James Robertson ‘observed that children experienced intense distress when separated from their mothers, even if they were fed and cared for by others’ (p. 3). It appeared to Bowlby that there emerged a predictable pattern – the children initially protested angrily and then fell into despair (Robertson & Bowlby, 1952). Bowlby became preoccupied with ‘why
the mother is so important to the child” (Cassidy & Shaver 1999 p. 3).

Previous propositions, adhered to by psychoanalysts like Freud, that it was the actual process of feeding and the resultant pleasure gained by the child from the mother in the feeding process – a ‘secondary drive’ (1999 p. 3) - which impacted on the attachment of mother and child, no longer made sense.

Bowlby investigated further and pursued information from ‘evolutionary biology, ethology, developmental psychology, cognitive science, and control systems theory’ (1999 p. 4). His pursuits assisted him in the formulation of the proposition that the ‘mechanisms underlying the infant's tie to the mother originally emerged as a result of evolutionary pressures’ (p. 4). Cassidy (ed.1999) says that Bowlby noted that ‘this strikingly strong tie, evident particularly when disrupted, results not from an associational learning process (a secondary drive), but rather from a biologically based desire for proximity that arose through the process of natural selection’ (p. 4).

Mary Salter Ainsworth, a developmental psychologist and member of Bowlby’s team created an assessment tool named the ‘strange situation’ (p. 4). This tool was used to assess the quality of attachment between mother and child (p. 4). The tool Ainsworth developed resulted in numerous empirical studies looking at individual differences in attachment style (p. 4). The body of research developed by Ainsworth plays a major role in the positioning of attachment theory in ‘contemporary developmental psychology’ (1999 p. 4).

‘Attachment behaviour’ provides the ‘predictable outcome of increasing proximity of the child to the attachment figure (usually the mother)’ (p. 4).

27 Subsequent theorists have replaced the term mother with primary caretaker(s) as these relationships are less important to the process than the role.
Attachment behaviours are important in as much as certain behaviours such as ‘smiling and vocalizing, alert the mother to the child’s interest in interaction, and thus serve to bring her to the child’ (p. 4). Behaviours such as crying are considered to be aversive, and as such ‘bring the mother to the child to terminate them’ (p. 4). Other types of behaviours such as approaching and following, activate ‘behaviours that move the child to the mother’ (p. 4).

Proximity of the child to the parent plays a central role in attachment theory because it is viewed as providing beneficial outcomes to the child (p. 5). These benefits include aspects of survival such as feeding and protection from harm, learning about their environment and social interaction (p. 5). Bowlby considered the biological function of protection, very important to the attachment process, as it is in times of threat or distress that infants are particularly predisposed to seek their parents (p. 5). Hence, the ‘proclivity to seek proximity is a behavioural adaptation…and considered a normal healthy characteristic of humans throughout the lifespan, rather than a sign of immaturity that needs to be outgrown’ (p. 5).

Consideration also needs to be given to variant environmental factors. For example, separation that may occur as a result of death or illness is not due to the primary carers negligence but to external forces outside the control of the primary carer. The impact on the child, who may see this as an act of abandonment, will be affected in a negative emotional and psychological manner. The life stage of the child may play a significant factor as to the
“depth” of the negative emotional and psychological impact28 if separation occurs (Bowlby 1956, 1969; Cassidy & Shaver 1999 and Chisholm 2000).

There is obviously a range of factors that will facilitate or hinder proximity. These may include illness, such was the case with Ralph’s mother who was taken from home and put into hospital. Harold was left in the care of an abusive female caregiver who basically, ignored and ill-treated Harold to the point that he became physically ill and psychologically withdrawn. Allen’s mother had to go to work and left him with a female caregiver who almost drowned him to stop his “naughty” behaviour. The distance Harold’s father kept because he had to work overseas created extremely distressing situations for Harold. Situations experienced by the participants mentioned above created fear and anxiety (Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Bowlby 1969; Chisholm 2000).

Another factor that needs to be taken into account is that in certain cultural or social circumstances there may be more than one primary carer for a child (Cassidy & Shaver 1999). It may be that the caring for a child is shared among other adults as noted by Simpson (1997) among hunter-gatherer tribes of the !Kung San of the Kalahari Desert in Africa and the Aborigines of Australia (p.7). Simpson (1997) also provides a good discussion on the attachment features of children from parents who have divorced or separated. In our modern day society, persons who are seen to share the primary carers role can include child-care workers and foster parents (see Cassidy & Shaver 1999 for expanded discussion).

28 For further discussions on this particular aspect of attachment in relation to the life stage of the child, see Cassidy and Shaver ed. 1999 and Chisholm 2000.
Attachment behaviours are viewed as being ‘organised into an “attachment behavioural system”’ (p. 5). Cassidy notes that the concept of a behavioural system involves inherent motivation’ (p. 5). It has been suggested that children become attached to their parents ‘whether their parents are meeting their physiological needs or not’ (p. 5).

Attachment is categorised in the following ways: ‘Secure attachment – when a child has a mental representation of the attachment figure as available and responsive when needed’ and insecure attachment when the child lacks such a mental representation of the attachment figure (p. 7). The three styles drawn from these categories are: secure, anxious/ambivalent and avoidant (Hazan & Shaver 1987). The anxious/ambivalent category identifies infants as exhibiting behaviours that ‘Bowlby called protest, and the avoidant infants frequently exhibit the behaviours he called detachment’ (1987 p. 512). Together with attachment theorists, I believe that the relationship the child develops with the primary carer impacts on the relationships he or she makes for the remainder of his or her life (Cassidy & Shaver 1999, Chisholm 2000). Chisholm (2000) tells us that ‘there is evidence from many sources that insecure attachments – avoidant and ambivalent- are indeed associated with later cognitive, social-emotional, and perceptual difficulties’ (p.105).

If I regard proximity of the child to the parent as playing a central role in attachment then, through the information provided by the participants to this study about their childhood, six of the eleven participants appear to have had secure attachment with at least one primary caregiver. The remaining five

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29 It is generally accepted that the earliest attachment experiences in infancy are beyond memory.
participants appeared not to have a secure attachment with any primary caregiver\textsuperscript{30}. An example of the latter is Allen. Both Allen’s parents worked and he was left with ‘a succession of housekeepers’ to whom he gave ‘merry hell’ because he was seeking proximity to his mother: ‘I was seeking their (his parents) attention…. I think it was normal for a little boy who wanted mum’s attention’. Allen noted that he found these housekeepers or secondary caregivers were at times abusive. Harold is another example. His father was away working much of the time. As Harold said: ‘he was absent even when he was here because he worked long shifts’. His mother was busy with his other siblings:

‘she had lots of kids and my brother came along when I was 2 which is always the crisis…. I hated her for a while when I was younger… and looking back I kind of felt neglected by her at certain times’.

Harold felt abandoned by his father and mother at a time in his early growing years when he believed they should have been there for him.

Another participant Ralph provides another example. On arriving in Australia from England Ralph was sent to Fairbridge Farm at the age of five for approximately nine months.

When we had to say goodbye – you know at Fairbridge that first day – and we were on a bus and we all had to get on the bus, and then the kids had to get off and we had to say goodbye, and she had to say goodbye to all eight of her children – and I was the last one, I was the last one and I

\textsuperscript{30} These observations are not made from a clinical perspective, but only from one whereby I analysed data and understood the information in light of Attachment Theory as I understand it.
hung onto her dress, she was trying so hard not to cry and…. ahh it was
terrible, absolutely terrible.

Ralph’s father took no interest in his welfare and Ralph gradually became
angry and resentful towards him:

He just moaned and groaned about every little thing, day in and day out,
it’s all he ever did. Just a completely selfish so and so…. By the time I
was in high school, he was someone I did not want to be like. I did not
want to be like my Father – someone who showed no respect at all for
his wife…. I despised him.

It was these occasions when Ralph’s mother was ill and he was sent to
Fairbridge Farm, when he was at a distance from his primary caregiver and
left in the care of abusive caregivers, that caused Ralph insecure attachment.
Even though Ralph talked about his mother in very kind, caring and loving
terms, his distress every time he was separated from her seemed to be
immense.

Of the eleven participants who took part in the study, eight of them actually
verbally expressed some sense of abandonment by at least one of the primary
caregivers. Paul’s mother died when he was seven years old and his father by
the time he was fourteen. Paul describes his feeling of abandonment: ‘you
never get over it, losing your parents so young. I was really angry for a long
time and got into a lot of fights’. Matthew’s parents both worked and left him
in the care of a nanny: ‘I was raised by Joy [a black South African woman]
who was employed by my parents as a domestic worker’. Although he
described a positive relationship with his nanny, he described his parents in the following way: ‘Both were very strict and my mother has compulsive behaviour’. The only other comments he made about his parents were in relation to their disapproval of romantic love partners: ‘I returned to Perth and started a relationship with an Aboriginal woman and my parents flipped’. His comment about his parents when he married an Islander woman was: ‘…we got married in [northern Western Australia]. … due to parental pressure.’

Robert on the other hand, presents an interesting scenario when he says: ‘I think my father felt I was in competition with him for my mother’s affection and I, as a child, got in between them’. Robert talks about how he looked for his father’s attention:

I was always trying to get dad to play with bat and ball on the beach. I drove everybody mad and we had a game ... a bit like tennis in a way and we’d play that together. And I was always demanding, and demanding and demanding for an hour of bat.

It is difficult to understand whether Robert felt abandoned by his father in any way. However, his comments suggest some kind of longing for affection, which he felt he lacked.

According to Bowlby (1969), emotions are strongly associated with attachment:

Many of the most intense emotions arise during the formation, the maintenance, the disruption and the renewal of attachment relationships. The formation of a bond is described as falling in love, maintaining a
bond as loving someone, and losing a partner as grieving over someone. Similarly, threat of loss arouses anxiety and actual loss gives rise to sorrow, whilst each of these situations is likely to arouse anger. The unchallenged maintenance of a bond is experienced as a source of joy (p.130).

Ten of the participants who took part in this study expressed a love of both their parents, even though they may have felt anger or frustration and/or abandonment at some stage in the early part of their lives. One participant, Ralph, still clearly disliked his father’s abusive nature and has nothing to do with him: ‘my relationship with my father…. has never been good. I haven’t spoken to him actually for about 15 years, but even as I was growing up he never really was a father anyway’. Ralph has very positive emotions for his mother: it was… ‘my Mum who was extremely loving, we always had a very loving mother’. In fact, Ralph’s feelings about his mother and father are mirrored by his siblings:

As a teenager I learned to despise him along with all of my siblings, all eight of us actually. None of us had anything to do with him, so, whilst I had a very loving mother, I had a father who was the complete opposite.

On the other hand, despite the anger, frustration and despair that Harold experienced because of his sense of abandonment by his parents, he is still able to maintain a bond and experience a sense of joy in that bond:

My father travelled a lot when I was a kid, which I think was a problem for me at that particular time and I followed in his footsteps I think… I
was very fond of my family. I keep in contact. I love them to death…nice people.

Oh, its only now got to the stage, where, when I ring he doesn’t say, “oh I’ll get mother”. You know where he’ll actually talk for a few minutes. And I think only in the last couple of years. Actually while I’ve been here [in Australia] and on occasional visits back [to England].

Harold throughout the interview demonstrated a conflict with his feeling of abandonment by his father and a sense of still wanting and needing his love and affection and his actual love for him as his father and parent. He says:

We fought all our lives over everything…we had a terrible relationship…. you know I saw more positive things in him as I got older and saw things in myself in the 60’s generation and so on…. but I still have never bonded…I feel there is something absent, lacking.

Bowlby (1969) recognised the interrelationship between attachment and cognitive behaviour. Bowlby proposed that the organization of the attachment behavioural system involves cognitive components- specifically, mental representations of the attachment figure, the self, and the environment, all of which are largely based on experience. According to Bowlby, these models allow individuals to anticipate the future and make plans, thereby operating most efficiently. The child is thought to rely on these models, for instance, when making decisions about which specific attachment behaviour(s) to use in a specific situation with a specific person.
I think I have begun to provide a picture of how I perceive the link between attachment and cognition. The approach I have adopted views interaction and inter-relationship between attachment and cognition as crucial to self-understanding and self-representation. My own understanding is that it is where these two intersect, a decision is taken at the cognitive level. Perhaps this is where the “making sense” takes place. This decision, albeit an unconscious one, is about how one self-defines and self-represents within a given situation or scenario (Strauss & Quinn 1997). For example, when Allen, developed a sense of abandonment through his mother leaving him for housekeepers with whom he felt abused, he seemed to take these feelings and emotions into his adult romantic love relationships. His attachment with his primary caregiver, his mother, appears to be insecure and he described what could be perceived as insecure attachments with romantic love partners (Hill et al 1994). Hazan and Shaver (1987) applied the categories of secure and insecure attachments to their study of romantic love. Their findings support the argument posed in this study, that ‘affectional bonds in infancy’ were translated in terms appropriate to adult romantic love (p511)\footnote{It was unfortunate that time and resources did not allow the Attachment Instrument, measuring secure or insecure attachment was unable to be implemented with the participants to the study.}.

The importance that cognitive processes play in the attachment process has been noted and emphasised by a number of proponents of both theories (Bowlby 1969; Ainsworth 1967, Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Chisholm, 2000; Strauss & Quinn 1997; Hazan & Shaver 1987). Cognitive processes impact not just on the behavioural response of the individual as an infant but have far reaching effects into adulthood.
Overall it is accepted among attachment theorists that we rely on our caregivers\textsuperscript{32} to instruct us and provide us with the “cognitive strategies” for our survival at all levels of our development, physical, social, emotional, psychological, spiritual and environmental (Bowlby 1969; Ainsworth 1967, Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Chisholm 2000). Attachment theory gives us insights into how we develop relationships throughout our life span by understanding how we developed relationships with our primary caregivers (Bowlby 1969; Ainsworth 1967, Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Chisholm 2000).

The theory explains that the bonding or attachment created by a parent with the child is considered crucial to the child’s sense of self-identity, and consequently is crucial in determining future relationships. In particular, this theory looks at development during infancy, when the foundations to the development of the cultural cognitive frameworks for the remainder of the individual’s life take place (Bowlby 1969; Ainsworth 1967, Cassidy & Shaver 1999). More recent studies also focus on the relationship between early attachment during infancy and adolescence and adult attachment, post adolescence (Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Hill et al 1994).

It is significant to note that the attachment system is supported by cognitive development (Cassidy & Shaver 1999 p. 31). Cassidy and Shaver (1999) also note that various authors in the field of attachment theory, including Bowlby and Ainsworth (1969) have observed that children demonstrate as strong an attachment to abusive parents as the non-abusive parents. There appears to be

\textsuperscript{32} I use the term caregiver here broadly, to include, parents, family members and anyone who has had in some way played a role in the development of the individual’s cultural cognitive framework from the perspective of relationship development and behaviour.
no difference to the actual strength of attachment, children have with non-abusive parents. This, I believe, is important in the cognitive development of the child. It is significant in that the attachment developed impacts and moulds the cultural cognitive framework of children and influences their behaviour throughout their remaining lifespan.

Attachment theory provides an understanding of how relationships are formed in early childhood and their impact on later adult life relationships. It also provides an understanding of what and how certain behavioural responses are developed. Schema theory explains how information regarding life experiences and relationships is stored in memory and drawn upon when required in any given situation. These two theories work together in a relationship whereby they draw from one another creating and developing learning and understanding of the social and cultural worlds. The intersection of these theories is where the cognitive processes, motivated by emotions related to attachment (secure, ambivalent, avoidant), work to create schemas. The cognitive processes of an infant observe and absorb the type of attachment relationship they experience is being created with their primary caregivers. These cognitive processes create schemas about the relationship, drawing information and understandings based on attachment behaviours demonstrated by the parents or primary carers. What the infant has experienced in its relationships with his or her parents will in some way influence the type of relationships he or she develops in later years with romantic love partners and even friends and acquaintances (Bowlby 1969; Ainsworth 1967, Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Chisholm, 2000; Strauss & Quinn 1997; Hazan & Shaver 1987).
Schemas that are created in the early years of life, and thus the experiences in these formative years, can be crucial to the formation of perceptions that will carry the child into the latter years of its life (Strauss & Quinn 1997). Hence, the quality of the attachment relationship with primary carers plays a critical role in the creation and development of schemas (Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Strauss & Quinn 1997). Schemas are created using all senses, situations and experiences. How primary carers behave in situations such as, mealtimes, will impact on the development of the child’s behaviour, self-identity and self-representation, in future, in similar settings. Even experiences with toys and children’s stories can play a significant role. For example, stories of characters such as Batman or Superman give clear messages to boys as to what “makes a real man”. Today these stories are presented in visual and auditory forms, such as videos and movies that support the physical presence.33 The toy itself provides tactile experience. The mannerisms and signals with which the toy or book is presented by the primary carer are crucial to the child’s learned experience in that situation. Social evaluations of either approval or disapproval are presented to and witnessed by the child in this situation.

Social evaluations need not always have an emotional side to them, of course. But when they do - when learned through approval and disapproval and associated with the strong emotions that accompany those social evaluations of oneself and others can be very durable indeed (Strauss & Quinn 1997 p95).

33 These male models are perceived as unrealistic body images. Researchers from the Harvard Medical School in the US have found that there appears to exist a "muscle dysmorphia" among boys exposed to toys including "GI Joe", 'Sergeant Savage' or 'Batman'. These models have been presented to boys since the early 1960s. In order to recreate themselves like these models, we are likely to see an increasing number of men develop over-eating disorders to increase their muscle bulk. (Health Reader Vol. 5, No. 10 December 1999, pp 8-9)
It can be argued that schemas evoke emotions in a wide variety of contexts. The emotional world of individuals in day-to-day life situations is important to the individual as a cultural construct. In turn, schemas collectively are important in the overall understanding of culture (D’Andrade 1995; ed. D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; Strauss & Quinn 1997). Our emotions and feelings drive us to act, react or respond to any given situation. Abuse has an intense and deep impact on victim’s emotional levels, particularly, when the abuse has been part of the infantile experience (Bragg et al 1989).

Strauss and Quinn (1997) argue that cultural schemas are particularly durable when shaped by an infantile experience:

> Notably, the role of emotional arousal\(^\text{34}\) in making schemas durable can explain the indelibility of schemas learned in infancy, if we assume that early experiences tend to be linked to exceptionally strong feelings related to survival and security. To the degree that such an early experience is widely shared, the durable schemas shaped by this infantile experience will be cultural schemas (1997p. 93).

They go on to suggest the ‘infantile experience has a powerful effect on motivation’ (1997 p. 107). Harold tells us that because of what he went through at the hands of an abusive male youth in his childhood, he has a way of ‘getting back at men through women… by being, unfaithful, insincere and lying a lot’.

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\(^{34}\) Emotional arousal is the awakening or movement of emotions when they are triggered by a particular situation that carries previous emotionally arousing experiences.
It was important to gain a sense of the feelings of the men who participated in the study. Their feelings were an expression of their emotional world. Their early experiences of attachment with their primary carers were emotion filled times, which carried memories as schemas into adulthood. Hence, the emotional world of men was important in my discussion on men and masculinities as it relates to their cultural cognitive constructs and is central to their self-representation (Gregg 1998; Strauss & Quinn 1997).

In her discussion on the ‘reworking of cognitive connectionist models’ Burbank notes, ‘emotions are seen linked in associative networks to other kinds of information from both the past and the present’ (2000 p14). In the life span, this includes childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Feelings and emotions are created in early childhood and it is through the guidance of primary carers that children establish their basic schemas (Bowlby 1969; Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Chisholm 1998). The cognitive frameworks developed in childhood provide information that is used to assess situations in future scenarios (D’Andrade 1995; D’Andrade & Quinn 1992; Strauss & Quinn 1997; Bowlby 1969 Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Chisholm 1998).

Emotions work the construction and re-construction of one’s current ‘reality’. How parents interact with their offspring and siblings interact with each other impacts on the intrapersonal world of individuals. For the men who participated in the study, emotions are significant “deciders” of how and what response they will take in a particular situation. James “decided” he would rather be kicked and hit by a woman than ever hit a woman himself.
I demonstrate through the participants’ accounts of their life situations, how cognitive processes representing their early childhood experiences have all played a significant role in the way they have conducted themselves and behaved in adult romantic relationships. Allen, a participant to my study, provides a good example of the long-term impact of early caretaker experience. He talked about the ‘breach of trust’ experienced when his grandmother interfered with him sexually when he was a boy, about 6 years old. He described the experience in the following way:

I think her husband had died and she interacted with me [put hand inside trousers and fondled penis] as a male child. It’s an abuse, an abuse of trust. It’s not right to anyone’s mind.

Allen also talked about entrusting his romantic love partner with his ‘emotional world’ and said the abuse he experienced, as a result of their relationship was a breach of that trust. When describing his romantic love partner he explains:

I was head over heels for this person …In a sense [I trusted her] with my emotional world. There was a breach of trust with my emotions. It was emotional and psychological abuse…..psychological abuse is a breach of trust.

These experiences related by Allen, suggest a link between the breach of trust he experienced as a child with his caregivers, and the trust he had with his romantic love partner as an adult. Allen also expressed feelings of being abandoned by his caretakers, his mother and ‘house- keepers’, the persons from whom he had expected love and nurturing. It seems that Allen held a
schema of being either abandoned by a female carer or breaching trust. He took or reflected this sense of abandonment into his romantic love relationship and experienced what he describes as emotional and psychological abuse. This example of Allen’s child and adult life experiences provide some insight into how important childhood memories are in adult situations and relationships.

Quinn (1997) tells us that ‘it is from infantile experience….that love acquires its motivational force, including its power to shape our understanding of marriage’ (p. 201) and all adult romantic love relationships (Hazan & Shaver 1997). In relation to the creation of cultural schemas, as in the case of love described by Quinn (Strauss & Quinn 1997), it

…exemplifies, not only the incorporation of emotion and motivation into a cultural schema…but the primary role that may be played by these emotions and motivations in the formation of such schema’ (p..201).

Quinn (Strauss & Quinn 1997 p. 202) notes that as the infant looks to closeness with its caregiver so the adult looks to his/her romantic partner for closeness, expecting to share his/her life with them, expecting the relationship to be permanent. As an adult the needs that look to being fulfilled include ‘sensuality and sex…and caring’ (p. 203).

Quinn (1997) also points out that:

Psychoanalytic theorists regard this ability to take both needful and need fulfilling roles in a relationship as a hallmark of mature love, and indeed, it is for them perhaps the very measure of adulthood in our society.
This is significant as, conversely, it indicates that if a person has not been nurtured, nor had his/her physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs met as a child, then it is likely that as an adult they may find it difficult to have their needs as mature adults in romantic love relationships met either (Hazan & Shaver 1997; Cassidy & Shaver 1997). For such people, the schemas surrounding love that they have developed and evolved, lack a feeling of total security, and hence lack an expectation of having those needs met as a mature adult (Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Hazan & Shaver 1997). For example, in a later interview Allen talked about never again expecting to fall in love or ever finding a romantic love partner with whom to share his life, someone he could trust with his emotions and feelings. Although in his relationship with Violet he had the expectation that he could find a romantic love partner with whom he could resonate, she seems to have been his last hope. I will continue to explore these concepts in latter chapters of the study when discussing abuse and masculinities.

The following are some further examples where there appears to be a possible link between childhood experiences or messages and self-belief or self-identity in adulthood35.

Matthew said that:

Mum and dad were disciplinarians. It was an abusive upbringing. We were smacked, hit or verbally put down at the drop of a hat.

He then recounts that in latter life with romantic partners:

35 The following two examples are only early indications and as this study evolves I hope the links will become clearer to the reader.
Even after I’d made changes, she [his wife] was starting to get violent. Like she threw a pot at me. Things got progressively worse. She wouldn’t talk to me for days…She was never honest with me about our relationship. She was looking around for other relationships…

Robert attributes his decision to marry his first wife, who was his first love, to the model his parents presented him in relation to how they developed their own romantic love relationship.

The relationship between my mother and father was very good. My mother tended to mother my father quite a lot. My mother’s parents died by the time she was 12 and she was put into boarding school…. met father when she was 16 and they got married when she was 19 and him 23. It was a very close relationship. It was exceptional. And I suppose I was brought up with the first love syndrome.

Only Matthew, of the all the participants to this study, described his parents as abusive. However, seven participants in total talked about being hit or smacked by a parent as a child. Three participants described situations of physical abuse by a caregiver other than a parent as a child and three participants talked about being sexually abused by an older person as a child. Matthew did not disclose who abused him sexually. However, Allen talked about being sexually interfered with by his grandmother and Harold related his experience of sexual abuse by an older teenage male. Four participants talked about being bullied at primary school and one participant physically bullied at military college. Four participants described situations of being bullied by an older brother. Only one participant, Robert, did not talk
about any kind of abusive situation occurring during his early childhood and adolescent years. The men’s early childhood and adolescent experiences could be seen to have impacted on their self-representations in so far as they saw themselves as being vulnerable to situations of abuse in latter years. To adequately support this statement, further in depth knowledge would need to be gained about the life histories of the participants. However, there is some evidence that an experience of abuse as a child or adolescent can create a predisposition to abuse in latter years (Cassidy and Shaver 1999; Nunnally et al 1988; Gelles 1987). This will be further explored in Chapter 3.

I wish to end this chapter with the following account of an abusive situation provided by Ralph as an illustration of the possible intense emotions that can be associated with early attachment experiences and behaviour:

I was the sixth surviving child; there were two more born after me. When the next one was born, and I was about 2 or something like that, my Mother became seriously ill, so she was put in hospital for about 3 weeks or so and in that time, my Father was working long hours. They brought in a woman basically to look after me. I was still a little toddler, and I remember aspects of it but not that much. She was a little bit abusive, I regularly got smacked about and told off and she showed complete indifference to me in a way, and if I wet myself, she sort of tipped me in a sink and I’d be left there for hours until my older brother or someone came home from school or something like that. I do remember bits of that, but not much.
When my Mum came out of hospital, and this is sort of related to me by her afterwards, my Father said to her that I was a bit different, when she saw me apparently I had lost weight, my eyes were sunk in and my teeth began to buckle and I used to stare into space. Now part of that might be abuse and I think also though, to be honest, part of it was fact that my Mother wasn’t there and I didn’t understand it then. Although I think that woman that was in care of me failed in her responsibility to care for me, I don’t think it was solely that, but I was clearly affected by it.

The result of that was that I regularly used to wet myself, and mess myself and also I couldn’t sleep very well at night. And I, like a lot of kids that are a bit disturbed, I rocked myself to sleep which is in fact why I have ears which stick out, because as your head goes back and forth your ears get folded in that way. And actually I’ve often as an adult noticed people whose ears stick out I immediately think that they may have had a similar sleeping disorder. That sleeping disorder continued until I was 14 and I have insomnia still as an adult (I’m 40 now). But I had nightmares right up until my early twenties – really horrific nightmares – and I didn’t like going to sleep until I was in my late teens because I was scared of the sort of dreams I might have. In a way, that incident affected me. But anyway it was a short period of my life and for the most part my mum who was extremely loving; we always had a very loving Mother.
When I was about 2 as I was saying, I was looked after by that woman [the nanny]…[when] my mother came out of hospital, things repaired themselves slightly, but I became very clingy to my mother after that, and I was very shy and introverted. And people told me and it is all through my earlier school reports, that I barely speak and when I do, people can’t hear me. I was just, I was scared of adults quite a lot – not everyone. [Ralph reminisces about an uncle] I knew one of my uncles – I was very fond of him. But most adults I wasn’t familiar with. I was very unsure of them.

… as an adult, you find yourself in all these situations where you re-live the scars of Fairbridge constantly and some of it’s bad, cause it makes you angry and some of it’s good, because it’s also a way of saying – maybe in some ways I had life experiences that informed me very early on, about injustice, and other people didn’t have that opportunity, and I shouldn’t be angry with them. It just gives me the opportunity to inform them about it. So I constantly go through this thing in my head. I balance my anger with “ok, they don’t really understand lets just use this as an opportunity to explain it to them. It’s very hard; it’s very hard to talk about injustice without remembering your own pain.
Chapter 3

ABUSE

Annaliza: Brian, have you had any problems with any of the women at the refuge?

Some women fall in love… There was one particular case of a woman, Carol, who stayed at the refuge. I was living with a couple of guys and one of these guys’ sister knew this girl and went to school with her. And they had gone to the same school I went to. Anyway, she’d been in a violent relationship and came to the refuge, with her two children. She stayed at the refuge for probably 4 or 5 weeks. I spent a lot of time with her children like I do with all the children there. Alternative accommodation was found for her - it was probably 5 or 10 minutes from where I lived. On my way home I dropped off furniture and clothes and stuff that were at the refuge, to her new place. It wasn’t until probably about a month or two months after that Carol started to phone up my home. In the beginning she needed someone to talk to and that would be enough. She used to phone me at the refuge not at home.

Annaliza: How did she get your number?

I don’t know, I think the guy I live with, his sister had been Carol’s best friend at school and there could have been a contact through there that she got the number. And then she started dropping round unannounced, a
lot of times drunk – knocking at the door, knocking on the windows and it could be anytime during the day right through to the early hours of the morning – at 3 o’clock in the morning. And it went on for a while. I called the police. On several occasions, they came out. There was one time, which blew me away. I woke up at 3 o’clock in the morning finding this woman had walked into my house turned the light on and had a gun in her hand. And held it to her head, saying, “Do you think I should use this”? I was devastated to be woken up by this. And I told her she should put the gun down and she threw it to the ground saying, “Oh, it’s not real anyway”.

And I can’t remember the conversation but I told her to get some help – I told her “I can’t help you”.

She was probably there 5 minutes. She picked up the gun raced out and I called the police. They couldn’t do anything about it - she’d gone. That was probably 2 to 3 years ago and since that incident there’s been tapping on windows all hours. Recently, she’s come past, driven past and loitered. Hasn’t approached the house at all.

This introductory account is taken from the first interview I conducted for my study. Brian was relating his experience of what he termed or self-identified as an abusive relationship with Carol, a woman he met thorough his job. Brian said in a later interview that he had had a short-term sexual relationship with Carol, who later stalked him. Carol had stalked Brian and yet was herself a victim of domestic violence. He had met her in a women’s crisis accommodation service escaping domestic violence from her male partner.
Brian was one of the child-care workers at the refuge. This scenario, is an example of an abusive incident experienced by the participants to my study. The literature on male abuse and reports by the other participants in the study tell us that this type of scenario is neither incredible nor unusual.

Men have historically been perceived as the more aggressive of the two genders (Firestone 1979; Millet 1969; Summers 1975; Dobash and Dobash 1979). Going to war has been taken for granted as something a man has to do, that is, defend his country, women, children and the elderly. John Webb (1998) talks about Australian men going to war and says that ‘men demonstrate their supreme test of masculinity’ (p. 67) through their readiness to go to war. He also says that ‘whole generations of Australian men have had their masculinity confirmed and their importance in the national culture established by war’ (p. 67), and that information about ‘former generations of Australian men’ going to war is ‘immediately available within the family’ (p. 67). Webb goes on to explain that there exists a whole ethos about masculinity surrounding war and violence (pp. 65-87). It is expected that men will be violent and aggressive during war (pp. 65-87). According to Webb (1998), this is certainly the test of whether a man is a real man (pp. 65-87). Barry McCarthy (1994 pp. 105-120) explains that male violence experienced through war, cannot be adequately addressed without looking at warrior values and their relationship with masculinity. He notes that there appears to be an ‘almost universal, intimate bond between warrior values and conventional notions of masculinity’ (p. 105). McCarthy explains what ‘warrior values’ are,

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36 I understand that war is also perceived as that which men use as a tool for basic rivalry against each other. However, I also see war is also a symbol of that male power which is strongly linked to masculinity.
how they have evolved historically, how they differ between cultures and what role they play in modern society (pp. 105-120).

The military forces seemed to play a significant role in the lives of some of the men I interviewed. Arnold is currently a member of the Australian Navy as was his father for a number of years before worked as an engineer in civilian life. Arnold notes: ‘my father had left the navy about 7 years before I was born. When I was born he was a public servant, an engineer…working supporting ships’ missile systems’.

Graham was a member of the Army Reserve in his early twenties. Brian’s father was a sailor all his working life: ‘He’s been at sea since he was married when he was 24 or 25’. Allen’s father was a member of the Air Force before leaving and working as a businessman. Allen also describes the beliefs and attitude his father sensed came from being in the Air Force: ‘He was a member of the air force once. He’s very much the Australian version of stiff upper lip. You should do the honourable thing. Truth and honour.’ On the other hand, painting a different scenario, Joseph noted that his older brother, who had been abusive towards him, joined the military forces.

Robert and James in their descriptions of their abusive romantic partners mentioned that their partners’ fathers had been in the Navy. Robert described his wife and her father in the following manner:

She was very masculine. She was always the son that her father didn’t have. And he was in the Navy being macho, she was very strong-willed. She and he would start yarning on about what happened in the Navy.
The military presents a public image or extrapersonal world associated with masculinities and implications of accepted and even required abusive behaviour. The military is a cultural environment where violence is not just accepted but also required as in war.

Another area where violence often receives tacit approval on a broad societal and cultural level is sport. Studies of men and masculinities make reference to the male persona as a sports hero and the level of violence accepted as part of the cultural milieu of playing sports, in particular games like football, soccer and rugby (Connell 1995; Webb 1998; Archer 1994; Marino 1984). In his second interview, Robert expressed his feelings about violence in football in relation to his son playing the sport:

Rick is talking about giving up on footy. … Knocking someone around a bit to get the ball… and Rick doesn’t have that and I’m actually quite pleased. And there’s also the issue of damage to the body. And anyway I don’t think it would take him very far. Also though things like footy and rugby are in my view extremely un-technical sports … and disgusting … finger up the bum… a player…has been actually shoving his finger up people’s arses and there are all kinds of views about it, but in my view he should retire, not acceptable, because what they’ve done is vulgarise acceptability…it’s really quite revolting. His coach said Rick needs to learn to tackle better, but I think this a bit “tacky”. There’s some physical contact in basketball, but it’s not generally speaking the aim of the person to knock out and damage the other or they can’t carry on the match. And I mean in soccer those things happen, but those things are
decided by the referee and they get sent back…so it’s not an assumption
to sock in your boots.

There is, it seems, an interrelationship between sports and masculinities,
which is important in understanding why violence in sports is accepted
(Connell 1995; Webb 1998; Archer 1994; Marino 1984). This interplay works
in both the public and private worlds and, as such, impacts on the
intrapersonal and extrapersonal levels of individuals’ mental structures or
schemas. Webb (1998) provides an explanation of this interplay between
masculinities and sport:

The masculine styles of our male sporting heroes create a structure of
dominance in the gender order as a whole, which puts the culturally
idealized forms of masculine character that our sporting heroes represent
at the top of the hierarchy (p. 89).

Men hold schemas about sport and about being men in sporting activities as
part of their overall self-representation as men. Robert provides some insights
into his own schemas about men and sports. His thinking supports the view
presented by Webb (1998). Robert explains how he understands the interplay
between the public and private view of men, sports and masculinities:

I'm not the male sporting macho type. And those people [sportsmen] do
exude that... It's a real thing and you can see them in the photographs as
well, sporting photographs. Big strong, fat (pointing to shoulders),
obviously athletic space, nurturing the younger lads.
Robert also talks about what he perceives as the ‘need’ for sports for men in Australian culture, as opposed to the British culture, where he originated:

I'm working very hard on Rick having skills in sports and physical presence, which I actually suspect is more important in Australian culture and more easy to get away with than, say, being a musician, more with an interest or whatever melding in with the culture than you can do in somewhere like England.

In this passage it seems that Robert is suggesting that in order to be accepted as a man, particularly in Australian culture, one needs to be involved in sporting activities. In Australia, football heroes in particular, are given a lot of attention by the media and are held up as model males for younger men. Australian football is considered to be a rough and tumble game. Many players have sustained long-term physically debilitating injuries, and some players have sustained injuries that have left them totally incapacitated as quadriplegics and paraplegics.

We see, therefore, a link between sports, the military and masculinities. We also observe that these structures or institutions at times create an environment where aggressive or violent behaviour by men is not just accepted, but even expected in any given situation and circumstance (Connell 1995; Webb 1998; Archer 1994). Studies have identified a correlation between violent behaviour, demonstrated in sports and the military, with violence in interpersonal relationships with romantic partners and family members (Archer 1994).
When looking at violence based on gender, there exists a large body of literature and statistical evidence to support the proposition that there is a preponderance of violence against women perpetrated by men (Archer 1994; Scutt 1990; Ferrante et al 1996; Young People and Domestic Violence Report 1997). Harold, a participant to the study, at the end of his interview, poignantly stated:

When you just look at the sheer amount of violence, women are violent but there’s so much male violence you tend to get lost in it.

As a feminist it has been extremely difficult for me to research the area of masculinity under abusive conditions created by women. Woman as perpetrator is often a difficult concept for feminists to accept, given the struggle they have put up to gain social and political recognition in areas such as health, work and education (Summers 1994; Einstein 1985). Feminist discourse and thinking, has for a long time viewed women as victims of violence and abuse in romantic love relationships. This thinking and viewpoint has facilitated and reinforced public and private perspectives of women as victims, and men as perpetrators.

Joyce Layland (Stanley 1990, p.128) talks about the ‘conflicts of doing feminist research into masculinity’ and suggests that part of the difficulty is that we as women produce masculine behaviour and we consequently have to live with it (p.128). Layland (1990) goes on to say that our co-existence with this masculine power challenges us with decisions about where we work and employ ourselves in leisure and educational activities (p. 128). As primary caregivers of children we are charged with producing masculinity, although,
our partners are often accused of producing it ‘in abstentia’ (p. 128).

Consequently, we become consumers of masculinity. We do it daily. Some forms of masculinities are our own production and some forms of masculinities, someone else's production (Berger & Wallis 1995 pp. 7-16).

Graham, in describing what happened between him and his “abusive” partner, suggests how women produce and consume masculinities: ‘I actually felt guilty when she [abusive partner] called me gutless. … She was the victim and I was the saviour and jealousy was the perpetrator…’ Then when he talks about his current wife Graham says:

I always thought that my role was to go home and bring joy and happiness but Mary [his wife] would get annoyed. Instead she wanted me to say I had a shit day. She was studying and had had a bad day. [So then] I use to find bad things to share. This actually brought us closer.

As stated earlier, the idea of women producing and consuming masculinities will be further explored in the following chapter, Constructing Masculinities.

The participants in this study were asked to define both abuse and masculinity in their own words through a series of prompts37. The individual perspective is of utmost importance in the analysis and relationship of the information gathered. It is only through recognition and acknowledgment of the individuals’ perspectives that we can come to an authentic understanding of cognitive processes (Hart 1992).

37 See Appendix I for questions and prompts.
In some way or another, all participants talked about their experience of abuse as filling them with fear. Harold expresses his feelings about being bullied at school and the sexual abuse he experienced as a young adolescent:

I was afraid at school because I was bullied and there would be boys waiting outside to bash me when I was going home. The guy next door was 16. It took me years to work out how much older than me he was … he sexually abused me for a couple of years on and off. I thought it was a relationship…[Harold explains how he felt as a result of the abuse] Lonely. Loneliness. Anxiety. A lot of inexpressible rage…. like really serious truancy, running away from home, violence, theft, just staying out … looking for something. Like walk the streets. Go off on my own. I was a real mess…. it wasn’t until I was in my mid 30s, I had a break down at university…and then a little later and for years ….I’d get panic attacks and …claustrophobia all that stuff. All classic stuff in the gut.

The participants defined situations of abuse from a self-representative perspective. They defined abuse as a result of their life experiences, and discussed how they made sense or understood the situations from a cultural and cognitive perspective (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997). The following section will address the social construction of abuse, which I conceive as the extrapersonal world structure. As I have previously explained, what happens at the broader extrapersonal or public level, impacts and interacts with the intrapersonal mental structures developing schemas about abuse from a self-representative perspective.
The Social Construction Of Abuse

Our understanding of the social construction of abuse has become more highly developed over the last 20 years (Scott 1995 p. 117). The idea of the prevalence of abuse has come to be widely accepted, almost without question, by professionals and public alike (p. 117). Scott (1995) notes that the ‘problem of child abuse’ (p. 118) was only recognised as ‘a problem’ in the late nineteenth century (p. 118). She says that the ‘late (re) discovery of child sexual abuse is generally attributed to societal denial in a sexually repressive era’ (p. 118). The recognition of child abuse as a social problem involved the reframing of relationships, such as the model of father-daughter incest where the daughter was perceived as ‘seductive’ and the mother as the ‘colluding wife’ (p. 118). This model was challenged by ‘a feminist model of incest which, emphasized the gendered nature of child sexual abuse and the significance of patriarchal power’ (p. 119).

Scott also tells us that there is no common definition of what constitutes an abusive act (p. 121). For example, investigation into male abuse is still in its embryonic stage of development. Our cultural and social models support the view that men are still seen as the main perpetrators of violence (Archer 1994). Notwithstanding the literary and statistical support for this view, men are sometimes also victims of abuse and violence (1994). A number of studies indicate that it is more culturally and socially expected for men to be abusive and violent than women (Young People & Domestic Violence Report 2001; Archer 1994; Cook 1997). This acceptance has to do with a wide variety of
cultural messages supported by the socialization process of men. This is about men being the stronger sex, natural aggressors, the hunters and about boisterous and aggressive behaviour being somehow natural male traits (Young People & Domestic Violence Report 2001; Archer 1994). James reflected this in his interview when he described why he did not hit back and allowed his partner to continue hitting him:

... she’d actually hit me a few times …and told me to hit her back if I was a man. Now in my mind I’ve always held the view that any man that hits a woman is wrong, whatever the provocation… I’d just roll into a ball on the floor and she’d kick me and say, ‘Go on hit me, hit me’. She’d just get so up tight about something and I said my view is that you just don’t hit a woman so I’d go into the foetal position really, roll up and think, ‘Keep kicking me because you can’t hurt me’. It’s different if it were a man kicking a woman, because a man kicking a woman can do a lot of damage. It wasn’t as though she was a big woman or anything, and I’m a small man, so I knew I wasn’t going to be hurt as such. But I was afraid that if I snapped I could hurt her.

The cultural messages that influenced James’ reasoning for not hitting back or restraining the abusive behaviour of his partner, are supported by social structures and institutions and reinforced at the broader public or extrapersonal world structural level. Thus, while men, in general, might be expected to be more violent than women, it is generally accepted that men should not hit women, and that men can do more damage hitting women than women can when hitting men. These social and cultural factors sometimes make it
difficult to investigate situations where men are abused by women, because they are generally perceived as being outside the norm, so that they are almost unbelievable (Archer 1994; Cook 1997). It is through personalized accounts, that the social construction of men being abused by women in romantic love relationships, may be modified to provide a broader understanding, that in fact, all forms of abuse cause significant pain and fear in the victim, no matter what the gender (Cook 1997; Young People & Domestic Violence Report 1997).

At the beginning of this chapter, I reported Brian’s experience of being stalked by a woman. He here expresses his feelings and view that the sense of fear is no different for a man than for a woman:

A man being stalked by a woman is no different to a woman being stalked by a man…you have to be there to understand what’s going on.

It was quite scary, I mean I’m probably feeling a lot more comfortable than what I was a year ago – it’s frightening. I wasn’t sleeping…I’ve gone to see a psych…I think maybe it’s affected my work.

In working to make sense of a construction of masculinity under abusive conditions with a female as the perpetrator, it has been important to consider a range of theoretical constructions and ideologies. The following section will provide an overview of the “social problem” and definition of abuse.

**Defining Abuse**

The definition of abuse has been built on the societal acceptance and recognition of abusive behaviour as a social problem (Scott 1995). In defining
abuse, current literature provides a general understanding that it ‘indicates or includes acts carried out with the intention of inflicting physical, emotional, and/or psychological hurt on another’ (Marino 1984 p. V). This view is supported by many more current writings in the field of family and child abuse. (Justice & Justice 1990; Gelles 1987; Cook, 1997; Etherington 1995; Elliott ed. 1993; Dobash & Dobash 1998). Abuse can also include the act being carried out or a threat of the act being carried out (Cook 1997 p 2). It is generally agreed among authors and professionals in the field that physical abuse is easier to measure than psychological, emotional and sexual abuse (Cook 1997 p. 2).

The Western Australian Department of Family and Children’s Services sees itself as an organization ‘together with other government and community organizations…. working to prevent family and domestic violence and to help those affected by it’ (Annual Report 2000/2001). The Department defines family and domestic violence in the following manner:

Family and domestic violence are any form of abuse, violence or coercion, which occurs between people who are in close personal relationships or who have been in relationships in the past. Abuse between married couples, defacto couples, ex-partners and other family members are usually called domestic violence. (Annual Report 2000/2001)

38 Family and domestic situations, are understood to be created from partnerships formed through romantic love relationships.
On their web site (www.fcs.wa.gov.au), the Department of Family and Children’s Services makes the following statement about domestic violence:

There are many definitions of domestic violence but generally the term refers to abuse of one person by another who has or has had an intimate relationship with them. This includes spouses, defactos, ex boyfriends and other family members.

The terminology can be confusing as often the terms domestic violence, family violence, spouse abuse, wife assault and wife battering are all used to mean the same thing. Among the different definitions in use, some include only criminal activities and others encompass a wider range of coercive behaviours.

Family and Children's Services includes physical, sexual, verbal, and psychological abuse in its understanding of spouse abuse, as well as behaviour which causes the victim to live in fear.

The following excerpt from the Department of Family and Children's Services’ website demonstrates that the perspective it adopts is one in which patriarchy is seen as the key problem. It also notes the historical factors related to violence perpetrated by men against women.

It is recognised that when violence occurs between adults in their private lives, in some cases men may be victims. However, domestic violence is, in general, overwhelmingly found to be abuse by a man to a woman. At least 90% of spouse abuse is carried out by men against women. Historically men have been able to treat women as their possessions and
to use force to control them. Women are no longer chattels in a relationship, but some of the old notions about men’s right to power and control over women remain.

A Western Australian study conducted into domestic violence (Ferrante et al 1994) supports the idea that overwhelmingly the majority of cases of domestic violence victims are women (p. 63). A recent national Australian study into Young People and Domestic Violence (1997) provides statistical information supporting the view that ‘in more serious forms of domestic violence, female victimisation is more prevalent than male victimisation’ (p. xv). However, in ‘less serious forms’, male victimisation and female victimisation appear equal’ (p. xv). The research also points out that many young men and women hold traditional patriarchal views on the socialised roles appropriate to men and women, and how they should behave in romantic love relationships according to these roles (1997 pp. 28-31). The research suggests there is a link between witnessing domestic violence, attitude towards being either a victim or perpetrator, and actually experiencing or being involved in violent situations (pp. 129-130). It also says, that ‘there is some evidence that higher levels of violence occurred in homes where young people hold attitudes more supportive of violence’ (p. 84). Overall, the research (1997) provides significant insights that support the approach I have adopted, in particular, in supporting the notion that there are cognitive links between the experience and

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39 Less serious forms of violence appear to have been things like: yelling; putting down or humiliating; shoving or throwing something. Whereas the more serious forms of violence appear to have been: kicking; hitting; beating up; threatening with a gun and forced sex Young People and Domestic Violence (1997 p 115).

40 For a more informed and detailed discussion refer to the Young People and Domestic Violence full report September 2001.
witnessing of abusive situations in early childhood and latter adult life experiences of abusive situations (1997).

The types of abuse people experience or witness impact on their understanding of abuse, and the significance of abuse in their future life situations and scenarios (Young People & Domestic Violence Report 1997; Archer 1994). In an attempt to gain a broadly accepted social and cultural definition of abuse, the Western Australian Department of Family and Children’s Services (2000/2001; www.fcs.wa.gov.au) provides categories describing the types of abuse that occur in the Western Australian community.

The types of abuse which are usually considered to be aspects of domestic violence include the following:

Physical Harm: This can range from pushing and slapping to punching and breaking bones, and includes using weapons and denying sleep, food or medical care.

Sexual Abuse: This includes forcing the victim to engage in any sexual act against her will, demeaning and humiliating sexual comments or jokes, or threatening physical harm should she not comply with his sexual requests.

Emotional/Psychological/Verbal Abuse: Any action designed to degrade, humiliate and demean. This also includes threats of physical harm to the person, to property and to pets. Stalking is also included here.
Economic Abuse: Where a partner has no access to, or control over the family income. One person may be given money only for household expenses and none for personal use, while the other spends freely on himself.

Social Abuse: This includes enforced social isolation or social control where one partner prevents the other from having any social contact, or strictly controls any social contact.

Note that with sexual abuse and economic abuse, the department uses the female gender to describe the victim, rather than taking a more neutral position as it does in describing the other forms of abuse. This implies a view that only women are the victims of sexual abuse and that men only, are perpetrators. Some of the situations described by study participants, included self-definitions of experiences of sexual abuse. Allen at his first interview provides this example:

There was a feeling of being maybe abused from the way that she approached the sexual aspect of your relationship… it had to always be that a woman can say no but a man can’t say no. And a man won’t say no, a man is always ready for sex and on that particular occasion I said no to her and she must have been ovulating at the time and that’s why she wanted to have unprotected sex…because she knew what her cycle was and she knew that she was ovulating and it was late at night and I’d been at work for 13 or 14 hours or some … length of time and I’d had a particularly stressful day and she was demanding sex. I said, “Look I’m just too tired, I just don’t feel like it. And it’s not going to be enjoyable
for me”. And she said “Have you got problems, have you, relating to sex”?

And I said, “No I’m just tired that’s all”… I suppose that I felt that she had no respect for my wishes. Very little respect for what I wanted. It was her – that’s what’s important, that’s what matters, that’s what counts that’s the important thing, what I wanted was immaterial. Zero.

In gathering the ethnographic data for this study, I did not provide the men with a definition of abuse. Rather I worked to elicit their definition of what they considered to be abusive in situations through their life experiences.

Of the eleven participants who took part in the study, six indicated they had suffered physical abuse as adults, with women as perpetrators. Three participants identified physical abuse as children, with the perpetrators being women. Five participants identified bullying at school, though this was mainly by other males, not females. Ralph, recalled his experience of child abuse when staying at Fairbridge Farm. It is interesting to note that the definitions provided by participants, very closely match the descriptions provided by the Department. The following is a collation of the types of abuse experienced by the participants in the study, together with examples of their experiences of the various types of abuse.

Matthew relates his experience of abuse as an adult in a romantic love relationship:

She actually got physical… she hit me when we were [overseas]. It was an intense situation. I was driving the car. It freaked me out… I can’t
even talk to another woman. At the conference, for example, she’d hassle me about talking to some woman or ignoring her and she’d blame me for my low self esteem…. for a long time she maintained hitting me was justified and she still feels provoked.

Six participants identified sexual abuse by women. From my understanding of the information provided, this was either in the form of controlling sexual interactions, unfaithfulness or betrayals by sexual partners. These men saw unfaithfulness or betrayals by sexual partners as a form of abuse. For example, Harold explained how his wife’s various male partners during their marriage had a damaging effect on him emotionally and psychologically. Joseph also felt disturbed and extremely upset when he saw his wife naked with another man engaging in what appeared to be sexual behaviour, when instead she had claimed to be engaged in a spiritual coven ritual. One participant, Robert, identified sexual abuse as one aspect of his total experience of abuse with his former wife. Only one participant, Allen, identified sexual abuse as a child:

I was going to my nanna’s whose husband had passed away prior to my birth and the same thing would occur. I would stay there for a few days. I can remember one night, one very warm night…. We were sitting outside on the front veranda with my nanna…. and I can remember her putting her hand up my trousers and she was playing with my penis.

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41 These descriptions reflect participants’ comments. Jim talked about betrayal in the context of his partner, Angela, apparently betrayed his trust for her. Jim gave Angela his love and she betrayed him because she rejected it.
Each participant who took part in the study indicated that he had suffered emotional, psychological and verbal abuse as an adult with a female as the perpetrator. Three participants identified emotional, psychological and verbal abuse as children by female perpetrators. Joseph describes his feelings at finding notes (with sexual references) left behind after one of his wife’s coven meetings and his wife’s reaction when he confronted her with the notes:

It is a fear of total… my heart just fell out. I must have sat in the games room for a few minutes just reading it. Of course I would have to question her and say, ‘Look I have just found these bits of paper on the floor and I pick them up and put them back in the book but I read them’.

[On questioning his wife] Of course she just blew up, completely went over the top of me. I don’t think she would have hit me but if she could, would have destroyed me and she made me feel like I was a little weeder, so she attacked psychologically. I thought like I’d done nothing wrong and to her I had done everything wrong. I thought I had betrayed her in some way [because he read the notes she left behind], but I hadn’t. It was just the way that she made me feel…

Joseph relates his experience of seeing his wife engage in a sexual activity with her coven members:

What I saw was, my wife standing naked in the back yard. The coven leader was kneeling down in front of her groin and was basically worshipping that part of her body. And I just thought, ‘No, this has gone too far now’ and I just had to say something and try and sort things out…
He [male coven member] was now touching her…that’s what happened and so I tried and tried to talk to her about it and I just couldn’t get it out, I just couldn’t say to her, ‘Look, I saw this happening last night, what does it all mean, tell me”.

I just couldn’t get it out - as much as I would have liked to, I just couldn’t. I think I just couldn’t get it out because I knew she would have an answer, an intelligent answer and it would make me look really silly again …She would have a perfectly logical explanation for it.

Three of the participants to the study identified economic abuse by their female romantic love partners. Robert talks about economic abuse in his first marriage:

She started to control the expenditures. I was the primary earner. She was writing cheques from our joint account. I continued to put all my salary into our joint account and she opened a separate account. …I was still cooking, I was still paying the bills and I was still minding the children… At marriage guidance she admitted money was put somewhere else.

Six of the eleven participants identified social abuse as experienced in romantic love relationships. James relates his experience with one of his romantic partners.

Like there was a friend I used to go to soccer with and he used to come round and knock on the front door and he wouldn’t even come in the house. And if …answered the door he’d say, ‘Can James come out to
play, please; I’ll be out in the car waiting for him’. And she’d say to me ‘
‘Have you finished doing your housework?’ I used to have to do
housework until 1 o’clock on Saturday.

These ethnographic excerpts are examples of how the men who participated in
this study defined abuse or violent behaviour through describing experiences
in which they self-identified as the victim. In all bar one of these examples the
perpetrators were women. In the sections below I will attempt to provide a
broad overview of the field of abuse and in particular how it relates to men
being abused by women. My aim is not to provide an extensive nor exhaustive
overview of the literature, but rather to provide views and perspectives that
have relevance to my study, in so far as I am able to relate them to the overall
cultural cognitive approach of my work.

Theories and perspectives of abuse

The more commonly presented scenario surrounding gender abuse, in terms of
the profile of the perpetrator and the victim, is that most of the offenders or
perpetrators are men and most victims are women and children (Ammerman,
R.T. and Hersen, M. 1991; Justice & Justice 1990; Gelles 1987; Dobash &
Dobash 1998; Rudin, M.M., Zalewski, C. and Bodmer-Turner, J. 1995). In
light of literature produced over the last twenty years, it is clear that, overall,
the abuse of men by women has been largely overlooked within the broad
spectrum of literature on abuse (Justice & Justice 1990; Gelles 1987; Cook,
et al (p332, 1995) state that ‘the female perpetration of sexual abuse has, until
recently, been a subject largely overlooked in the child abuse literature’ and
suggest that female offenders make up a greater proportion of perpetrators than present literature indicates.

In their research on female offenders, Koonin (1995) and Lawson (1993) provide some reasons why the topic of female offenders is controversial. Their reasons include factors, such as, feminist ideology, socialisation of males and society’s reluctance to accept the notion of females offending in any way similar to males. Burbank (1994), in pointing out that male violence against women has been identified as a major problem, questions whether, in fact, women are as abusive as men but express their abusive behaviour differently or in more culturally appropriate and accepted ways. The idea of women expressing their abusive behaviour differently to men is important in the overall contextualization of women as perpetrators of abuse and violence (Burbank 1994; also see Kelly 1998 pp30-31).42

There appears to exist, gender specific, culturally appropriate ways of expressing abusive behaviour, or even playing the role of perpetrator or victim. This I think relates to observations made by Anderson and Jack (1991) who talk about real thoughts and feelings being muted under the ‘familiar and publicly acceptable terms of prevailing concepts and conventions’ (p11). This discussion is an interesting one from the perspective of how, at both the intrapersonal and extrapersonal levels, abuse is understood and perceived in any given situation. As indicated earlier, the men who took part in this study felt they would not be believed or validated in their accounts of abuse at the

42 Many earlier studies such as those produced by Gelles 1980 and Dobash and Dobash 1979, did not recognise women as abusive or violent in romantic partner relationships.
extrapersonal level, although at the intrapersonal level, they were clear about what had taken place (D’Andrade & Strauss 1997).  

Historically, there has been a range of theories explaining domestic violence. Some of the more common theories seeking to provide an explanation of domestic violence include: the physiological theory, which attempts to demonstrate that evolutionary and biological factors are responsible for the proclivity towards violence in males (Mayer 1973; Broderick 1982; Marino 1984); the psychiatric model, which attempts to explain abusive behaviour by focusing on personality traits of both victim and assailant as the main factors of violence and abuse (Pizzey E. 1974; Weitzman and Dreen 1982; Marino 1984); and the socio-cultural or sociological theoretical approach, which provides a macro level analysis of abuse (Hopkins & McGregor 1991; Marino 1984). This last model considers abuse in the light of socially structured inequalities and cultural attitudes and norms surrounding abusive behaviour in relationships (Hopkins & McGregor 1991; Marino 1984).

To date, patriarchal theory is one that has had greatest support in addressing domestic violence, particularly among feminists. (Firestone 1979; Millet 1969; Summers 1975; Dobash and Dobash 1979) Patriarchal theory postulates

…that our economic and social systems operate directly and indirectly to support a patriarchal social order and family structure…patriarchy leads

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43 One might ask: Does the social construction of abuse carry a gender bias or is it at least gender specific in some way? This is a question that will be explored to some degree but overall is beyond the scope of this study.
to the subordination of women and contributes to a historical pattern of systematic violence directed against wives (Gelles 1980 p. 882).

Feminist literature and ideology use patriarchal theory, which often focuses on the socialization of males. It describes men as having traits such as dominance, aggressiveness and strength, and as being decision-makers and perpetrators of violence (Greer 1971; Summers 1975). Women in their socialized roles have generally been described as being nurturers and carers, submissive, and as having little ‘real’ social, political, economic or cultural power of their own (Greer 1971; Summers 1975). Cultural, religious and social structures support these idealized roles of women (Greer 1971; Summers 1975). In the feminist literature there appears to have been a reluctance to accept the idea that women might demonstrate what are considered negative male traits, such as abusive or violent behaviour (Greer 1971; Summers 1975). However, some shift in thinking has occurred, and it is now acknowledged that women are capable of being perpetrators of abuse. (e.g. Koonin 1995; Lawson 1993; Burbank 1994; Kelly 1998; Briggs 1991; Crisp 1991; Cook 1997).

There is a perception that women do not have the strength to physically abuse a man and, as such, cannot cause any real harm or hurt (Greer 1971; Summers 1975). Six of the eleven study participants held this idea. Two of the

44 When discussing my thesis topic with some feminists, reactions were negative in so far as there appears to be a denial of the actuality that women may use abuse or violence in interpersonal relationships with men. It is argued even if it does exist it is minuscule in occurrence, vis a vis men abusing women, or that women have been “forced” into using abusive or violent behaviour because of the actions of men (see Young People & Domestic Violence Report 1997 for comprehensive discussion).

45 For example, the idea of women as perpetrators has been acknowledged in Western Australia and in the early 1990’s a lesbian women’s refuge was established to assist women abused by other women (Department of Family & Children’s Services).
participants, James and Paul stated this directly when relating accounts of being hit by their romantic partners. James said: ‘I knew I wasn’t going to be hurt as such’, and Paul said: ‘I didn’t hit her as hard as I would a man or I could have really hurt her’.

The other four participants’ beliefs also reflected the need to protect women in some way or another. One of the participants, Matthew, mirrored this thinking when he talked about his involvement in setting up men’s groups, to address what he described as, ‘sexist behaviour’ and aggressive behaviours towards women, even though, he self-identified as the victim of physical abuse by two female ‘romantic partners’, his ex wife and his current partner at the time of interview. Describing his current partner he said: ‘She actually got physical…She hit me’.

Despite these experiences, Matthew believed that men could cause more harm physically than could women, who in some way needed protection. Neither James nor Matthew hit back at their partners. Their accounts are inconsistent with an observation made by Cook (1997) in that each time a woman strikes a male partner, she greatly increases her chances of becoming a victim herself (1997 p. 25).

However, Paul was ready to hit back when struck by his female partners. He sees this as a challenge to his masculinity:

I was 17 and going with this older woman. One day she got angry with me about something and whacked me across the face. I said, ‘Do that again and I’ll flatten you.’ She replied, ‘Be a man, I dare you’.
So I whacked her.

When I asked if any other women had ever hit him in other relationships, he replied that they had and that he had hit them back: ‘No matter who it is, if someone hits me, I hit back’.

Harold provides a different picture. Having been sexually abused by a male and bullied by males at school, he talks about “getting back” at women for his pain. Harold explained that he hit back at his female romantic partners for the sexual abuse he had incurred as an adolescent, by a male youth. As described earlier, a young teenage male sexually abused Harold in his adolescent years. He became angry and confused about his experience and took his anger and pain into relationships with female romantic partners in later years. This is very significant in this study. His sense of abandonment in early childhood by both his mother and father, and then the sexual abuse and bullying at school all seem to have created negative cultural schemas about romantic relationships.

In general the issue of child abuse is important to my research, given the link I see between early and later intimate relationships. Reflecting on his story, I sense that Harold feels that had his father and mother been available for him, he would not have experienced the abuse he did from the older boy. Below are further excerpts from Harold’s experiences and thoughts about them:

46 In a sense, he seems to have had the need to hit back and let out his frustrations of anger at someone—notably women.

47 Even though this type of experience of abuse does not necessarily predicate a vengeful attitude toward women in later life; however, it does predicate a negative attitude and expectation in romantic love relationships in later years.
He [father] was absent even when he was here because he worked long shifts and… I remember as a kid being told to be quiet because he was asleep during the day because he was a shift worker…

I was about 10 or 11 years old. I was looking for father, brother something. The guy next door was 16. It took me years to work out how much older than me he was. It’s interesting, in the sense that he sexually abused me for a couple of years on and off. I thought it was a relationship. I knew it was wrong in a way, but I was inquisitive and I felt it was normal and that he was closer to my same age. It may have been experimentation, but it wasn’t with some of the things he did to me… and the context. …I was never quite the same again.

…and then I think when I was about 13-14 …something like that he [his father] went to South America to work. So really getting into adolescence and it was very hard. I didn’t think I missed him. But it was a terrible, terrible year for my mother for me. I went wild…and a lot of it my worst period was when I was 14. …I truanted from school for years, I ran away from home, fell in with a bad crowd. …My secondary education was a mess. It didn’t exist. …. I was this wild working class boy… fighting… and all sorts.

I got picked on at school and I had to learn to fight… I got picked on and bullied a bit by the older boys in particular… I learnt to fight. That’s what you had to do there. And I did. … I was very nervous and anxious around school… I was afraid at school because I was bullied and there would be boys waiting outside to bash me when I was going home …
My father didn’t know anything about it. I don’t know why but I never told him. There were a lot of things I didn’t tell him about.

Significant work has been conducted on family abuse, demonstrating the impact it has on children and their development as adults (Scutt 1990; Justice & Justice 1990; Cook 1997; Dobash & Dobash 1998). Kelly (1998 p. 29) explains that although violence is socially accepted, it is subject to social control and is situationally defined. Kelly (1998) draws on work carried out by Strauss in the 1980s and 1990s. He supports the idea that the family is a situation in which violence is ‘both likely to exist and to be accepted’ (1998 p. 29). Extensive literature on domestic violence (Justice & Justice 1990; Gelles 1987; Cook 1997; Etherington 1995; ed. Elliott 1993; Dobash & Dobash 1998) supports the proposition that a significant amount of this abuse occurs between marital partners or in some kind of romantic love relationship. The family insulates the violence that occurs within the family structure from wider social control (p. 29). I would suggest that romantic love relationships are perceived as private and thus, are insulated from the violence that occurs within these relationships. Such relationships are supposed to be caring, nurturing, supportive relationships filled with joy, happiness and understanding (Bloomfield & Vettese 1989) 48. However, the literature and statistics on marital and family violence indicate a significant number of relationships are abusive in one way or another at some point in time.

48 It is interesting that the literature on abuse, even though it defines what an abusive, violent relationship is, does not provide a picture of the opposite, a loving relationship. The authors quoted have written books specifically to assist people in creating loving, caring romantic love relationships. Dr Bloomfield is a psychiatrist and Dr Vettese a psychologist.
I now move into discussing the issues of child abuse as they relate to the
gender of the victims and the perpetrators. Statistics from the Western
Australian Department of Family and Children’s Services identifies 448 males
as victims in substantiated allegations of child abuse, and 564 females. Their
statistics also identify 229 females as the persons responsible for substantiated
allegations of child abuse when the gender of the victim was male and 202
males when the gender is male. These findings clearly indicate that women
are as capable as men of inflicting hurt upon children.

Literature in the area of child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse,
overwhelmingly identifies and describes the offender or perpetrator as male
(Lawson 1993; Koonin 1995). However, particularly since the early 1990s,
there has been a growing interest and increasing amount of research into
Lawson (1993) provides some very disturbing evidence of ‘mother-son sexual
abuse and critiques the methodologies that may be responsible for the under-
reporting of such cases’ (p. 261). Her research is particularly interesting in
relation to my study, as she addresses not only the taboo surrounding mother-
son sexual abuse, but also the link between childhood experience of abuse and
adult behaviour as a result of the abuse.

Lawson (1993) goes on to explain that most of documented cases of mother-
son sexual abuse are to be found in the clinical literature, and that such cases

49 A comprehensive table and breakdown statistics provided by the Department of Family and
Children’s Services is provided in Appendix II. Figures are also provided for the previous
years 1997 through to 1999.

50 I want to impress upon the reader that in drawing on Lawson’s (1993) study, I wish in no way
to detract from statistical and qualitative data provided by a vast array of professionals and
academics indicating the disturbing number of cases and higher incidence of father-daughter
sexual abuse.
are more likely to be ‘disclosed in long-term therapeutic treatment’ (p. 261). Such cases are rarely reported to child-abuse authorities and so are not included in public statistics (p. 261). Hence data from general surveys and reported cases do not accurately reflect the prevalence of mother-son sexual abuse (p. 261).

Lawson (1993) says that Finkelhor (1986) proposes that certain types of sexual abuse experiences may be underreported (1993 p. 264). These include:

(a) Experiences that are blocked and not accessible to retrieval;
(b) Experiences that are partially forgotten, but retrievable with the right prompting;
(c) Experiences that are in memory, but are not defined according to the terms referred to in survey questions;
(d) Experiences that are in memory, but are not volunteered due to embarrassment or to other conscious withholding. (p. 264)

With regards my study, this type of underreporting is significant, particularly from the perspective of the type of abuse and the relationships that occur between victims and perpetrators. Also of significance are the links between childhood and adult life experiences, and their impact on relationships.

Lawson provides definitions of the types or categories of mother-son sexual abuse (p. 263). Broadly these categories include, ‘seductive abuse, sexual abuse that is ‘intended to emasculate and humiliate the child’s sexuality’, overt abuse and sadistic sexual abuse’ (p. 266). She points out that ‘some of the most tragic examples’ of sadistic abuse ‘have been described in the life

51 See Lawson 1993 for definitions of these categories.
histories of several serial sexual killers of females’ (p. 266). She provides as an example one such serial sexual killer of females who was brutally sodomized by his mother with a broomstick, but it was only after hypnosis conducted by a psychiatrist that he recalled the experiences (p. 266). I suggest that this serial killer’s schemas of relationships with women, originally established in attachment to his abusive mother, included a perception that women are dangerous and must be eliminated. A link between attachment, cognitive processes and behaviour seems apparent.

Lawson’s (1993) study indicates problems when research, such as that conducted by the Department of Family and Children’s Services (2000/2001), rely on incidence studies. Her reasons include the point that the fear of the abuse and the consequences on disclosure to the family members actually reinforces secrecy (p. 264). Another reason she notes is that ‘in cases of mother-son sexual abuse, taboo against disclosure is far stronger than taboo against the behaviour itself’ (p. 264). ‘Parental loyalty’ is another obstacle to disclosure (p. 264).

All participants who took part in my study expressed positive feelings towards their mothers, even though at times they had indicated feelings of abandonment and hurt resulting from their mothers’ behaviour. For example, Harold, in describing his mother, expresses these apparently conflicting and confused feelings:

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52 Notwithstanding there is some scepticism regarding regressed memories, my belief is that memories are memories and so until such information, as presented in the article to which I refer, is proven totally incorrect, it poses validity in this argument.
I love my mother. She’s adorable. And everyone loves her… And I have a very good relationship with my mother. She’s very caring and sweet… beyond the usual family thing, we communicate about cooking and nurturing children… typical English working-class stuff… But yeah, I hated her for a while when I was younger… But even though I think I got some really good things from her…. these things are very complicated, aren’t they… I mean, she’s a very sweet lady.

Kaufman et al (1995 p. 332) also suggest that female offenders make up a greater proportion of perpetrators than present literature indicates. The aim of their study was to ‘identify similarities and differences in the modus operandi of female and male perpetrators of sexual abuse’ (1995 p. 332). Their findings suggest that females commit between 3% and 13% of all sexual abuse and further, that ‘females are perpetrators in 1% to 24% of sexual abuse cases involving male victims’ (1995 p. 323). One suggested conclusion is that ‘with few exceptions, the findings …suggest that the type of abuse perpetrated by males and females does not differ on many dimensions’ (1995 p. 330). My impression over the past ten years from The West Australian newspaper is that there has been an increase in the number of reported cases of child abuse committed by women53. The reports have included Australian and overseas cases. I imagine that for many, these cases are extremely difficult to understand and accept, particularly, given the role expected of mothers, that is, of nurturing and protection. This reinforces the difficulty in accepting, at a

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53 This does not necessarily mean that there is an increase in such cases, but instead more frequent reporting may be a result of stories that create greater consumer interest in media.
social and cultural level, the idea of women as perpetrators of abusive behaviour, because they are perceived as nurturers and protectors.

Phillip Cook (1997), and others who have made observations about violence and abuse of women against men, presents statistical information which indicates that in the United States cases of women hitting their partners occur nearly as frequently as, those of men hitting their female partners (1997, p. 9) and that two million men a year in the United States\(^{54}\) are seriously assaulted by their partners (1997 p. 12). He notes that even though the rate of violence against women has decreased over time, the rate of violence against men has increased (1997, p.12). Throughout his book Cook (1997) points out that the men he interviewed and identifies as abused by women were reluctant to report their situations to recognized authorities for a variety of reasons. These reasons included, fear of reprisals, ridicule, embarrassment, emotional and psychological co-dependence and financial need or dependence (p. 26).

Among the participants I interviewed for this study, Brian was the only man who officially reported his experience of abuse to an agency or service\(^ {55}\).

Some of the reasons the men gave for not reporting the abusive situations included: ‘Nowhere to go’; ‘no-one would take me seriously’ or ‘I just didn’t think to’. One of the participants, James, never reported what was happening to authorities, but his work mates were aware of his situation and their offerings of sympathy appeared to suffice:

\(^{54}\) Cook (p12, 1997) takes his statistics from the National Family Violence Survey.

\(^{55}\) This may have been because the perpetrator appeared in his bedroom in the very early hours of the morning with a firearm threatening to kill herself.
We were both working in the same place. You’d get a fair bit of [upset] colleagues; she’d [his partner] have blow-ups and arguments with people. One comment on her appraisal was that “she suffers fools badly”.

And I’d get quite a bit of sympathy from people we’d work with.

When I went back to UK [after wife’s death] close friends of hers I hadn’t written to said they were amazed I didn’t back out, but went to Australia and they were glad to see me. They said: “Although we liked her, we know how difficult she was”.

Cook (1997) presents a number of situations where men have been abused by women in domestic situations, citing examples of partners throwing objects, attacks during sleep, groin attacks, biting, over consumption of alcohol and weapon use (pp. 38-46). He extrapolates his evidence from a study of approximately 100 men (p. 38), also eliciting support from other works conducted in the field. Cook discusses the bewilderment felt by men when they have been the victim of female abuse; why they do not hit back, and the fear men have of being ridiculed for being hit or beaten by a woman (p. 28).

The ridicule experienced by males is often more intense and of a different nature than that felt by women, and so is the shame (p. 54). James provides an

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56 By domestic situations I am referring to episodes of domestic violence where abuse occurs between partners in romantic love relationships.

57 While I was a manager of a women's refuge, a young woman related a story of mutual abuse. She told me how her partner woke her one morning tickling her feet. This annoyed her so she chased after him, grabbed a fork and stabbed him in the chest. On another occasion I had two police officers wanting to know the whereabouts of one of our residents. She was wanted for stabbing a man in New South Wales.

58 It could be debated that a study of approximately 100 men is not statistically significant. However, it does provide some very interesting anecdotal evidence of men abused by women together with some challenging notions about and perspectives in partner abuse.
example of how he felt about his abuse in terms of his masculinity and self-worth:

…it [his masculinity] really diminished. No self worth at all. And I had to suffer with this role. And I had to really. There was no home life as such. I used to sleep on a sofa in a sleeping bag in the lounge and maybe once every three months it would be back in the bed again but within a couple of days, it was back downstairs again because I’d be accused of keeping her awake or “Leave me alone, I’m not interested”. So your self-worth diminished completely, totally.

Cook (1997) notes that men who are victims of domestic violence, like women who experience abuse, try to hide any evidence of injuries from friends and family with other explanations (pp. 45-6). Cook notes, that because the attendant shame and ridicule are less acceptable for men than women, men can feel open to ridicule by friends and family if discovered, and they may also be fearful that the partner might discover that they disclosed their experience (pp. 52-54). There is greater social acceptance for women being abused by men than the reverse (Cook 1997). In this light, it is a sign of “weakness” that a man allows a woman to abuse him. Hence, his sense of shame is likely to be more intense than that of a woman presenting as a victim of abuse by a male. All the participants who took part in the study attempted to hide the scars, whether physical, emotional or psychological from family and friends. Graham provides an instance when he actually concealed a physical injury, inflicted by his romantic love partner:
She was flicking through my teledex, and said, “You’ve still got M’s telephone number,” and she started kicking and punching me. I suddenly felt this crunch. She bit into my shoulder and bit a chunk of it out. I still have a scar. It was surreal, seeing her with eyes of rage and my flesh hanging out of her mouth. … My parents saw the graze on my back and I just told them I fell off my skateboard. I hid what she did to me. I rewarded bad behaviour.

James provided another example. He initially concealed abusive situations between his romantic love partner and himself, from family, work colleagues and friends, but he finally tired and exposed what was going on:

She just went ballistic then, she picked the radio up and threw it at me and cut my head with the radio she threw at me. And she had been very remorseful about that and she said, “Oh, you can’t go into work tomorrow”. … So I went into work with a cut on my lid and a black eye and everyone knew one another, and she knew it was going to be fairly obvious as to what happened.

Cook (1997) also discussed men’s difficulty in leaving an abusive relationship (pp. 26-27 & pp. 60-78). The reasons are not very different from those for women, and include fear of ridicule, shame and a desire to keep family matters private, and concerns about leaving the children behind (1997 pp. 26-27 & pp. 60-78; Roy 1977; Walker 1979; Vinson & Ross 1982).
Four participants appeared to remain in abusive relationships because they did not want to leave their children behind. These men had children with the women who abused them. Robert describes his situation:

All of a sudden a voice yells down the extension, “I’m leaving, I’m taking the kids with me.” They are my kids as well, they are not her property, so I ran into the house and she had taken the kids who were sleeping. She had taken them to the car. I wasn’t going to hurt her, she’d beat me up anyway, she’d done it a number of times anyway. So I went out and sat in the driver’s seat so she couldn’t take the kids without me. …So things calmed down and I managed to allay her fears. And I said that our relationship wouldn’t have any chance unless we decided what was going to happen to the kids. And we did manage to negotiate what would happen in the event of an operation. That thing about taking the kids: I will always hate her for that. The kids matter in the relationship, not just with her and me and with me, and the kids. They were 6 and 4 when that happened.

Two participants, Joseph and Graham, indicated that they wanted to keep family matters private. Joseph identified himself as a traditionalist and worked to keep his marriage together at all costs. He said: ‘Part of our wedding vows was that we would support each other whatever we do’. Graham explained: ‘You’ve got to work as a team’: this, he explained, was ‘scripting from my parents’. Cook (1997) notes that a sense of responsibility, whether one is married to the mother or whether the children are his biologically or not, is also a strong reason why a man may not leave an abusive relationship (pp. 60-
62). Cook (1997) discusses the responsibility men feel towards their children, it being a major reason why men do not leave an abusive relationship (pp. 62-78).

Two participants, James and Paul, who were not the biological fathers of their children, seemed to have a sense of responsibility for the children of their partners. James explained that

‘the son also copped a lot of abuse from Martha and he went to the US to stay with an aunt. I think Martha had an anti-male thing. The daughter, Sally could do no wrong…but she used to go out drinking and come home drunk. She was only 12, but Martha wouldn’t believe me when I told her Sally was drunk’. James also said of his relationship: ‘I couldn’t walk away. I felt a relationship should work and I felt there would be a new life, and we were telling people we were moving. And I really wanted the relationship to work.’

Paul acknowledged a sense of responsibility for the children of two romantic partners whom he also identified as being abusive. Paul said, ‘I always wanted kids of my own and I really enjoyed being a dad to Ethel’s kids’. Paul also noted that he stayed in the relationship: ‘Because it was convenient’.

Participants who took part in my study stayed in abusive romantic love relationships for a range of reasons including some of those identified by Cook (1997) in his study, most notably, concern about the welfare of the children; still love their partner; fear of reprisals and abdicating a sense of responsibility for the family unit (pp. 98-102).
Cook (1997) also suggests that women are more likely to become violent in romantic relationships in more recent times as they have “less at stake materially and emotionally” (p. 24), and therefore are more likely to express their feelings in open and aggressive ways. This view is interesting as it differs from the more customary one that sees women as expressing their aggression differently from men and so perhaps do not appear to be as violent as men (Burbank 1994 p. 3; Kelly 1998 pp. 30-31). As described by the men who took part in this study, all but two of the women with whom they were in abusive romantic love relationships were presented as financially independent. For example, Joseph’s wife was a teacher and Robert’s wife an academic.  

As noted earlier, Cook (1997) says that ‘when a woman strikes her male partner, she greatly increases her chances of becoming a victim herself” (p. 25). This resonates with comments made by Webb (1998) on men being violent against other men and women. He observes that ‘the role of violence between males is the “testing and establishment of power in relation to other men”’ (p. 190), and further notes that ‘women risk the strongest retaliatory action because of their ability to deliver telling blows to a man’s self-esteem, as do men who threaten a man’s masculine self-image’ (p. 191). Strauss (1980) supports this notion by noting that a man can morally justify hitting and abusing his partner if she hits or abuses him, even though she may be retaliating to his abusive behaviour (p. 79). This was the case with Paul, who justified hitting his abusive partners, because they struck the first blow.  

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59 James’s wife worked as an accounts clerk. Paul’s partners included a businesswoman and a secretary. Matthew’s partners worked in social welfare areas. Arnold’s abusive experience was with a senior manager in the corporate sector. Graham’s abusive partner was a shop assistant and Harold’s wife was a secretary. Ralph talked about experience of abuse from women only as a child. Allen’s partner was not identified as having an occupation, although Allen often talked about her wealthy, father.
In relation to the children who witness the violence, the message is: “Violence is acceptable”, and I want to suggest, that it is inconsequential whether the perpetrator is the male or the female: the message is received regardless. One might suggest that if people have experienced or witnessed abuse in early childhood, the schemas they have about abuse and relationships may not only condone it, but perhaps even make it “necessary”. Certainly the individual would appear to have first hand experience in understanding and knowing how to respond or react in an abusive situation. Understanding abuse in a relationship thus may be considered significant to the survival strategy adopted by that particular individual (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997).

Because children become attached to abusive parents (Cassidy & Shaver 1999), it is crucial for them to understand how to respond and react on a behavioural level to the abuse being administered, in order to survive. I would further venture to add that if the “attachment” relationship of the child has an element of abuse, then the child as an adult will register that abuse or conflict in relationships as “normal”, even important to the survival of any relationship (c.f. Cassidy & Shaver 1999). There has been significant literature and research conducted by social scientists into the cycle of abuse (Nunnally et al 1988) or the ‘domestic violence trap’ (Cook 1997, p. 91). It is generally accepted that witnessing of abusive and violent behaviour sustains the cycle of abuse and violence (Nunnally et al 1988; Gelles 1987).

The following is an ethnographic example of this point. James talked about his parents having lots of arguments and ‘raised’ voices. His second long term romantic love relationship endured verbal and physical abuse and it did not
seem unusual for him to have arguments with his partner, and for there to be raised voices. Brian explained that when his father returned from sea he was ‘lovey-dovey’ with his mother for the first week, and then he would become unsettled and the family would ‘tread lightly’. Allen described his parents in the following way:

They had their moments. Mum became frustrated with dad. Fighting has only been in the last few years…getting frustrated, their hearing is going and they are less inclined to be tolerant. 56 years they are together. They know each other so intimately; they know how to hurt each other. For example, if dad wants to hurt [mum] he just has to say something his dad said about her…

Identifying and understanding gender abuse is important in order to understand how an individual makes sense of abuse per se. The relationship of the victim to the perpetrator plays is important part, particularly if the perpetrator has played a primary carer’s role for the victim (Cassidy & Shaver 1999). This relationship of the victim to the perpetrator will be significant to any future relationships formed by the victim, whether the partner be male or female. Most significant for future relationships may be how the victim self-identifies and self-represents, having been himself a victim of abuse.
CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITIES

It now appears to me that woman’s place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things she does (or even less a function of what, biologically, she is) but of the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interactions. And the significances women assign to the activities of their lives are things that we can only grasp through an analysis of the relationships that women forge, the social contexts they (along with men) create – and within which they are defined (Rosaldo 1980, p. 400).

We may transpose the words “men” and “women” in the passage above and ask, what do women’s actions mean to men and how do they affect their self-concepts, their perceptions of the relationships with the women who may or may not abuse them, and their behaviour in the context of these relationships. In this study I am mainly interested in how the self-construction and self-definition of masculinities occurs through the interrelationship with the public, extrapersonal world, and the private, intrapersonal mental structures.

Allen provides an example of the utility of this approach when he explains how he perceived himself in his relationship with his partner, Agnes, and why he did not want to return to the relationship. Allen defined his experiences of abuse as ‘a breach of trust’. It is trust with his emotional world that he says he
gave to Agnes. Below he talks about his feelings about having that trust breached:

This feeling of abuse…the abuse really began from the first day I moved in with her. She was on the rebound. …From the first moment I moved in, it was like a conscious thing on her part to make my life a hell…the abuse in a sense was with my emotional world. There was a breach of trust with my emotions. It was emotional and psychological abuse. It was more a head thing than a physical thing….’

Allen explained that he would not “hit back” at her or leave because he perceived ‘she was in control’ and he was powerless. Even though he does not use the word “masculinity”, I see Allen’s sense of manhood being challenged in a way that makes him feel powerless within the framework of the relationship with his partner.

In another case, Brian said of his fear of being stalked by a woman: ‘I don’t see it [fear] as a gender thing’. Brian seems to imply that men are generally considered to be fearless or at least ideally so. Brian went on to explain: ‘I think men are less likely to report situations where they have been violated’. Again it appears that Brian has a belief or sense that as a man, he should be fearless and not talk with authorities or discuss any episode of violation in which the perpetrator has been a woman.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Certainly when I discussed my study with certain men, their quips included “I wish it [the abuse] would happen to me”. This would be followed by laughter, thus implying ridicule experienced by any man who might identify as having been abused.
It is largely through the analysis of gender relations as cultural constructs, that we can gain insights into the self-perceptions, identities and representation of individuals (Gregg 1998; Strauss & Quinn 1997). Individuals’ personal responses in the abusive relations, are central to uncovering the ways in which they construct their realities (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998). As I will demonstrate, the situations presented by participants in this study clearly identify the impact and hence importance that gender relations have made to their self-representation as men.

In this chapter I present masculinity as a product of diverse and complex cultural and social influences, interwoven with personal interpretation and expression. I argue that masculinity is constructed from a multiplicity of cultural and social influences inter-woven with intrapersonal and extrapersonal cognitive processes. Masculinities are framed or situated within the cultural frameworks of gender roles and gender relations (Connell 1995; Berger et al 1995). Thus masculinities have a significant relationship in terms of both complementarity and conflict with femininity (Connell 1995; Berger et al 1995). The work I present is an attempt to understand how men who have been abused by women construct their ‘realities’ of masculinity in both the private and public arenas. These self-definitions provide insights into the construction of masculinities. They also provide indications as to whether men who have been abused by women re-construct, their self-identities, perceptions and understandings of masculinity after having been abused.

In interviewing the men who participated in the study, it was important to gain a sense of their feelings. The emotional world of men has raised interesting

In this chapter I focus on the importance of emotion as it relates to the feelings of the men and their experience of abuse perpetrated by women. In particular, I focus on the man’s cultural cognitive frameworks throughout their life span, that is, through childhood, adolescence and adulthood. I argue that their feelings and emotions, from an attachment theory perspective, are created from early childhood when, guided and nurtured by our carers, we try to make sense of our world (Bowlby 1969; Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Chisholm 1998). The importance of emotion, at all these stages of the life span, relates to the cultural cognitive constructs, schemas and thinking developed through past, present and future experiences (D’Andrade 1995; D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; Strauss & Quinn 1997; Bowlby 1969; Cassidy & Shaver 1999; Chisholm 1998). These emotions, felt and expressed when we either make some sense of our world, or when we cannot make sense of it, impact in constructing and restructuring our current ‘reality’.

The greatest difficulty I found in bringing this chapter together was deciding whether I should introduce it with discussion about the definition of masculinities or the construction of masculinities. I am sure that I have not been alone in my dilemma, which lay in the fact that the definition and construction of masculinities interact, with one anther (Berger et al 1995). In simple terms, I see the definition of masculinities as a snapshot of the ongoing dynamic process of the construction of masculinities at a cultural level.
It is this intricate relationship that causes confrontation in addressing the topic (Berger et al 1995; Connell 1995). Berger provides a discussion on the construction of masculinities and how it impacts on the definition of masculinities, which in turn impacts on the construction (1995).

We may recall, Robert’s view of the public social construction of masculinities in reference to the ‘male sporting macho type’. However, Robert defines his own masculine identity through his singing voice. Robert adopted his self-sense of masculinity from his father, who was a singer outside his normal working job as a school principal. Ralph on the other hand did not have a positive view of his father and considered him insensitive and abusive:

He would sort of pretend to drown you and duck you under and terrify you until you’re screaming, and then you’d think he’d never let you go, then he’d laugh – he was like that; he was a bit cruel.

Ralph did not model his masculinity on his father but rather on other male role models, like his oldest brother ‘who I was very close to’. Ralph and Robert’s self-definitions are a result of their intrapersonal and extrapersonal experiences of masculinities.

The sociology of knowledge concerns itself with the analysis of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman 1966 p. 15) and is a means or method, which can be used to study almost any facet of life. The social construction of reality is the central focus of analysis of the sociology of knowledge, and thereby concerns itself with what people ‘know’ as their ‘reality’, or perceive to be their reality. The construction process explains that
what individuals witness in everyday situations impacts on their decision-making and behaviour. It is a space where people create a self-image, perception and understanding about the world around them. Social construction theory assists us to understand how people build, maintain and change their phenomenological world and the consequences these worlds have on their lives.

Social construction theory provides an explanation of how, through everyday situations, individuals collect a set of experiences and knowledge that is integral in creating their ‘reality of everyday life’ (Berger & Luckman 1966 p27). A question I pose at this point is whether some men in their construction of masculinity take for granted abuse or violence perpetrated by a woman as an aspect of ‘reality’ within that construction.

All participants had played some kind of sport throughout their lives and seven of the eleven participants saw sports as a masculine activity important to the development of a man. Graham explains how he built his own self-representation of masculinity through the sporting model provided by his father:

Dad was heavily into sport…..my father was my closest role model. We used to go on lots of family social picnics. I saw a man being a family man and working collaboratively [with wife]. The closest thing to being a man was a sporting model…I ’d always played a lot of sports, football, squash, etcetera.
Harold explained his public perception of masculinity through sports in the following way:

Well, I think the greatest shock in my life was that I realised that I wasn’t a great soccer player…this was one of my ambitions to lead…I wasn’t as good at things like that…I would have liked to have been. A big thing for a boy in those kinds of cultures [English working class] you know. It’s a big passport to status and things.

I agree with Gregg (1998) and argue that culture, its influences and personal interpretation and expression, has a significant role to play in the self-construction and self-representation of masculinity. The following example provided by Robert further demonstrates this point.

My father was often away doing things, like doing concerts and he got a couple of LPs and things. But there was never sufficiency of income to sing full time and make a break from teaching. Sometimes it gives me the spooks when I switch on the radio and think, “Oh shit it’s dad.” He was very talented

I finally sang recently at a wedding and it is a form of personal projection and it is a form of sexual projection, if you sing an old Nat King Cole number. Something like that "True Love" or whatever it is, and if people enjoy listening to that you can stand up in a hall you can hear your own voice resonating against the back wall, if you really go for it. Everybody is listening. Everybody's watching. And lots of people

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61 A more comprehensive version of the situations is provided in the last section of this chapter.
are smiling. And it's one of those situations where, I hasten to add I'm not a rock star or anything, but that is a way in which you can exude some form of sexual presence and a lot of energy. And those are probably the times in which the public think I felt more masculine than at any other time.

Yangisako and Delaney (1995) provide an explanation to this thinking in their discussion in *Feminism and Culture* (pp. 15-19), which I believe is pertinent to my overall argument. They suggest that

culture is what makes the boundaries of domains seem natural, what gives ideologies power, and what makes hegemonies appear seamless. At the same time, it is what enables us to make compelling claims for connections between supposedly distinct discourses (p. 19).

James provides us the following example, which I think reflects well what Yangisako and Delaney (1995 p. 19) allude to in their discussion on culture, connections and discourses. I use James’ thinking about hitting women as an example. In our Western culture, it is culturally inappropriate to hit a woman because we are conditioned and socialised to believe that a man never hits a woman. This thinking has become naturalised (Yangisako & Delaney (1995). In this scene, James firstly describes his current beliefs about hitting women and then provides the messages instilled into him by his parents:

Yeah, she’d actually hit me a few times as well and told me to hit her back if I was a man. Now in my mind I’ve always held the view that any man that hits a woman is wrong, whatever the provocation...
My parents would have been a major influence on me …I’m close to my mum…. she is very protective…. My mum was quite strong as a person but my dad was also quite strong but quiet, but pretty much a couple, but my mum tends to be more headstrong than my dad and he tends to be a steadying influence. They used to argue a lot, and a lot of raised voices in my family, which I wasn’t particularly happy with but I got used to it… Whereas when I was with Martha, she was a very strong personality as well, I felt that there was no respect for my views at all, that she wanted her own way all the time and that not just to get her own way but that I had no worth at all… mum was the one who always did the discipline, really.

From James’ account it seems that both his parents had an influence on his masculine self-representation in relation to his romantic love relationships. Later in this study I hope to further inform the reader how James reconstructed this self-identity and self-representation in a subsequent romantic love relationship.

Yangisako and Delaney (1995) also suggest that culture is a productive site for discussion and debate about difference and similarity. It has also been a productive site for continual assessment of the coherence among a society’s discourses and practices. This creative dialectic of the culture concept is lost when it is reduced to one of its poles. The productiveness of the concept depends on our commitment to use it as in incitement to continually rethink what is same and what is different, how they are so and what this means; and to continually
reassess the fragmentation or coherence of discourses, domains, and institutions – whether they hold together and how (p. 19).

I think the excerpt above, from James’ interviews, provides insight into the point that is being made by Yangisako and Delaney (1995). James continually re-assessed his view of not hitting women. He was committed to holding on to the view his parents instilled in him and his re-assessment would lead to further reaffirmation.

Allen’s experience surrounding hitting provides some further interesting thoughts and views with regard to his own personal belief of never hitting his own daughter.

I don’t smack her [his daughter] as a policy…Angela [his daughter’s mother] does though.

It was dad with his hand [hit or smack], mum rarely gave it [hit or smack] to me with a belt. I don’t believe in hitting children. My parents don’t agree. And my sister doesn’t agree. It’s OK if people chose to. It is a conscious decision I have made not to hit her [his daughter]. I can discipline her without smacking. I don’t have a boy so I don’t know how I would be. I might be less inclined to restrain from hitting if I had a son. I’d be more likely to give him a wack. I never saw my father smack either of my sisters. Whereas my daughter, I’m totally opposed to [hitting]. Maybe it’s a father-daughter thing. I’ve never thought about it before. Funny. Even though I’m philosophically opposed to smacking of
children or physical correction, I would be more inclined to smack my son than my daughter if ... I were so inclined to smack.

Allen’s experience regarding never seeing his father hit his sisters seems to have impacted on his own beliefs about hitting his own daughter. We noted in the previous chapter that youth who witness or experience domestic violence are more likely to condone the behaviour (Young People & Domestic Violence report 2001). Allen’s indecision as to whether he would hit his son if he had one may have to do with his father and mother hitting him as a disciplinary measure. Hence he witnessed and experienced being hit by both his parents.

I wonder whether there is anything in what Allen said to indicate why some men do not hit women, no matter what, and whether this links to his self-representation as a man, and why he never “hit back”. Allen’s personal views of hitting children seem to be a result of the interrelationship between his intrapersonal mental constructs and extrapersonal world structures.

This reinforces the notion, that how men self identify as private individuals is a result of the interrelationship and interaction with the public world. Lewis (1983 p. 10) says that ‘masculinity is the presentation of male public and private identity in everyday life’. He further says that public identity is defined in terms of politics, organisations and the media, whereas, private identity is defined by interpersonal and family relationships. Let us recall Harold’s sense of public importance about being good at playing soccer for a male in his working class culture, saying it was a “passport” into masculinity: nonetheless, at the private or intrapersonal level, Harold wanted to be appreciated for his
“artistic” talents. Lewis (1983 p. 11) adds that ‘men define themselves and other men mainly through their dealings with each other at work and through their relations with women and children’.

Arnold identified himself as having ‘blokey sorts of relationships’ with men, which meant ‘drinking together and go fishing’. In personal relationships with women he said that he followed his father, who was ‘very patient, very kind and very caring’ towards women and ‘in a sense put them up on a pedestal’. The attitude and behaviours he adopted towards men and women become directed through his socialisation and life experiences with friends, family – men and women (1983 p. 11). Lewis (1983 p. 11) also notes that the more traditional a society the ‘more limited will be the range of role options that men have to choose from’. He says, that this supports the way men define masculinity as the ‘ways men create space for themselves … social, psychological and emotional space’ (1983 p. 11). Harold seems to have reflected the type of restriction or limitation Lewis (1983) describes. Harold left his hometown for a large city in his own country and eventually migrated to Australia, recalling his frustration at the cultural views about men held by the women in his hometown.

The differences and similarities in the cultural constructs of the extra and intrapersonal spheres provide information in uncovering the activities of men and women in gender relations. This is important and provides relevance about gender relations to the self-perception, self-identity and self-representation of individuals. (Rosaldo 1980; Burbank 1994). In her discussion on gender relations, Rosaldo (1980) argues that who we are is ‘not just of gender, but of
cultural identity and social class’ (p. 400). This resonates with the view I have advanced throughout this study which attempts to understand the construction of masculinity under abusive conditions. The individuals have provided self-representations and self-identities from a gender relation perspective where cultural and social understandings include factors such as power and social status. These play a significant role in determining the quality and definition of these gender relations (1980). These factors become even more important if we agree that gender relations are critical factors in the development of cultural cognitive frameworks and human relationships (Flax 1987; Strauss & Quinn 1997). The fact that feminist theory has now ‘problematized’ (Flax 1987, p. 5) gender relations, means they can ‘no longer be treated as a simple, natural fact’ (p. 5). They must be seen as complex, intricate and fragile structures, revising social and cultural construction of gender relations both intrapersonally and extrapersonally.

The following sections present an analysis of how cultural constructs of gender relations interplay with experience of abused men’s self-perception. It is particularly useful to note the similarities and differences between the internal or self-definition of masculinity and the external or cultural/social definition of masculinity as the participants in this study understood them. Similar experiences reflect the notion of ‘approximate understandings’ and help us see how the participants constructed their public and private identities (Lewis 1993). These similarities and differences in life experiences, may provide information as to whether or not it is useful to speak of a “culture of abused men”.

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Cultural constructions of men at the extrapersonal level may differ significantly from those of men at the intrapersonal level. These constructs provide and interplay with the definitions of masculinities across these levels (Berger et al 1995). The intra and extra personal understandings, however, can be different yet held simultaneously as an established personal perspective. The cognitive understandings that result from this inter-relationship, have an impact on the relationships that are developed on an everyday basis. They also appear to influence the self-perceptions and self-representations of masculinity. The following example provided by Robert suggests he feels a strong relationship between the public and private worlds of his co-workers in relation to the masculine world of football:

But one of the interesting things about where I work, a lot of my people, say, 10 years older than myself… they all started together. A lot of them went to school together and a lot of them in their early days working in [named place of work], they played footy together before or after work, during the lunch break or whatever, and they refer to each other’s past in games played out in 1969 or whatever. You could almost…I’m always left wondering, when I see their circulars and memos, and chats on phone calls and things like that they have a long-standing image of how they used to pass ball to each other from the field that’s going a bit over the top there - but that network exists and it’s extremely strong. …I don’t feel any bonding with the sporting community.
However, Robert himself does not relate either at the public or private levels to the sporting community, although in his interviews he did acknowledge the importance for his son of being part of the sporting community.

I think it's very important for one pushing the sport and it’s through sport he [his son] seems to be getting his self-confidence and social thing, and I think it will help with other aspects of his schooling.

Further observations related to Robert’s relationship with his mother and father assist in understanding how he developed and constructed his own self-representation of masculinity:

In relation to the culture model you have been talking about, I said something earlier about how I was … musical intellectual type… that was very much my father’s mother. Grandmother pushed dad into singing…

In his recollections, Robert observes his “need” for sport as a young boy on family holidays:

I think I said something about not wanting to be sporting and yet, at the level of play, [as a young boy] I did. Something my mother said to me some years ago was how I was possibly always trying to get dad to play with bat and ball on the beach. I drove everybody mad and we had a game, … which is a bit like tennis in a way, and we’d play that together. And I was always demanding, and demanding and demanding for an hour of bat.

Here Robert has picked up on my interest in the relationship between Attachment Theory and Cognitive Anthropology.
Robert talked about his son wanting to interact with him by hitting ball and playing cricket. Robert reminisced that he too wanted his own father’s attention and would insist his father ‘hit ball’ with him on family holidays. Robert also identified this aspect of his relationship with his father as satisfying his need for sport.

As noted earlier in this study, Robert provides his interpretation of what he perceives to be the difference between Australian and English cultures in relation to class, sport and culture:

I mean in the British middle class there isn’t a great need to be involved in sports or interested in sports as a man. That’s never stated or written. I’d say the working class is much better off if you enjoy the soccer and play the soccer, then that gives you an identity. But I don't think there is the same large group of cultured middle class here that enables you to be masculine. That is a real difference between the two cultures.

Robert’s observations surrounding sport, culture and the differences he perceives between Australia and England are significant as they seem to be important to his rationalization of the importance of sport for his son and the development of his relationship with his son. This is further emphasized in the subsequent excerpt.

Robert, in clarifying his observations of what he means by masculine in relation to his being brought up in England and now living in Australia, says:

I think there is still a strong culture here that says you know a cultured musician or something that you are really rather different to the group,
strange. I mean, I was brought up on the East side of the track, not on the West side of the track in England, and the school I went to was… comprehensive, had a large proportion of the sons and daughters of people that were labourers and factory workers or…. and a largely rural proletarian group there as well. I certainly didn’t have what I would describe as a particularly sheltered upbringing. But there was, that strong middle class there - one in five, they were - what I call a cultured non-sporting group, and there wasn’t that collective pressure to be involved in that kind of way.

Scenarios such as these provided by Robert, from both the public and private spheres of his life, invite insight into the cultural constructs that influenced his self-representation as a man and masculine identity.

Public identity defined through popular culture, as for example, expressed by media and the arts, plays a significant role and impacts on the self-representation of men’s masculine image (Lewis 1983; Berger et al 1995; Connell 1995; Webb 1998). The media and mass communication constitute an extrapersonal world structure, which provides one aspect of the social views and perspectives that reflect modern culture. It also impacts on the cultural constructs formulated, created and developed at the public and private levels (Stevenson 1995). Media and mass communication also present, broadly based shared meanings (Geertz 1966) or approximate understandings (Burbank 1994) among a wide audience.

Nick Stevenson (1995) tells us that ‘modern culture is transmitted by the media of mass communication’ and that it has ‘profoundly altered the
phenomenological experience of living in modernity, as well as networks of social power’ (p. 3). Stevenson (1995) is ‘concerned [with linking] the media of mass communication to other social practices contained within the public and private’ (p. 2) and significantly notes that

it might be possible to demonstrate that social theory and mass communications has much to contribute to our understanding of the modern world [particularly] given the growing importance of media cultures within most people’s everyday lives (p. 7)

Robert’s reference to the male sporting macho type as the public view of a real man, and Harold’s observation that being good at soccer was a passport into the world of real men, lend support to the views Stevenson (1995) presents in his work on modern culture, media and mass communications.

A comic strip in the local West Australian newspaper called Zits provides humorous dialogue between teenagers. In one example, Zits girlfriend, Sara breaks up with him. His male friend trying to comfort him asks him if he has heard from her asking: ‘So you haven’t heard from Sara at all?’ its answers ‘Not a word. It’s been five and a half days and I still don’t know why she broke up with me!’ After a silent pause, his friend replies: ‘If you weren’t a guy, I’d give you a hug.’ Zits responds: ‘Thanks, if you weren’t a guy I’d take it’ (The West Australian 9 October 2001). This example provides insight into how the media reflects thinking and understandings about gender relationships, and in this case, reinforcing a particular perspective of commonly practiced masculinities.
The Zits cartoon somewhat reflects Allen’s emotional response to the support he received from his father after his relationship with Angela had fallen apart:

She could switch it off and switch it on. We broke up for three days and then she brought it on again…

I was at the point of going into a psych ward to have me evaluated…I was clinically depressed. It was the worst time of my life. It was terrible. I did something I hadn’t done for years. I gave my dad a hug.

Why? It [the hug] felt like the right thing to do…like thank you for caring, they [his parents] were really concerned about me. I was so distressed at the time nothing could have really comforted me. …Once you’ve been demoralised and pulled down and ridiculed and abused like I was in my relationship with Angela it’s like, wow, I don’t want this to ever happen to me again.

From his account I am assuming that Allen seemed to need to be in an almost “desperate” situation, such as clinical depression, before he felt “comfortable” to hug his father - another man - for support in a time of emotional hurt and pain. Aside from Allen, none of the men interviewed in this study identified another male as a source support for the emotional and psychological pain they experienced from abusive romantic relationships with women. Six participants clearly identified current or previous female romantic partners providing sympathy and support, while the remaining five participants seemed to infer support from women, but this cannot be substantiated.
James said of his current wife, Jane:

Jane told me that I also withdrew from touch and I was apologizing for brushing against her....Jane did the healing there, she said “You don't have to apologize, we just brushed up against each other and I think it's nice.” This [apologizing for brushing up against] was all part of the sort of withdrawal in the relationship with Martha [abusive romantic partner].

James’ father died during the course of this study. The following text taken from the eulogy, which James delivered at his father’s funeral provides insights into how he felt about him and how he believes he was understood and perceived by his father’s friends. It also allows us to see what influence his father may have had on his own self-representation as a man:

To most people he was known as Will, quiet unassuming, solid, and dependable. To his card playing mates he had the eyes of a hawk and the memory of an elephant, you couldn’t pull a trick on Victor. These hustlers had their own name for Dad, … whenever he lost a trick those immortal words, “I don’t believe it!” could be heard. Mind you, he had the last laugh. He won the last three games he played.

There was a time when he was known as Rocky. He was playing skittles for the Dockers team at the appropriately named “Fighting Cocks” in

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63 I met James at a local shop by accident. His wife who was current during the collection of ethnographic data for this study has now left him to be in a romantic love relationship with another man. James is in another heterosexual romantic love relationship, which he describes as having some problems.

64 Of the eleven participants, three participants had fathers who had died previous to conducting the interviews.
Whitchurch. Dad went to play a ball and a guy stood right up behind
him. Dad said politely, “Excuse me my man, but would you kindly
remove yourself from my personal space.” or maybe it was just two
words to do with sex and travel?

Once again Dad moved, so did his newfound friend. Shortly afterwards
Dad’s shadow found himself vertically challenged and Dad playing
skittles to the tune “Eye of the Tiger” the Rocky theme.

Anyway enough of this violence - that’s not what Dad was all about. I
think that perhaps mostly he would be thought of by everyone who knew
him as Mr. Dependable. Not a “Flash Harry” but a real Will, one of
England’s yeoman stock. If you needed someone who would always be
there, someone who would turn up on time, someone who would give it
his best, Will was your man.

He was also a man who liked his beer. I think that is something that all
three of his sons have inherited. Dad was a Draft Bass man. When he
came over to visit us in Oz in 1991 we sought out a pub that had Bass.
But in true Pommy fashion, Dad had a whinge. It was too cold. Mind
you, I did convince him of the benefits of red wine, especially Australian
Shiraz. I think it was quite appropriate that it was the last drink to pass
his lips.

So we are all here to say goodbye to Elmer the Docker, to Will the card
player, and I’m here to say goodbye to the best Dad anyone could wish
to have.

Men’s relationships with and understandings of their fathers are integral to the
self-construction of themselves as men. The type of masculinities their fathers
represent, impact on the type of masculinity they seek to construct for themselves. Examples are provided throughout the study where the participants talk about how they have emulated their father in their own self-representations as men.

At this point, I want to look at masculinity as defined or described across a number of dialogues. These dialogues are significant as they reflect the diverse range of cultural and social constructs at public and private levels that influence the self-definition of masculinities (Connell 1994; Berger et al 1995; Money 1995; Morton 1997; Petersen 1990). These dialogues can be found within schools across all social and biological sciences. The intersection or cross-fertilization of biological sciences with the social sciences in providing definitions of masculinity demonstrate both the diversity of perception and the complexity of society’s understanding of masculinities. This is not surprising, if one accepts the idea that discourse structures experience (Berger et al 1995).

It is apparent that many western debates and notions of gender, gender relations and sex roles rest on western ideas about biological differentiations of men from women (Connell 1994, Money 1995, Berger et al 1995). One aspect in the literature on masculinity, which has made a regular appearance, is that of recognising masculinity within the framework of identifying male biological features. Comparing and contrasting their biological make-up to the biological make-up of women, is often used as the basis for defining a man.\footnote{It is important to note that I do not want to overlook the importance of understanding that sex is biological and gender is social. I am saying that often in dialogue we merge the two together when describing a man.} This is often blended with social and cultural precepts of how a man ‘should
be’ or ‘what makes a man’ (Connell 1994; Berger et al 1995). In these dialogues the physical becomes a natural precursor to what is expected on a social, cultural and interpersonal level. Hence even though a man might not be the sporting macho type, as Robert described earlier, the fact that he is a man and has male biological features, generates a social expectation for him to behave like a man.

Ralph described himself as not a particularly tall or muscular type of male. However, as a boy, he was expected to behave like one, as per the dictates of his peers. In the text below he talks about how when he about ten years of age he overcame being bullied by bigger, taller, older boys. Taking his older brother’s advice, one particular incident changed his understandings about men and himself, for the rest of his life:

Anyway, I just thought about all of that [family poverty and bullying that accompanied it at school] and I talked to my Brother who …is 2 years older than me, and he was a bit of a rebel, and he said, that he could protect me but what about when he wasn’t around. [His brother said] “You’re better to stand up to bullies, because most bullies are cowards, even if they’re bigger and if you just don’t argue with them, just hit them straight away – they’ll be so shocked that they’ll back off real quick”. And he said, “The worst thing that can really happen is that they can hit you back, and maybe your nose would bleed, and maybe it hurts for a couple of hours, but then it’s over – they will never do it again, they won’t, and the whole school will know about it – everybody will know about it. So stand your ground and don’t ever back down again”
So, I was thinking about that and I was thinking about death and about Fairbridge, and I was upset and angry, and I went into school the next day, and these 2 bullies come up and I just exploded. I said I was going to beat them both of them up, and they were laughing at me, and I said “No, I’m serious” and they started backing away and I said, “I’m not going to give you a chance to back away – I’m sick of you doing this every day and I’m not going to let you back away,” and a big crowd formed around us. And partly to my surprise, because they were both taller than me and older than me, and they were both much bigger than me, they both backed down, and one of them had real fear in his eyes. And I was so angry, I must have had like killer eyes, and almost from that day I changed.

I became a much more angry person. But within months, within the next 2-3 months I became quite good at sport, I became the second fastest runner in my year, I became good at high jumping and long jumping, I became much more popular with the kids. My grades improved, I developed more confidence and this fear turned to aggression. I never ever bullied anyone; I had these strong principles about never being a bully, but whenever I saw any other kid being bullied because they had downs-syndrome – there was a school next door to us that had kids with downs-syndrome, or some little kid being picked on - I would just instantaneously go into anger mode and I would just storm at these kids and I would just rip into them and I could see, even as a little kid, I could
see the fear I generated in other people because I was so angry that I think to them I must have looked completely unpredictable. I was just so desperately angry that I would have done anything, and I could see the fear that it caused in other people.

Berger et al (1995) suggest that ‘within the ideological structure of patriarchal culture, heterosexual masculinity has traditionally been structured as the normative gender’ (p 2). Feminist discourse on masculinity has challenged the preconceived notions of gender identities as fostered by the biological approach. In supporting the feminist perspective, Berger et al (1995) notes:

This approach has emphasised the multiplicity of identity, the ways in which gender is articulated through a variety of positions, languages, institutions and apparatuses. This position maintains that gender is constructed; that is, who we are is shaped by historical circumstances and social discourses, and not primarily by random biology. Gender roles, the subject positions we occupy in society, are constructed from a complex web of influences; some of these effects we control, others we do not (Berger et al 1995 p. 2).

My understanding of how masculinities are constructed and subsequently defined, is mirrored by the following conclusion Berger et al (1995) draw from the essays presented in their compilation, Constructing Masculinity:

“masculinity” should be seen as always ambivalent, always complicated, always dependent on the exigencies of personal and institutional power. Masculinity is realized here not as a monolithic entity, but as an
interplay of emotional and intellectual factors, an interplay that directly implicates women as well as men, and is mediated by other social factors, including race, sexuality, nationality and class (p. 3).

Just as dialogue surrounding femininity is not just about women, then so masculinity is not just about men, explains Sedgwick (Berger et al 1995 p. 7). This notion aligns well with the overall approach in this study, in particular in its focus on the impact that gender relations have on the self-identity and self-representation of men. It is through such representations that the men I spoke to, construct and define their masculinity. Robert, demonstrates this point well in a response he gave me in our first interview, when I asked him to explain how he felt as a man in his relationship with his first wife:

She was very masculine. She was always the son that her father didn’t have. And he was in the navy being macho; she was very strong willed. She and he would start yarning on about what happened in the navy. She became very interested in the feminist movement. I was the feminine one and the sex abuse was just part of it.

Robert also provided his self-understanding of being the ‘feminine one’ by talking about his sense of not feeling validated in his sexual relationship with his first wife:

I had sex in the missionary position from the age of 17 and I was 37 before I had sex in any other position. I’m 40 now. I did not feel very validated in our sexual relationship.

Gender issues are systemic and as much as men plan their identity through dialogues about men and women, so do women plan their identity through similar gender specific dialogues.
Judith Butler (1995) adopts the notion that masculinity is performative and that this performance impacts on public and private constructions and consequently also in self-definitions. In arguing that gender is performative, Butler adds that it is ‘continually unfolding as a complex enactment of self representation and self-definition’ (p. 24). She draws on Freud to support her argument, suggesting that gender is positioned by heterosexual accomplishment. She says that if heterosexuality is threatened in any way, so then is gender, and thus a man’s and a woman’s fears of homosexual desires are embedded in their fear of not being a real man or woman. Butler goes on to suggest that, ‘gender is produced as a ritualised repetition of conventions’ and that these rituals are socially enforced partly due to ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ (p. 24). Ritual is very much tied in to the concepts of masculinity and femininity (1995). These rituals are important to the self-representation of men and women – so they can be seen, perceived and accepted as the men and women they represent by the public or extrapersonal world structures. These rituals are culturally bound and as such are important to the development of the construction and development of cultural cognitive frameworks about gender (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997).

Harold did not perform or self-represent like the expected male in his cultural and social environment. He describes himself as different. He did not live up to the social expectations and as a result was to a degree ostracised. In the text below he describes what it was like in high school and in particular, his interactions with girls:
As I went to secondary school I met some nice girls. They all found me a bit strange, different, too different. Threatening. Too threatening for them and their expectations like. I was going to leave. Looking back now I realise that the girls weren’t being nasty they had their own culture lapse of meaning and own expectations. I was always somebody who was going to leave. I wasn’t going to stay there and become an apprentice and do all that kind of stuff. So I wasn’t a good bet for them. Because I think girls in those days in that culture were always looking for a prospective mate, you know. And they got married young and so on. I wasn’t going to do any of that. And they knew that. Girls are more perceptive.

This final comment not only expresses Harold’s emotions and feelings about the situation, but also how he understands the situation as a mature aged adult male. His observations about the girls being threatened related to his reluctance to become involved in any long-term relationship. He understood that the girls knew intuitively that he would leave his hometown, which he did. Harold was not a sure bet as a potential romantic life long love partner and so to a degree was ostracised by the girls. This is how Harold appears to make sense of the attitude and behaviours of the girls, towards him in high school.

Returning to a theme I alluded to earlier in this study, Sedgwick (1995, p. 13) suggests that women are both consumers and producers of masculinity. This formulation allows us to see better the interaction of seemingly exclusive categories of masculine/feminine. It introduces a framework mirrored in day-to-day experiences of men and women. In the traditional role women have as
mothers and primary carers, so are they the producers and consumers of masculinities. So also are they in their diverse relationships with men as daughter, sister, wife, and partner. Six of the participants provided examples of experiences when they indicated they felt challenged into behaving in a particular way by a woman in a romantic love relationship. The following are examples of the situations and the responses the participants gave to the “pressures” put on them by their partners to perform as men as they expected. Paul gave examples of romantic love partners who hit him in anger. His response was to hit back. Here he talks about Juliet:

She wanted me to go with her to the ballet with her. I said, “No, I hate ballet”. She kept going on and on and I kept saying, “No, I won’t go. You go if you like, there’s nothing stopping you. I’ll just stay home”. Anyway, she got really angry and slapped me across the face. So I slapped her back. She got a shock. But she never talked to me about it again and went to the ballet with her younger sister.

Paul noted that this type of scenario had occurred on other occasions with other women. I want to remind the reader that in Paul’s first experience in a similar scenario, his partner hit him and challenged him with, ‘if you’re a real man –hit me’.

Harold describes the pressures he felt from the women in what he described as a working-class culture and, as noted earlier, he begins this excerpt talking about women ‘making the men’:
And I think they [the women in his English working class town] found me unlike their standard type of bloke would be like which was surly, quiet, non-communicative, you know which is what a stereotype of a bloke was like where I grew up. And so I think girls had some trouble with me as well…. It wasn’t until later that I met girls from outside of town, girls who had an education, girls who did art, and those kinds of things. It was wonderful. It was then I discovered I was attractive to women, not [in a] that physical [sense], but in a sense that those other aspects of me were valued and validated [his artistic side which he alluded to earlier]. It was something I never had in my family, in my family unit and the culture I came from. It was the validation of the artistic side of me and that kind of thing.

Allen explained he felt emotionally invalidated by his romantic love partner after he succumbed to her coercions to have sexual intercourse. In these situations, it seems clear that the women’s challenges to their male partners were based on ideas the women had of what ‘real men’ are expected to do. These situations provide valuable insights into the role women have in creating and consuming masculinities. It appears that the men complying with the women’s demands for a particular response, as in Allen’s situations, were supposed to produce the type of “masculinity” which the women desired. However, in Harold’s and Paul’s case, it appears a little more complex. On the surface it appears as if they were not complying with their partner’s demand to produce the type of man they wanted. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether it was lack of compliance that the women expected. If we take the notion that masculinities are both consumed and produced, then masculinities
will evolve, according to the demands or requirements of their consumers. The intersection of the intrapersonal and extrapersonal worlds, where our schemas, are produced and which make possible ‘the identification of objects and events’ (D’Andrade & Strauss 1992, p. 28) become influenced by certain specific contextual situations and experiences. These in turn play a crucial role in defining and determining what consumers want (D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; Strauss & Quinn 1997).

This leads me into suggesting that if a man is seeking a specific consumer as a mate, a love partner, then he may produce for a time the “required masculinity”. Our schemas not only hold who we prefer to be, but also who we are not, who we could be, who we do not want to be or just cannot be (Strauss and Quinn 1997). In the following text, Paul provides another scenario of his relationship with Juliet.

Sometimes Juliet would go on and on at me, like the time I refused to go to the book launch with her. She went on about me not being cultured and that I didn’t know how to socialise with cultured people and it really annoyed her. I used to feel so frustrated, angry and hurt. Even though I tried to explain that I saw most of these people as a bunch of snobs and that I don’t like big crowds and feel uneasy, she still went on and on. In the end I’d give up but I felt really put down….

Even though Paul complied on this occasion and attended the play with Juliet, he continued to make clear his feelings and his inability to be anything other than what he was as a person, as a man.
In the following section I provide an overview of the theoretical position Connell (1995) uses to define masculinities. He identifies four main strategies, which maintain taken for granted, cultural positions and describes the flaws as he sees them (1995). They include, the essentialist, the positivist, the normative and the semiotic approaches to defining masculinities.

In talking about essentialist definitions of masculinities, Connell (1995) notes that these usually identify features that define ‘the core of the masculine, and hang an account of men’s lives on that’ (p. 68). The essentialist definition of masculinity is ‘built on the conception of individuality’ (p. 68) and attempts to interpret traits or tendencies expected to be found in the manner in which males express themselves to the world, in interpersonal, cultural, social, work and religious relations (1995).

The essentialist perspective adopts what are commonly accepted or referred to as the traits of a “real man”: responsibility, risk-taking, irresponsibility, aggression … that which can take men to war, violence and aggression. So we see masculine as aggressive, adventurous and decisive. (p. 68). This concept, Connell (1995) adds, presupposes that ‘masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity ’ (p. 68) and therefore, this definition is often used to contrast feminine traits as passivity, gentleness and caring. Connell points out that the weakness in this definition is the claim of the universality of masculinity and the lack of agreement as to the ‘essential’ elements of masculinity.

The essentialist definition plays an important role in the construction and self-representation of masculinities of the men I spoke with. From the perspective
of my study, the essentialist definition of masculinities has been useful in understanding and interpreting some of the situations participants described and explained. All participants described traits they believed were important in describing men and masculinities from what could be classed as the essentialist approach.

If we recall what Robert noted about masculinities and sports, he explains: ‘I don't feel any bonding with the sporting community’. Yet he was able to provide what he perceives as the public definition talking about the ‘male sporting macho type’ and describing their physique as ‘strong’ and ‘athletic’. What Robert presents is very much the essentialist perspective of what is socially and culturally accepted and projected as the ideal masculine male. He also noted that this public image is significant to his self-representation as a man and his masculinity, in that he does not exude this type of masculinity and that he has ‘an almost apologetic demeanour’. Instead he identifies masculinity in his voice through his singing. Robert’s thinking and ideas about the sporting world and, as we witnessed earlier, the comments he made about his co-workers and the football culture to which they belong, coincide with Connell’s (1995) comments about constructing masculinities through sport:

The construction of masculinity in sport also illustrates the importance of the institutional setting. Messner tells us that when boys start playing competitive sport they are not just learning a game, they are entering an organized institution (p. 36).

Yanagisako and Delaney (1995) present a similar framework for understanding gender with their construct ‘naturalization of power’. Historical,
cultural, religious and social factors create the ‘naturalization of power’ of men and masculinity (1995). These authors explain that when those factors are brought together in specific ways, they make up or constitute what we then call culture (p. 19). Women play an opposite yet complementary role in moulding men and masculinities under this guise of naturalised masculinities (1995). The concepts of masculinity and femininity are thus socially and culturally created.

The positivist perspective (Connell 1996 p. 69) in defining masculinity relies on the categorisation of the traits attributed to masculinity. The categorisation of these traits produces the military man, the corporate man, the sportsman, the father, the breadwinner. Connell (1995 p. 69) notes that the result is a prescriptive definition of masculinity based on averages. There is little flexibility to allow for these masculine traits to be attributed to women. Women are perceived as the holders of categorised feminine traits, producing the model, the mother, the housewife or homemaker, the actress and the lady. Men who are perceived as men from a positivist perspective, often self-represent and demonstrate traits and behaviours categorised as such. These men may be conforming to an extrapersonal perspective of masculinities, in an attempt to make sense of their own masculinity at an intrapersonal level.

Connell’s (1995) view is crucial to gender analysis. He notes that the terms “masculine” and “feminine” go beyond the categorical sex differences in the ways men and women differ among themselves in ‘matters of gender’ (1995 p. 69). The positivist perspective in defining masculinities plays a role in the construction and self-representation of masculinities. All participants, whether
they personally adhered to the public or extrapersonal perspective, using the positivist approach, described traits they perceived to be masculine and feminine. Using this perspective assists us, in understanding Joseph’s self-representation of himself as a man in his first marriage. When describing his beliefs about masculinity he said:

In my eyes masculinity is not working on the car and mowing the lawns. Masculinity in my eyes is trying for a family, which is very old and traditional, which is very much like my mother and father were. I believe in protecting the family earning a wage, doing the heavy work around the house, all those sort of things, which we have the edge over the woman with. Really, a protective role.

The normative definitions of masculinities define them as ‘what men ought to be’ thereby offering ‘a standard’ (Connell 1995 p. 70). This differs from the positivist view in that it talks about the “ought to be” rather than the “what it is”. Connell (1995) notes that ‘strict sex role theory treats masculinity precisely as a social norm for the behaviour of men.’ (p. 70). He adds that, ‘in practice, male sex role texts often blend normative with essentialist definitions’ (p. 70). He also points out that:

Normative definitions allow that different men approach the standards to different degrees. But this soon produces paradoxes, some of which were recognised in the early Men’s Liberation writings. Few men actually match the ‘blueprint’ or display the toughness and independence acted by Wayne, Bogart or Eastwood (p. 70)
We often see the normative definition in the media (p. 70), which plays a powerful role in presenting masculine models. There is a certain heroism and toughness in a normative definition. Connell (p. 70) asks: Are men who do not demonstrate these traits, not masculine? The answer lies in how much men believe in and accept this definition of masculinities, how they define their masculinity through belief and perception and how they have constructed their ideas, notions or schemas of ‘what a man ought to be’. All participants who took part in this study in one way or another held some idea of what a man ought or ought not to be. No doubt this was based on ideas developed through life experiences, particularly childhood, and reinforced through adult years.

Arnold describes his father, identifying him as being what he believes a man should be, and using him to model his own self-representation of masculinity:

My father was a very humble man in the nicest sense and quite reticent. He would never politicise me or drive me down any particular path… in any actual sense of doing anything or values and attitudes. But what he did was set himself up as an example. So as a role model, both as a man and one half of a marriage, he was a very good example, so I learnt from that.

Likewise, Joseph says: ‘Masculinity in my eyes is trying for a family, which is very old and traditional, which is very much like my mother and father were’.

Joseph talks about his wife:

She was never really interested in sex because of endometriosis and there was always an excuse, child abusive issue, not in the mood, so it was
very hard to be masculine around her in a sexual way even if I was out in the garden mowing the lawns or fixing the car, I could never do it right in her eyes.

Connell continues to suggest a more subtle difficulty, namely, that ‘the purely normative definition does not provide a grip on masculinity at the level of personality’ (p. 70). Like Connell, by personality, I mean ‘the recognizable identity of the individual in the course of development’ (Duncan Mitchell 1979, p. 140; also see D’Andrade & Strauss 1992, for discussion on personality theory). Thus, even though men may know what they ought to be as men, their own self-expressed form of masculinity is very different. Their personality does not lend itself to preconceived prescripts of masculinity.

Robert, whose thoughts on sport and masculinity are provided above, clearly sees the institution of sport providing the public definition of what a man ought to be. However, Robert did not see that his personality matched or fitted with the sporting male image. Arnold adopted his definition of what a man ought to be from his father and his “personality” lends itself to being like his father in romantic love relationships:

He [his father] was very patient, very kind and caring. He wasn’t the type who would forget his wife’s wedding anniversary. He always remembered things like that. He always had a lot of time for my mother, and me, and generally respectful of women. In fact, you never heard him say a bad thing about women. And so in a sense he put them up on a pedestal, which I do. To me they're not just 50% of the human race, actually quite different and special because of it, and I think I got that from him, really.
Graham provides the following insights:

Dad also said, “You make your bed, you sleep in it.” … My father was my closest role model…I saw a man being a family man and working collaboratively [with partner/wife].

The *semiotic* approach abandons the level of personality and defines masculinity through a system of symbolic differences in which masculine and feminine places are constructed. Masculinity is in effect defined as ‘not femininity’ (Connell 1995 p. 70). Connell points out that ‘this approach has been widely used in feminist and post structuralist cultural analyses of gender’ (p. 70). He adds that ‘it yields more than an abstract contrast of masculinity and femininity of the kind found in masculine/feminine scales’ (p. 70). Connell argues that,

> In the semiotic opposition of masculinity and femininity, masculinity is the unmarked term, the place of symbolic authority. The phallus is a master-signifier, and femininity is symbolically defined by lack (p. 70)

Using the semiotic approach, all participants provided definitions of masculinity and femininity that held symmetry with this approach. Although not adopted by all, this approach was one from which they necessarily defined their own masculinity. James had to get the housework done before he could go play soccer with his friends. Robert talked about being the feminine one in his first marriage where he stayed home and looked after the children while his wife went to work. Matthew identified himself as supporting the feminist
movement and his comments about how he perceived the differences between
men and women lend themselves to this approach:

I’m very pro-feminist. …I think women experience trauma in a more real
way and hence are more in touch with feelings. Men, I don’t think
experience as much trauma as women do, for example with sexual
harassment, rape and inequality…

Helen [his wife] made it clear she didn’t like the way I was treating her.
For example, I was making decisions for her. …I started working on my
behaviour - changing my behaviour towards Helen and to women in
general. I changed quite dramatically.

It is important for men at a collective level to change their views and
beliefs about women and they have to organize and support the women’s
movement. And it’s about redefining what is femininity and masculinity.
I’m a Marxist and see it as a constant conflict. Most women I know have
strong beliefs about certain things.

Paul said that, for him, being a man was about being able to ‘defend yourself
and look after yourself’.

Connell also suggests that ‘this [semiotic] definition of masculinity has been
very effective in cultural analysis’ (p. 70), notwithstanding its limitations in
narrow representation of masculinities. In a manner resembling Rosaldo’s
discussion about gender relations (1980 p. 400), Connell says that, to
understand and make sense of the broad spectrum of issues about
masculinities,
we need ways of talking about relationships of other kinds too: about
gendered places in production and consumption places, in institutions
and in natural environments, places in social and military struggles

Connell emphasizes that we cannot merely ‘define masculinity as an object, a
natural character type, a behavioural average, a norm’ but that we need to
understand and make sense of the ‘processes and relationships through which
men and women conduct gendered lives’ p. 71).

Gender relationships, can be seen as an internalised an expression of ones own
relationship to oneself. The relationship with oneself develops and is nurtured
over time. This is where we begin the construction of gender, and of self-
identity and where, for men, it is also the construction of masculinities
(Rosaldo 1980; Berger et al 1995; Connell 1995). The personal descriptions by
participants of what masculinity meant for them personally is central to this
thesis. These reflect the extrapersonal or public perceptions of masculinity, as
expressed in the broader social and cultural context. However, the men’s self-
perceptions of what masculinity is, or what makes them feel masculine or not,
are bound up in their own self-expressions or their personal life experiences.

In the stories thus far related about abusive situations, components of what
makes up the cultural construction of masculinity are being communicated.
For James, it appears to be that a man should never hit a woman under any
circumstances. It is not “privately” culturally appropriate. His partner appears
to have attempted to test this “private” cultural construct. However, she may
have been attempting to produce a type of masculinity, which she would have preferred to consume.

Paul, who hit back when challenged, did so, as he connected the public definition of masculinity with acceptance of abuse in relationships. So that like the other participants he accepted abuse as expected behaviour in a romantic love relationship. This connection with the public definition of masculinity and acceptance of abuse in relationships is one that is touched upon by a number of researchers and authors from a range of perspectives. (Burbank 1994; Cook 1997; Berger 1990) The works of D’Andrade (1995) and Strauss and Quinn (1997) assist us in understanding the cultural cognitive frameworks that direct our reactions and behaviours in abusive situations. This is particularly important in understanding the interrelationship between the extrapersonal and intrapersonal world views and their impact on human behaviour. It is this process that makes the construction of masculinities dynamic, constantly evolving and continuously challenged. Each time I met with the participants who took part in more than one interview, they seemed to have undergone another evolution in their self-representation in terms of masculinities. In part this had to do, for some, with on-going learning from the pain of their abuse, and for others the healing that had taken place.
RECONSTRUCTING MASCULINITIES

In this chapter I will provide an overview of my study of masculinities together with a discussion of the masculine reconstruction process, as it occurred pre- and post- the abusive situations described by the men who participated in this study. The experience of abuse as a life process impacts on an individual’s self-identity, self-understanding and self-representation. I focus on the impact that the experience of abuse had on the participants’ self-understandings and self-representations of masculinity. The dialogues interviews with the participants, regarding the impact of their experiences on their masculinity - provide me with the material for ‘cultural analysis’ (Quinn n.d. p. 5). This cultural analysis assists in reconstructing from their dialogues – the words the participants used to describe their experiences - their self-understandings and representations of masculinities under abusive conditions. I therefore, provide further analysis of material that I believe may be significant in the overall understanding of how men construct and reconstruct their masculinities under abusive conditions. Of course, my observations are not exhaustive and may raise more questions than answers in the overall quest of understanding human behaviour within a cultural context.

67 I use the term dialogue, meaning words used in conversation. Quinn, N. n.d. 2001, she uses the term discourse, however, I have avoided using the term discourse as there are a wide range of understandings of this word, and my study does not allow for an explanation of sufficient depth.

68 I want to add at this point that the scope of this study does not allow me to utilize and explore fully all the ethnographic material provided me by the participants. I was able, however, to hold the material in mind when presenting a particular analytical explanation, thereby working to present as true a picture as possible of the situation or experience.
The responses given by the men who took part in this study about the situations they defined and experienced as abusive, all seem to reflect parental verbal and non-verbal messages in relation to the way they responded, reacted and behaved in abusive situations. Their responses also provide an indication of how they rationalised or made sense of these messages and took them into romantic love relationships.

Quinn’s (n.d.) recent work on *How To Reconstruct Schemas From What People Say*, has proven to be extremely useful in supporting and explaining the approach I have adopted in interpreting the ethnographic material I have collected for this study. Quinn’s (n.d.) work has also assisted me in my attempt to understand how men construct and reconstruct their schemas of masculinity through their experiences in abusive situations in which women have been the perpetrators. Quinn’s explanation of the concept of schema has assisted me in understanding and presenting the reconstruction process.

An important component of schemas, in relation to this study, is that, although they can change, ‘those built on repeated experiences of a similar sort become relatively stable, influencing our interpretations of subsequent experiences more than they are altered by them’ (Quinn n.d. p. 6). The centripetal and centrifugal properties of schemas play a central role in the realm of culture (Strauss & Quinn 1994 Ch. 4). In relation to shared cultural experiences, Quinn notes that language, socialisation and even our physical environment

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69 See also Ch. 2 of this study.
are aspects of our world that are shared and so construct our social world.\(^{70}\) Schemas ‘can include experience of all kinds—unlabeled as well as labelled, inarticulate as well as well-theorized, felt as well as cognized’ (p. 6).

All schemas, including cultural schemas she says, ‘can be as various and complex as the experience from which they are derived’.\(^{71}\)

Quinn (n.d. p. 8) explains in her paper that she investigated shared understandings to gain access to understandings of ordinary people.\(^{72}\) My methodological approach has included asking “ordinary” men who have self-identified as being abused by women how they felt about this experience and what it meant, if anything, to their sense of being a man, on their manhood or masculinity. Like Quinn (n.d. p. 14) I looked for ‘key words’ and ‘patterns across interviews and passages, that would be evidence of shared, stable understandings’.\(^{73}\) Sometimes my analysis has looked at ‘features of discourse that did not occur frequently’ (n.d. p. 14). I looked for particular words in the context of the men describing their experiences about abusive and non-abusive situations and how they made sense of themselves as men in those scenarios.

Probably one of the most interesting aspects from my perspective, in this study, is how these men reconstructed their masculinities during and after the abusive situations. Some of these features were presented in Chapter 4. In the

\(^{70}\) See also Strauss and Quinn 1997.

\(^{71}\) I would venture to say that from my perspective all schemas are cultural because everything we experience in our lives has a cultural basis or foundation. However, the scope of this paper does not allow for me to pursue this discussion other than to say that it is a perception, which I will further explore and develop over time.

\(^{72}\) Quinn (unpublished ms 2002) explains how this method is different from the traditional ‘formal analysis of lexical sets’ (p.6) used in analysing ethnographic material.

\(^{73}\) Quinn (unpublished ms 2002) provides an extremely informative discussion on this type of methodology.
first round of interviews, only one participant directly stated or talked about the impact the abusive experience has had on him as a man and on his masculinity. In other cases, I interpreted statements such as: ‘I don’t see it (fear) as a gender thing’ (Brian) and: ‘a man can’t say no…a man won’t say no, a man is always ready for sex’ (Allen) to gain insights into the statements the men made with reference to their self-definitions and reconstructions as men experiencing what they understood to be abusive situations. Both Brian and Allen seemed to be expressing what they perceived to be some public social construction or perception of “fear” and “sex” for men and masculinities. They appeared to be expressing what is they believed to be ‘publicly acceptable’ (Anderson & Jack 1991 p. 11) within their own masculine cultural cognitive framework. Their statements indicate they perceive that their culture or society expects men to be fearless and ‘always ready for sex’. Implicit in the tone of their statements was a desire to reject these public perceptions. All of the participants who took part in a second interview were able to clarify their feelings, about perceptions of and self-representations of being a man in abusive situations. They explained in terms of having had time to reflect on what they had recounted in their first interview. It was in the second round of interviews that participants like Allen

74 For statistics of numbers of men who took part in second and third interviews, please see Chapter 2, The Study.

75 I used interpreting skills in coming to an understanding of the other participants self-representations of masculinities. It was much easier to gauge this self-representation after a second and third interview.

76 The reader needs to trust my interpretation of non-verbal body language. Aspects of the interviews such as the tone the men used in describing situations oftentimes made a deep impression on me and has been difficult to forget. One example, was when Ralph in relating his abuse as a child broke down and started crying. As an experienced interviewer with counselling skills, I was able to manage the situation effectively and bring Ralph back into a ‘normal ’ conversational situation.
talked about feeling powerless, while Robert related his sense of masculinity
to his singing, which made him feel ‘really masculine’.

The men who took part in the study provided some insights into how they re-
constructed their self-representation and understandings of masculinities, after
the abusive situations took place (Gregg 1998; Rasmussen 1998). Of the
eleven participants who took part in the study, seven appeared to undergo a
shift in the way in which they self-represented their own masculinities after
the abusive situations occurred. The remaining four participants evolved in
their self-representation of their masculinities: however, it appears they also
held fast to the masculine beliefs presented to them by their primary carers.

The reconstruction process is like the evolving schema process. Although
schemas are stable, durable mental structures, they are nonetheless prone to
change and evolution as a result of on-going life experiences (D’Andrade

As part of the reconstruction process, it was interesting to note how many of
the participants who identified as having been abused by female romantic
partners were currently in romantic love relationships. Of the eleven
participants who took part in the study, seven currently identify as being in a
romantic love relationship.

It was interesting for me to note that seven participants were analysing their
own experiences as they related their situations of abuse. This occurred with
participants who had an academic background in the social sciences. I sensed

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77 This statement can only be assumed as from the last time I met with the participants.
that this self-analysis may have supported a need towards their own self-understanding, although, at times I was unsure as to whether they were trying to meet my expectations in analysing their particular situation.

In analysing the ethnographic material I collected, I found that there were some common themes. These themes became apparent as I looked for patterns of “reasons” identified by the participants that caused the abusive behaviour of the women in these situations. It is important to be cognisant of these themes, as I believe they provide some insights into what triggers certain human behaviour within certain situations (Cook 1997; Quinn n.d.). Six participants presented with stories that had the theme of sexual jealousy. Four participants presented themes of sexual or gender, power and control. One participant, Ralph, described physical, emotional, psychological and verbal abuse as a child. All participants also talked about situations that could be described as sub-themes. These included the biological sexual need to procreate, sexual coercion, psychological control, and control of physical environment.

All of the men who took part in the study were interested to know if other men had shown an interest in my study and how many others were taking part. There was perhaps some comfort in knowing that others had had similar types of experiences. I also felt that in recounting their experiences of abuse, the participants seemed to feel they were obtaining some kind of emotional and psychological benefits. It appeared to me that they were gaining a sense of relief in relating their experiences of abusive situations in which the perpetrators were women. The seven participants who took part in more than one interview became more comfortable after the first interview and hence
provided further insights into their abusive situations (Quinn n.d. pp.12-13).

My sense was that it was important for them to have someone validate their stories and that would in turn validate them as people and as men.

The schemas that the men held surrounding their relationships with women were sometimes conflicting. The matter of female familial relationships is important here as it may give some sense as to why the participants felt comfortable about relating their experiences of abuse by female perpetrators to a woman. Seven of the eleven participants indicated current good relationships with their mothers. Four participants gave no indication of experiencing either a positive or negative relationship. The five participants who said they had sisters, all indicated they had a good relationship with them. By good, I mean that all the men who had sisters indicated positive, caring relationships. However, the same men were simultaneously maintaining schemas centred on other women, carers or romantic love partners who had been, in their minds, abusive.

Perhaps this dual experience of love and caring, on the one hand, and then hurt and abuse on the other is one reason why all except one participant indicated a “willingness” to enter romantic love relationships in the future. Some of the men, James, Harold, Paul and Robert have remarried and are in relationships they consider positive, loving and caring. It appears that there is a link between having a positive, caring relationship with a female in the early attachment years and the predisposition to being open to romantic love relationships, even after having experienced an abusive relationship with another woman either as a caregiver or in a romantic love situation. The
ethnographic material I have collected does not allow me to do more than make observations and raise possible links about the comparisons of these relationships and the impact they may have had on the schemas the men hold about the “apparent” conflict surrounding their experiences of relationships with abusive and non-abusive women.

I observe that collectively the men’s self-representations as abused men had similarities. This indicates a set of shared or approximate representations, meanings and understandings (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997). Collectively they make up cultural experiences, which in turn impact on the construction or definition of culture (D’Andrade 2000). Overall, my observations resulted in recognising how individuals experience situations in a “singular” way, and yet as individuals belonging to a ‘common cultural group’ this is done within an existing set of assumed shared values, norms and expected behaviours (D’Andrade, 2000).

The following are texts taken from interviews with the participants in this study. I present them with the aim of providing further insights into how these men understood or made sense of their experiences and reconstructed their sense of self as men. I begin with Harold, who throughout the interviewing process had difficulty finding a self-definition about being a man.

78 It has been interesting for me to see the threads of commonality across cultures in the definition and expression of masculinity, yet stated by different verbal and non verbal language. This is an observation taken from having worked and lived with people of cultures as diverse as Iranian, Indian, Italian and Anglo-Australian. I do not at this point have any research evidence to support such universal claims, although D'Andrade's article A Cognitivist's View, produced for Cross Cultural Research (vol.35 No.2, May 2001 pp 242-257) supports my observations.
Harold appeared to be deeply affected by the abusive situations he experienced, and seemed to give up totally on knowing, or wanting to know, what it was for him to be a man. In his first interview he talked about women making men, and in his second interview he simply said: ‘I don’t know what it is [masculinity]’. Whether this distance created a feeling of safety for him, whether he was refusing to be labelled, or whether he felt somehow inadequate, remains unclear. However, his response poses some important questions and challenging dilemmas in the realm of gender relationships and self-representation and identity. My sense was that Harold had retreated within himself\(^9\) and did not want to talk about how he saw himself as a man.

Harold describes when his father was away for long periods of time as a ‘terrible’ time for him. He describes himself as going ‘wild’. Even though he perceives his experience in a singular way, his behaviour is “culturally expected” in our society. As noted earlier, Harold talked about his father being absent a lot while working. This seemed to place a lot of pressure on Harold, who described his adolescent years by saying: ‘my worst period [was] when I was 14’.

In describing his relationship with his sisters, he says:

> I’ve got two sisters older than me… the eldest one, I am very close to. We’ve got much closer as we’ve gotten older and I think of all people,

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\(^9\) This may have been for reasons of self-preservation or fear of exposing himself “too much”: whatever it was remains his secret. This is a significant feature of many victims of abuse, particularly sexual abuse. Harold kept the sexual interactions with the older boy a secret (Lawson 1998).
apart from my mum and my dad, she’s the one I miss the most …. My baby sister, she’s almost 37, I’ve always doted on her.

After a series of unhappy heterosexual romantic love relationships, at some point, Allen decided he could no longer trust anyone enough to be in another romantic relationship. He had felt powerless as a man when in the romantic relationship he described as abusive, and did not believe he would ever enter into another romantic relationship. He described his partner as ‘demanding sex’ and said that he felt, that ‘for her I was a sperm donator’.

Allen said that he believed that he could never trust another woman in a romantic love relationship. Within his emotional world, Allen’s sense of his masculine self appears to have become more fragile and somewhat changed after the relationship. He said, that although he does not believe he could ever trust again, he would ‘dearly love’ to be in a caring and nurturing romantic love relationship.

One participant in this study who provided an extremely good example of a man reconstructing and redefining his masculinity, after an abusive romantic relationship and linking it with attachment to primary carers, his mother and father, is Robert. As a man re-defining his sense of self, he experienced something somewhat different to some of the other participants. He did this after he had left his self-defined abusive first wife and moved into another romantic love relationship with his second wife. As we saw earlier, he found his masculinity through his voice. Robert describes being married to his first wife as like being married to his father and his second wife as like being married to his mother. In the way he described the support, caring and
nurturing he is receiving from his second wife, Robert depicts a stronger sense of his masculine identity in this marriage than he did in his first marriage. This was also evident when I asked Robert how he felt as a man as a result of his abusive relationship. In his first interview, Robert reflected other participants’ responses, in presenting an unsureness about what this thing “masculinity” really was: “I’m not sure I know what this male identity is really”. Robert then described masculinity by relating what he perceived as his wife’s masculine behaviour and his perceived feminine behaviour in the relationship. As noted, he talked about being the feminine one, supporting his first wife’s career and staying home looking after the babies.

In the context of his own experience, Robert appears to reverse the gender role definitions of masculinity and femininity. He described traits normally associated with the public notions of masculinity as they pertain to men when he talked about men in sports as ‘sporting macho types, nurturing the younger lads’. It is also interesting to note that ‘not feeling validated in his sexual relationship’ contributed to Robert’s self-defined feeling of abuse in his first marriage. In Robert’s texts I see a connection in his early life experiences between feeling validated and feeling abused. This theme of validation and its link to abuse unfolds when Robert talks about his relationship with his mother and father. He felt neglected by his father, giving him a feeling of abuse, but nurtured by his mother, giving him a feeling of validation.

The following is an example of reconstruction of masculinity moving from a pre-abuse, to post-abuse phase. Robert’s sense of masculinity becomes

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80 There was a three year period between the first interview and the second and third interviews being conducted.
positive after moving away from his first wife and into the relationship with his second wife. Most importantly, his second wife supports and nurtures Robert’s enjoyment, desire and need to sing. This is important as singing is central to his sense of self and identity as a man. In the second interview with Robert, he talked more freely about ‘men’s space’ and ‘masculine space’ and the importance of these to one’s self-identity as a man. He suggested that his personal experience of feeling masculine through his voice was not publicly acceptable (Anderson & Jack 1991). He reiterated a number of times that he felt most comfortable and relaxed in his own male space when he was singing.

Robert’s feelings about his father are important to note as part of the reconstruction process of his own masculinities. Robert proudly reminisced about his father being a singing personality on radio. The fact that Robert was eventually able to identify his own masculinity through singing seems to indicate the deeply strong and emotional impact this made on him reconstructing his masculinity. Robert now feels comfortable, in both his public and private lives, with his self-representation of masculinities.

The conflict between his first and second marriage, and his own construction and reconstruction of his masculinities, may be explained in relation to how he perceived his father to feel about his relationship with his mother:

I think my father felt I was in competition to him and my mother’s affection of mother and child got in between them…. My relationship with my mother was very close.

81 The time span of three years seemed to have given Robert time, space and opportunity to explore this self-concept of masculinities.
82 Robert talked about his father’s singing at all three interviews.
During his third interview, Robert talked about how his own son was ‘right into sports,’ but that he personally did not enjoy the ‘ocker’ culture of footy. However, he felt it was important to support his son and so he attended games to demonstrate his commitment to his son. Robert disclosed that he now felt that he needed to act as a role model father, displaying what it means to be a man. He seemed to be trying to encourage his son by supporting what he perceived to be the requisite for male identity in popular culture (Stevenson 1995; ed. Berger et al 1995). Robert did point out that when he attended his son’s cricket game, he felt more at ease and less alienated from the social and cultural environment than he had when attending the ‘footy’.

Robert migrated from England, coming to Australia when he was in his early thirties. He identified as coming from a middle-class family with a strong academic background. Reminiscing about England, he described football as a blue-collar pass-time and cricket as a ‘gentleman’s’ pass-time. These observations have meaning in Robert’s own self-understanding about his culture (Gregg 1998). The links appear between class distinction and masculinity. Working-class men play football, while the “others” play cricket. Robert seems to link these class distinctions with both his general cultural perception - cricket was a “gentleman’s” form of entertainment- and his self-perception of masculinity and his un-ease with “footy”.

Arnold provides a workplace example of an abusive experience with women. Arnold attributed the type of offensive or abusive behaviour he experienced with a female student colleague to an “over-concern” with equal opportunities.
Arnold did seem to give the impression or imply that women, whom he describes as “having a programmed response”, are not feminine. He explains:

What I was looking for was a natural human response not another sort of pre-programmed “This is how I attack this problem” response... this military man attitude she had… she just saw me as some type of Colonel Blimp character and as a military type not receptive to ideas and suggestions… I found that very insulting and it was difficult to respond to it… I’d rather women use their femininity. I don’t mind that at all. But this sort of non-idiom of relationships and language within the workplace I think is starting …to detract from normal interpersonal human behaviour.

Through this experience he could rationalise retaining his original self-representation of being a man. This self-representation was what was presented to him by his father, who, he said, was ‘generally respectful of women’.

Arnold gives the impression that he retains, in his own self-representation of masculinities the type of masculinities, taught to him by his father. He also seems to adopt an image or construct of a feminine woman that would support and make comfortable the kind of masculinities he self-represents.

Paul was another participant who retained his original belief about what it is to be a man. He related to women without concern for the public or social norms of relationships with romantic love partners. He appeared to have no
compunctions about hitting back at a woman if she hurt him. When they hit him, he hit back. He described and rationalised this as self-defence.

Paul said his father exemplified the male who had respect and care for women. He said: ‘dad adored mum’ and described his mother as:

A wonderful woman - everyone loved her. She loved her garden and she and dad had a very close relationship. After she died, dad lost all motivation to stay alive.

Paul’s father also taught him to box and to defend himself against anyone, no matter who:

I always remember him saying “You’ve always got to defend yourself, make sure you get the other bloke down before he gets you”.

Paul was very attached to both parents and particularly to his father, whom he describes as ‘a loving, caring father who would do anything for us [he and his brother]. He said:

Dad had really strong values and he never let us get away with anything…when he died I just couldn’t handle it.

When Paul describes romantic relationships after his parents died, he explains:

I’ll respect them [women] as long as they respect me, but I don’t put up with any shit from anyone, I don’t care who it is.

It is important to note that after his parents died, Paul underwent many painful experiences in which he often felt alone and abandoned. He said:
It was too much after dad died. We [he and his brother] went our separate ways. I was on my own. There was no one to help me. They were really hard times.

In effect, it appears that his “not putting up with” may have been a type of self-preservation, a message that may have been part of what he received from his father’s boxing lessons about protecting himself. When he talks about his current wife, he echoes his father’s lessons:

I adore Rachel, I don’t know what I’d do without her. She knows I don’t put up with any crap from anyone, even from her. I trust her. We have a really good marriage, she’s more than just my wife, she’s my best friend.

In the reconstruction process, Paul held on the values and model presented by his father.

Ralph described physical, emotional, psychological and verbal abuse as a child. There were “ruptures” in the relationship with his mother because of her illnesses and their migration to Australia which saw him and his siblings put into care at Fairbrige. As a consequence he was left in the hands of caretakers who abused him.

Ralph talked about not being closed to going into a caring romantic relationship. Ralph’s wife became ill and their relationship fell apart as a result. They were both unaware of the illness at the time of the rupture in the relationship. Only after they had separated and he had moved into another romantic relationship, did they realize that the fractures in their relationship
were caused by this illness and not because of some fundamental incompatibility. About his first wife, Ralph maintains, ‘I still consider her my best friend’.

Perhaps he may have been repeating this pattern with his other romantic partners. These observations hopefully assist in understanding how we as adults manage to replicate early childhood experiences in the emotional sense, through schemas. The following is a description about how Ralph feels about his mother and sister:

Even though I had that terrible experience with that woman when I was a two year old, and again when I was at Fairbridge, the two most lovely people in my life are my sister and my mother. And I did see that my mother worked really hard and never got much thanks for it, and the same with my sister.

After he and his wife separated, Ralph became involved in another romantic love relationship. They had a daughter, to whom Ralph is totally devoted. However, the romantic love relationship ended. In the reconstruction process, we saw Ralph change from a timid, shy adolescent into an assertive, even angry young man. His romantic love relationship with his wife was caring and nurturing. The separation caused by her illness, echoes the reasons why he was separated from his mother. As a child Ralph had no idea why his mother was taken away, why he was being abandoned. With his wife, Ralph again had no idea why her behaviour was changing, why he was being abandoned. In both cases, these women had become ill and required medical attention. This took them away from Ralph. He now presents as a caring, nurturing man. He has
not lost his strong sense justice, which he talked about when he stood up to those bullies at school, at aged ten. He saw himself as a protector of human rights and still does. This is reflected in his work as a social scientist.

James provides us with a different scenario. He describes feeling that his relationship was considered a bit of a joke by his friends, particularly when his mate had to wait in the car of a Saturday afternoon for him to finish the housework before he could go play soccer. With regard to the episode when his partner kicked him, James explained that he would have lost his self-respect if he had hit her back. James then demonstrates that his sense of self-definition of masculinity is related to his sense of self-respect. He also always believed himself to be physically more powerful than his partner and he seemed to be holding on to some kind of publicly acceptable convention (Anderson & Jack 1991), which was supported by his parents throughout his life.

James’ second wife seemed to play a crucial role in his reconstructing a positive self-image and self-representation of his masculinities:

Jane was quite important to me then, because it did build my self-esteem and you felt as though you are worth something. Jane supported me during that time [during break up with abusive partner]…. she [Jane] did the healing really.

However, James did note that the experience of an abusive relationship impacted on his current relationship. His partner, Jane, had herself been in an abusive romantic relationship before entering into the current relationship with
James reflects on the difference between Martha, his abusive partner and Jane his current nurturing partner:

The relationship with Martha [abusive partner] has made me feel defensive and it has affected my relationship with Jane, and if she has a view, I’ll stand back. And I do get more my way even when I think that what Jane wanted was right. We are very good with one another and try not to argue…. We are very happy together.

In reconstructing his masculinities, James held on to the messages instilled by his parents. He did however evolve in relation to his own life experiences moving from an abusive romantic love relationship to a caring one.

Matthew’s story has a continuing theme of abusive scenarios with males and females. In the text below he describes what seems to be some ambivalence in his relationship with his mother and his parents as disciplinarians.

I didn’t know my mother very well. She returned to work, four weeks after my birth. Mum and dad were disciplinarians. It was an abusive upbringing. We were smacked, hit or verbally put down at the drop of a hat.

Matthew also talked about what was a non-abusive relationship with the black African nanny who raised him as a child in South Africa:

Enid was my surrogate mother. She changed my nappies, fed me when I was hungry and she was there to hold me and cuddle me when I fell
and scraped my knee. I would cry, and she would tell me it was alright.

Matthew’s memories of boarding school provide some insights into the violent behaviour males were expected to exhibit in the social and cultural environment in which he lived:

The education system was violent. Teachers hit us on finger tips with wooden spoons...canned us on our backsides or would walk past and hit us with the cane. Single sex schools had a Calvanistic ideology and were white only schools.

He describes the ideology by which he was brought up in the following terms:

Male superiority and racial superiority was inculcated into us. I was brought up in strict religious environment. I remember the teachers at school using a wooden spoon to hit us over our fingertips and canning us on the backside or walking past and just hitting wherever the cane landed. I went to a single sex school for white only.

The school was very violent. In my first year I remember the older boys made a fat boy simulate having sex with a pig. The boy later ran away and left the school. They also dragged six junior boys screaming and branded them. We had to play the game. There was both male superiority and racial superiority inculcated into us. A friend of mine died after being beaten up by one of the prefects.

About his first wife:
Even after I’d made changes, she was starting to get violent. Like she threw a pot at me. Things got progressively worse. She wouldn’t talk to me for days. She was never honest with me about our relationship. She was looking around for other relationships.

Matthew’s marriage with his first wife ended and below he is talking about another relationship, this time with his current partner:

She actually got physical. She hit me. I can’t even talk to another woman. At a conference for example, she’d hassle me about talking to some woman or ignoring her and she’d blame me for my low self-esteem.

Matthew seemed to be working to move away from the disciplinarian and abusive image of masculinities under which he grew up in South Africa. In the reconstruction process, Matthew works to become a caring partner. However, we see that in doing so he becomes a victim. This is probably due to the fact that in the South African environment in which he grew, one was either a victim or a perpetrator. Even when he talks about the caring black South African nanny, Enid, we cannot escape the fact that the black South Africans were for many years slaves and badly or poorly treated domestic workers – the victims.

Graham, was interesting in that he made regular reference to psychological models of victim-perpetrator, when talking about his abusive partner and their relationship. He talked about transactional analysis and described himself as being in denial of the abusive situations. Throughout the interview, when he
described the abusive relationship, he would slip in messages he adopted from his parents about romantic love relationships and marriage:

The song “Julie May” came on the radio again. She picked up a stubby and threw it at me and split my chin. I was in denial, it was like fantasy land, surreal. You’ve got to work as a team, was the scripting from my parents. Other scripting from my parents was “We don’t argue we’re just discussing”.

Graham described his “jealous abusive partner” and the “game” he saw her play, and discussed how he resolved it through his own self-beliefs and self-representation and his own “game”. He repeated regularly throughout the interview what methods of conflict resolution he had adopted during the relationship.

My conflict resolution was that I was very accommodating. I was cooperative and passive and this suits my personality type. I am a patient, calm, accommodating person. It takes a lot to get me upset. I’ve always been a constant to who I am. It didn’t affect my self-esteem. I knew I was right and she was wrong. I was above the problem and I was greater than the situation. That’s my life position.

The game she played was:

1. “Now I’ve got you, you son of a bitch”;
2. “If it weren’t for you …” And
3. “Keep me”….
4. The game I was playing was: “Harass me, kick me”. And I played this game to reduce the tension.
[After the stubby incident] I said I’d had enough. I told her to get out of my life…. she then played “That’s right just like you – gutless”. So then I walked back in to talk about it. I actually felt guilt when she called me gutless. Then she said, “I don’t want you” and she repeated the “gutless” phrase three more times and on the third time, I walked straight out.

Graham provides a good example of sexual jealousy when he describes his partner’s reaction to the memory of his previous romantic partner:

The cause of the conflict, from her perception, was jealousy. This stems from the fact that I used to go out with a girl Julie, the name is important. They knew each other socially. Julie was the stereotypical blonde, beautiful, tall, etcetera [and] this song “Julie May” came on the radio. I was driving the car and she started to hammer me, hit me with clenched fist and I thought: ‘Shit, this is strange,’ and I said ‘what’s happening here? What’s the story?’ But she wouldn’t say anything. [On another occasion]: She was driving her car and the song came on again. I heard the first couple of bars and I hit the button and turned it off. She drove over the curb and threw a ring I’d given her out of the window. [Another time when she heard the song] she said, ‘I’m going to kill us both’ and she headed [the car] for the copper logs. I put on the hand brake and turned off the key. It was surreal.

Graham does not describe his current wife as abusive, however. As we saw earlier, he felt a need to be more negative in his conversations surrounding his work. He said he had to talk about having a ‘shit day’ rather than a good day
as the latter would annoy his wife. Like the other participants, Graham has developed his own self-understanding and representation of masculinities. Keeping the peace seemed to be a significant theme throughout his relationships with romantic love partners. He looked up to his father as his role model of what a man should be. He adopted this model and tried to live up to it throughout his life, at least up to the point of when I last spoke to him. In the reconstruction process, Graham’s model of masculinity is supported and sustained by the image of his father.

In conclusion, the reconstruction process provides significant assistance in our understandings of the construction of masculinities under abusive conditions. This becomes particularly useful, if we observe the construction and reconstruction of cultural definitions like masculinities and abuse from across the whole of an individual’s life cycle. It confirms what many authors of attachment and cognitive theory support, and that is, that what takes place in one’s life experience as a child has significant impact and meaning in adult behaviour. The life processes of understanding ourselves and our environment through life experiences is a dynamic process. This study has assisted me in more deeply understanding this process. It has also assisted me in acknowledging the importance of understanding human behaviour from a life span perspective and how this happens from a cultural cognitive viewpoint (Quinn n.d.).
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Theories from sociology, psychology, human biology and anthropology together have played a significant role in this study. Social construction theory provided a starting point in understanding how masculinity and abuse are constructed and developed. This eventually gave rise to my study question. Implementing the approach I adopted in this study assisted me in answering this question, by applying and integrating cross-disciplinary models and ideologies from anthropology, sociology of knowledge, psychology and human biology to produce my overall approach in understanding human relationships.

Overall, this has broadened my understanding and views about how culture - items, symbols and practices - become shared and understood. How as individuals we construct our self-representations in both the public and private worlds of our reality, becomes more apparent once we apply schema theory.

As I progressed through my readings and research into cognitive anthropology and attachment theory, it also became apparent to me that the self-representations are an intricate tapestry of experiences at the extrapersonal and intrapersonal levels for both men and women. Gender as a social and cultural construct, is difficult to avoid, nor should it be, if we are seeking to understand self-representations and human behaviour with any degree of depth. As I see it, self-representations even though complex in structure, are simple in process
looking at them from the perspective of cognitive processes through the
creation and growth of schemas.

Even though the sample of men taking part in this study is minuscule in
comparison to the greater population of men, the participants’ thoughts and
perceptions nevertheless have provided insights into how men, more
generally, place meaning on their self-definition of ‘being a man’. One
example is where Robert uncovers his masculine identity through his voice as
a singer. Allen desires a warm, responsive romantic relationship but cannot let
go of the mistrust he holds of making himself vulnerable to a woman. His
experience when he did trust a woman with his emotional world left him
feeling powerless.

The information collected from the participants to my study seems to support
my hypothesis; that men who move into an abusive relationship with a woman
as a romantic partner have observed and gained an experiential understanding
of a relationship and “mating style” that makes them predisposed to an abusive
relationship. I have argued that both early and later life experiences of abuse
have implications for men’s self-representative views as men – their manhood,
their masculinities. Material provided by participants such as Matthew, Robert
and James seems to lend support this hypothesis.

The self-representations of the participants collectively could be viewed as a
set of shared representations, shared meanings and understandings
(D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997). Collectively the self-
representations make up cultural experiences that in turn impact on the
construction or definition of culture (D’Andrade 2000). Overall, my
observations resulted in the recognition of how individuals experience situations in a “singular” way and yet, as individuals belonging to a ‘common cultural group,’ this is done within an existing set of assumed shared values, norms and expected behaviours (D’Andrade, 2000).

Schemas surrounding romantic love relationships between men and woman can provide a number of messages. These include messages about abuse and women and about men and masculinity in relation to gender differences. If a man is repeatedly told how he should behave as a man, he learns what makes a man. His response to how he, as a man, should behave is automatic to what information he receives and how he processes that information. That information, in the form of schemas, makes its way into the long-term memory, the central storage centre of cultural knowledge (D’Andrade 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997) and, as such, becomes his “personal reality” or self-representations of masculinities.

Schemas make sense of the inter-relationship between the cultural extrapersonal and intrapersonal realms through human experience (D’Andrade 1995 pp.136-137; Strauss & Quinn (1997). Schemas provide images in which, the component parts are matched or linked producing a recognizable emotional product. As D’Andrade (1995) puts it: ‘As processors schemas are a kind of mental recognition “device” which creates a complex interpretation from minimal inputs; it is not just a “picture” in the mind’ (1995 pp.136). This ‘mental recognition “device”’ and the ‘complex interpretations’ (pp.136) are a vital link between cognitive frameworks and attachment theory (Hill et al 1994; Chisholm 1999; Hazan & Shaver 1987; Strauss & Quinn, 1997).
Attachment to primary caregivers, is the foundation upon which schemas are created and developed. In this role, the interrelationship between attachment and schema plays an absolutely crucial role in self-identity and self-representation. Once a schema is developed, in some sense it becomes a taken-for-granted, in that whatever the schema holds or contains, is “personal reality”. It takes conscious effort to bring about change in schemas. This is because schemas hold values and beliefs, which have been etched into the mind since the early formative years. When values and beliefs are changed or modified, our “personal reality”, our self-representation, will shift (Strauss & Quinn 1997; D’Andrade 1995). Change is neither static nor permanent, and so neither is the development and growth of our schemas.

Scott’s states that, ‘Defining child sexual abuse is not just an academic issue How child sexual abuse is defined is important because it determines the basis on which social control agencies act’ (1995 p. 121). This, from Scott’s perspective, is important because it will impact on how children are protected from abusive and violent behavior (1995). I would venture to add that this perspective applies not just to child sexual abuse, but to abuse per se.

In researching partner abuse, the absence in the literature of males as victims is very obvious. In fact, due to the significantly small number of reported cases of males abused by females, family abuse has, in general, been perceived as a woman’s problem (Batten et al 1991; Hopkins & McGregor 1991; Scutt 1990). This attitude reinforces the view that women are victims and, as such, isolated with the problem, rather than it being a shared problem with men. It also means that resources and services available to men and women reflect this attitude:
anger management classes for men, and refuges for women. No provisions are made for women as perpetrators and men as victims.

In closing I offer a sentiment expressed by Ralph. In the quote he mentions his ex-wife about whom he spoke very little during interviews, other than to express a deep love and say that ‘she is still my best friend’. Ralph’s statement, encapsulates in essence, a feeling, which in various “silent” ways was alluded to by many of the men who participated in this study. Brian said: ‘Fear is not a gender thing;’ and Robert talked about being the ‘feminine one’ in his former marriage, playing the role of primary carer for their two children, enjoying the role but not feeling appreciated. I think Ralph’s quote really brings out the contrast and sometimes even conflict, that men and women feel in their day-to-day gendered roles: the expectation of behaving according to extrapersonal world structures, yet at the same time, maintaining at the intrapersonal mental structural level, their own self-representative view of how we really see or want to see ourselves. This self-image and representation is created and held in our schemas. Here are Ralph’s thoughts:

One of my mild dismays in life has been that women are always given flowers, but not men. Flowers are simply amazing products of creation. I take photographs of them in every place I travel; my photo album is full of them, from the English garden flowers through to tropical forest and arid desert flowers. I love them. I told my ex-wife, when we were together that I loved red roses, the look, texture and especially the smell of them. When I came back from overseas one time the lounge was full of red roses. It has always been one of my fondest memories.
Appendix I

*Interview Questions*

The following are a sample of the standard type of questions and prompts I used in the interviews with the participants to this study. I briefed participants as to the intent of the study and asked that questions be answered with that in mind. Questions asked about relationships were where required, followed up with further questions about the quality of the relationship/s in light of being a man (masculinity) and whether there was anything about the relationship/s with which they felt uncomfortable or troubled (abuse).

1. Can you tell me where you were born and what it was like growing up there?

2. What was your relationship like with your parents? Your mother. Your father.

3. What was your relationship like with your brothers and sisters?

4. What was your relationship like with boys and girls at school?

5. What was it like growing up and being a teenager? (Beginning to identify relationships with women)

6. What were your relationships like with girls as a teenager?

7. What was it like as an adult? (Being a man and relationships with men and women)
8. Have you had any long-term relationships with women? (Identifying any abusive romantic love relationships)

9. Do you feel that anyone (woman) has ever hurt you in a relationship? (Abuse)

10. How did you feel? (About the abusive situation/s)

11. How did you feel as a man? (Being in an abusive relationship with a woman)

12. Did you ever feel you wanted to get back at …him/her? (Identifying their response to the abusive situations identified particularly in light of being a man.

13. Tell me more about…. (Either clarifying the abusive situation/s being described /providing more information or clarifying their feelings about being a man in abusive situations)

14. Would you like to tell me more about…? (Abusive situation/s being described /providing more information or clarifying their feelings about being a man in abusive situations)

15. Do you mind if I ask. (Situations that I felt were significant although sensitive regarding an abusive situation and/or romantic love relationship)
Appendix II

Department for Community Development, Family and Children’s Services Research and Information Western Australia

Request for Statistical Information by Annaliza Jackson

The following data is for the period 01/7/00 – 30/6/01

1. Allegations of Child Abuse by Gender of Victim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2594</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: (2000/2001 there were 2828 allegations involving 2594 children)
2. Substantiated Allegations of Child Abuse by Gender of Victim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: (2000/2001 there were 1076 substantiated allegations involving 1017 children)

3. Substantiated Allegations of Child Abuse by Gender of Victim and Person Believed Responsible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Person Believed Responsible</th>
<th>Gender of Victim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The total of 1035 is greater than the total of 1017 in the previous table because some children were recorded on separate occasions with different gender persons believed responsible for abuse.
4. Substantiated Allegations of *Sexual Abuse* by Gender of Victim and Person Believed Responsible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Person Believed Responsible</th>
<th>Gender of Victim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Substantiated Allegations of *Physical Abuse* by Gender of Victim and Person Believed Responsible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Person Believed Responsible</th>
<th>Gender of Victim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Men Contacting the Department because of Family Violence (excluding child abuse)

This table should be viewed with extreme caution. The callers may be victims, perpetrators, other family members or friends contacting because of concerns about family violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Caller</th>
<th>Number of Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Men Contacting the Department Requesting Assistance to leave home on the grounds that they are victims of family violence.

Again care should be taken in interpretation. While the definition of this category in the information system appears clear, workers may use this category to record males (friends/family) ringing to organise assistance for a female to leave home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Caller</th>
<th>Number of Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following data is for the period 01/7/99 – 30/6/00

1. Allegations of Child Abuse by Gender of Victim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: (1999/2000 there were 2609 allegations involving 2361 children)

2. Substantiated Allegations of Child Abuse by Gender of Victim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>996</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: (1999/2000 there were 1094 substantiated allegations involving 996 children)
3. Substantiated Allegations of Child Abuse by Gender of Victim and Person Believed Responsible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Person Believed Responsible</th>
<th>Gender of Victim</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The total of 1024 is greater than the total of 996 in the previous table because some children were recorded on separate occasions with different gender persons believed responsible for abuse.

Substantiated Allegations of Sexual Abuse by Gender of Victim and Person Believed Responsible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Person Believed Responsible</th>
<th>Gender of Victim</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Substantiated Allegations of Physical Abuse by Gender of Victim and Person Believed Responsible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Person Believed Responsible</th>
<th>Gender of Victim</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>142</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Men Contacting the Department because of Family Violence (excluding child abuse)

This table should be viewed with extreme caution. The callers may be victims, perpetrators, other family members or friends contacting because of concerns about family violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Caller</th>
<th>Number of Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Men Contacting the Department Requesting Assistance to leave home on the grounds that they are victims of family violence. Again care should be taken in interpretation. While the definition of this category in the information system appears clear, workers may use this category to record males (friends/family) ringing to organise assistance for a female to leave home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Caller</th>
<th>Number of Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Chisholm, J.1999, Death, Hope and Sex, The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, UK.


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Fredrickson, R. 1992, *Repressed Memories*, Fireside/Parkside, USA.


