

**Identity construction and perception of violence by  
female residents of a domestic violence shelter**

By

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## **Dedication**

To my grandchildren Arthur, Cayden and Cillian, who are convinced they have a virtual  
Granny, and to whom I hope to prove I am, in fact, real.



## Abstract

This research examines the narratives of three women temporarily living in a shelter for women fleeing domestic violence in the UK. It explores how they construct their identities and perceive violence, how broader narratives influence their perceptions and identity construction, and how these broader narratives are interwoven and represented in their stories. It is an interdisciplinary study drawing on domestic violence, sociolinguistics, sociology, narrative and literary theories.

This interpretive study combines a narrative approach with elements of ethnography. Through in-depth analysis, it investigates the structural and thematic content of the narratives, the linguistic and discursive strategies used by the women, the different contextual aspects of the narratives and the relationships between time, space and people. Stories were elicited through unstructured interviews.

Several findings emerge in relation to the women's narratives. First, coercive control was consistently indexed in their stories through the use of linguistic strategies and discursive markers. Forms of emotional and mental abuse appear in their stories as more damaging to their sense of self and autonomy than, for instance, physical violence. Second, the women represent themselves not as victims but as thinking, acting and reacting people in response to the circumstances at hand. The identity of the victim appears as a 'retrospective evaluative, ascribed identity' (Blommaert 2005, p. 206). Third, their personal and meaningful possessions spoken about in their narratives served as a strong indexical of identity representations, and the destruction or disposal of such possessions by their abusive partners represented a violation of the self and of their identity ownership. Together these findings illustrate how narratives help us to understand better the agency women bring to their lives. Violence and abuse, especially in the form of coercive control, appear in the analysis as an attack on the women's identity and a hindrance to their identity construction, corroborating earlier studies.

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## *Overview*

My research is an interdisciplinary study drawing on domestic violence, sociolinguistics, sociology, narrative and literary theories. I examine the identity construction and perception of violence and abuse of three women who are temporarily living in a shelter for women fleeing domestic violence and abuse. I am also investigating how broader social and cultural narratives are represented in their stories and how these narratives influence their perceptions and the construction of their identities.

## *1.1. Research background and research questions*

I worked in different positions in a shelter for women fleeing domestic abuse in the Midlands/UK for a few years while I was undertaking my postgraduate degrees. The women in the shelter, mostly mothers with their children, often had different social and cultural backgrounds and different experiences of violence and abuse. The shelter is a temporary accommodation where the women come for protection and safety, and where they are given some respite to reorganise and make sense of their lives. During the time I was working there, I listened to many stories. Driven by my academic background and interest in discourse analysis, I sought permission and approval (in the shelter and at the university) to study some discursive aspects of domestic violence and, out of my working hours, I started to do some research in the shelter. Often, there were women in the shelter who could only communicate with a little English. Motivated by this fact, for one of the modules in my first Master's degree, I investigated encounters between a support worker and two residents (one English and one Polish) with different proficiency levels aiming to understand how meanings emerged in their interactions. I focused mainly on assumptions, inferences, and contextualisation cues (Gumperz 1992). Two main findings emerged. The first is that the speaker adapted her way of speaking, depending on the (assumptions about the) interactive partner's proficiency and understanding. Second, narratives were an important locus for the analysis of identity (Georgakopoulou 2007). It led me to start exploring in my Master's dissertation, the identity construction of two other women in the interaction with their support workers and in an interview. The study

signposted the complexity of the identity work, the different ways of perceiving violence and abuse and the different social discourses which were present in the background of the women's narratives. To develop and explore those findings further, and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the research has evolved into this PhD thesis, where I attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. How do women victims of domestic violence perceive violence and construct their identities in their narratives?
2. What roles do broader cultural discourses play in those women's perception and identity construction?

To answer these questions, I have applied interpretive principles and methods, combining narrative and ethnographic approaches. This research was conducted in the same shelter where my previous studies were done. A detailed description of the setting is given in Chapter 3. The women's stories were elicited mainly through unstructured, narrative interviews. In the following section of this chapter, I will give an overview of the issue of domestic violence to situate my research within. I finish the chapter with a description of the structure of the thesis.

## ***1.2. The issue of domestic violence***

Until not long ago, due to the historical inequality between men and women, in most societies, violence towards women, especially in the home, was considered a private matter, a 'domestic' issue, not to be interfered in by others. In 1993, the United Nations (UN) declared violence against women an infringement of fundamental human rights and an obstacle to the achievement of equality. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (UN Women 1993, p.1) recognises violence against women as 'a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which had led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of full advancement of women...'. The World Health Organisation (WHO) also declared intimate partner violence as a violation of women's human rights and a major public health problem (Krug et al. 2002). Although not at the same pace worldwide, and mostly as a result of women's movements and militancy, women's rights started to be recognised and gain space in public discussions and government policies (Anyidoho

et al. 2020; Matczak et al. 2011). The acknowledgement of the issue strengthened the women's cause and motivated the provision of services to victims of abuse. As the problem became noticeable, the costs of domestic violence in relation to services funded by the government (Criminal Justice System, health care, social services, housing, civil legal), economic losses sustained by employers and employees, as well as human and emotional costs also started to be measured (Walby 2004). A report published in 2019 shows that in the year ending March 2017 the estimated social and economic cost for domestic violence in England and Wales was approximately £66 billion (Oliver et al. 2019).

Domestic violence is a complex and serious social issue, which may take the form of psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. In the UK, domestic violence is defined as, 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.' (Home Office 2013, p. 2). Although anyone can experience domestic violence regardless of gender and sex, women are overwhelmingly more affected worldwide. According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (Office for National Statistics/CSEW 2019), it is estimated that in 2018, 2.4 million adults (between 16 and 74 years) had experienced domestic violence and abuse and 75% of them were female. Young women (aged 20 to 24) were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse.

There is a strong body of research in the field. Some focuses on statistics (e.g. number of victims by age, gender, ethnicity, types of violence), such as those produced by the Office for National Statistics or the Crown Prosecution Service. This method of research is useful for designing and informing government policies and decisions (Griffiths and Hanmer 2012). Grounded on women's experiences, feminist research favours qualitative methods and methodologies, especially addressing the social issue from gender and power perspectives (Aghtaie and Gangoli 2014; Skinner et al. 2012). In my research, which is also grounded in the women's experience, although I recognise that discourses of gender and power ought to be present in the women's narratives in one way or another, I do not explore these two social discourses in particular. Instead, my aim is to explore how women understand their experience vis-à-vis those and other social and cultural discourses. Domestic violence research interested in language and discourse, often focuses on what researchers consider important, according to their field of investigation



or practice, exploring, for instance, how language choice (e.g. terminologies used to refer to domestic violence, gender, power) in policies and institutions affects meanings and practices (Klein 2013). There seems to be little research focusing on the linguistic strategies used by those who have experienced domestic violence to express their perception and understanding of their experiences and themselves. This is what I strive to do in this research: to explore the experience of domestic violence from the women's perspectives, as they perceive it, and the meanings that they attribute to their experiences.

On the one hand, domestic violence is objectively defined and regulated (e.g. by the state, institutions and social and cultural practices) and, on the other hand, it is subjectively experienced and perceived. The variety of the women's experiences of violence and abuse and the multiplicity of meanings they attribute to this, are influenced by different personal, social and cultural elements. I regard contextual, performative and ethnographic details essential to the investigation of the women's sense-making, and I understand that identity, perceptions and action are influenced and affected by different layers of meanings, and that to understand social practices such layers must be investigated. The following chapters in this thesis build upon this understanding.

### ***1.3. Structure of the research***

This chapter introduces the aim and the rationale of the research and the questions it seeks to answer. It presents an overview of the issue of domestic violence to situate this research within it.

Chapter 2 is divided into two parts. The first part reviews the literature related to family, home, and domestic violence to examine the complexity of these concepts in terms of social practices and research. To uncover the influence of different personal, social, cultural and contextual elements in the women's meaning-making process, the second part of the chapter reviews the literature concerning discourse and discursive practices, such as chronotope, chronotopic identities, roles and structure of expectations. These theories and concepts combined allow the exploration of the different contextual levels in the women's narratives and help to make expectations and perceptions evident.

To investigate the women's sense-making and perspective of their experiences, a qualitative paradigm is demanded. Thus, Chapter 3 explains the methodology and methods adopted within an interpretive approach. It provides an overview of the research

process and context, in which the research emerged as a narrative study. A reflexive account of the challenges encountered in the field is given, as well as a detailed account of the setting, methods, approaches and people involved.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are analytical chapters where the stories of R10, R8 and R20 are consecutively analysed in-depth. In Chapter 4, R10's story, analysis is organised around three main characters, who are made salient in her narrative: her ex-partner; her mother; and her son's father. The analysis shows how invocation of each of these characters in her narrative indexes specific values and affords the construction of specific identities. The chapter also explores the connection between personal objects and identity performance, and how abuse affects it.

R8's story is analysed in Chapter 5. It shows how her perception of the circumstances and of herself changed over time. As violence and abuse are not immediately recognised by R8, coercive controlling tactics and behaviour are indexed in her narrative as a breach of expectations. Becoming aware of the abusive nature of her experience appears as a slow process. The concepts of chronotopic identities and motifs are used in this chapter to investigate the relationship between situations, identity and agency, and places in relation to their meanings and functions across time.

In Chapter 6, R20's story shows how her perception of the situations and the potential effect of her response to them is affected by different but interconnected levels of power and personal histories as she positions herself in relation to her husband, family, culture and community, social roles and discourses. The chapter illustrates some constraints and struggles involved in impression management and in keeping 'face'.

Chapter 7, the final chapter, summarises and discusses the research findings by answering the research questions. In relation to the implications of the findings and contribution to knowledge, it discusses how the combination of Bakhtin, Goffman and Tannen can assist in the identification and analysis of different levels of context. In relation to domestic violence, the chapter highlights the effect of control on the women's identity construction and reflects on discourses of victimhood.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Introduction***

As discussed in the previous chapter, the main interest in this research is to investigate the identity construction and perception of violence and abuse in the narrative of female residents in a shelter for women fleeing domestic violence and abuse. It involves different areas of study: domestic violence, narrative and discourse, and identity. To cover these areas, I divided the chapter into two parts. In the first part, I talk about family, home and domestic violence, to explore the complexities of these matters. Domestic violence, as the name indicates, is the kind of violence that is practised within the family, inside the home or household. Thus, I believe that reviewing family dynamics and the functions of the home help to understand how expectations and perceptions are formed. In the second part, I discuss the literature concerning chronotope, chronotopic identities, roles and structure of expectations. I take the position that these theories and concepts can support the analysis of the relationship between social situation, social structure and social action, and make expectations and perceptions discursively evident.

### ***2.2. Family and home***

#### ***2.2.1. The complexity of the family***

The concept and format of family and marriage (at least in Western culture) have changed over time. Giddens (1991, 1992) suggests that such changes in late modernity are due to more gender equality and more choices. Couples are less inclined to observe law and tradition (e.g. marriage as a duty with rules and roles, a means of procreation) and more disposed to follow their perceptions of intimate relationships (e.g. relationships based on love, happiness, sexual attraction); couples stay together while their needs are being met. On the one hand, tailored to the needs of its members, family life is a private matter. Family members develop particular dynamics and ways of acting, feeling and being. There is a variety of living arrangements (married and living together; married and living apart; cohabiting; non-cohabiting); there are stepfamily members and same-sex relationships. On the other hand, the family is a public matter in policies, laws, practices and society, all trying to regulate and classify in particular ways what and who is family,

and what families do and feel. Being a private as well as a public matter, and having subjective as well as objective characteristics, the family is a complex field of investigation (Cheal 2002).

Discussing family from an interactional and discursive perspective, Holstein and Gubrium (1999, p. 5) suggest the family as ‘an idea or configuration of meanings’ whose interpretation relies on the resources (i.e. personal and collective experiences) and standards of accountability brought into the interaction and the circumstances at hand. From this perspective, family ‘is constantly under construction, obtaining its defining characteristics somewhere, somehow, in real time and place, through interpretive practice’ (Holstein and Gubrium 1999, p. 4). Family is not objectively described or explained but interpreted. It is not defined (only) by biological ties, legal and traditional terms (e.g. the family is father, mother, son, uncle, etc.), but its meaning is constructed in relation to the circumstances (e.g. the family is who cares, supports, helps). Sometimes and in some discourses, it evokes hierarchy (power and authority), and sometimes familial sentiments (affection, feelings). Holstein and Gubrium (1999, p. 7) say ‘the essence of family is found in the way family is *used*, not in conventional or idealised social forms’ (emphasis in original). From the viewpoint that family discursive meaning and domestic reality are mediated in interaction, Holstein and Gubrium adopt what they call an ethnomethodologically-informed constructionist approach to family, claiming that this approach is apt to recognise families’ contemporary plurality and diversity. From this perspective, the family is not one thing (e.g. kinship), and it is not located in one place (e.g. in the household or the home); instead, it is where it is experienced. They claim that this perspective is useful because it makes the home and family life available for observation outside the home, through people’s accounts of how they experience family life in the home. Family studies do not have to be confined to the observation of the household (an aspect that imposes limitations to family studies), but it can be realised in any situation where family becomes a theme (Gubrium and Holstein 1987). Nevertheless, the home plays an important role in the family’s life, and very often it is the setting (either explicitly or implicitly) of family narratives.

### ***2.2.2. The home***

Douglas (1991) refers to the home as a virtual space, not because it is not part of the real world but because its representation is as varied as those who represent it. Its boundaries

and orientation are complex and ‘depend on the ideas that persons are carrying inside their heads about their lives in space and time’ (Douglas 1991, p. 290). Home is a (virtual) space with its particular structure in time, own rhythms, spatial effects and regulations. It organises space over time; the future is planned and prepared for in the present based on (past) history. For instance, in summer, provisions for the coming winter (extra food, blankets, etc.) are stored in the home because of the knowledge acquired from past winters. Also, meals and other activities are organised around certain times and needs. This organisation is fragile because it depends on its members’ commitment to a common good, but the level of adherence to this commitment may differ among the members. Hence, home as a collective good is protected if solidarity between the members is observed. Douglas’ home is a space where past, present and future intertwine. The possibility of anticipation of the future based on past experiences creates in the present a sense of security, stability and order, making events familiar and predictable. Family life becomes recognisable and the meaning-making possible. This sense of stability and security is maintained so long as the members do not subvert the system. If subversion occurs, Douglas notes, the home becomes inefficient, and the common good is put at stake as the order is broken. It seems, however, that such order is often subverted, as in the case of violence and abuse.

In a national study in America, Straus et al. (2009) note that in the home, behind closed doors, different levels and forms of abuse are as common as love, since violence between couples, against children, between siblings and other members of the family is prevalent. Straus et al. (2009, p. 13) state, ‘although the evidence is far from adequate, it persuasively argues that we live in violent homes’. In this research, I am interested in the violence and abuse of husband/partner against wife/partner from the latter point of view. For the sake of this study, I refer to this form of violence at home as domestic violence and intimate violence interchangeably and as encompassing all forms of abuse, violence being one of them. I sometimes use the terms violence and abuse together, where violence refers to forms of physical abuse, and abuse refers to sexual, emotional, psychological or financial abuse.

### ***2.3. Domestic violence***

The recognition of domestic violence as a public and social issue is a relatively recent phenomenon. With the criminalisation of intimate violence and the creation of public

awareness, victims (the majority of them being women worldwide) are increasingly sharing their stories. As this practice became an object of research, its complexity started to be made evident, challenging researchers, practitioners as well as policy and lawmakers. Intimate violence and abuse can take several forms, which include physical violence, and sexual, financial, psychological (or mental) and emotional abuse. More recently, attention has been given to the coercive and controlling tactics through which most forms of abuse are usually manifested. For instance, Stark (1995) notes that physical violence might not be the most critical factor or the primary cause of women's medical and psychological problems. He says, 'in all probability, the clinical profile revealed by battered women reflects the fact that they have been subjected to an ongoing strategy of intimidation, isolation, and control that extends to all areas of a woman's life, including sexuality; material necessities; relation with family, children and friends; and work' (Stark 1995, p. 986). Physical violence (severe or sporadic) is used to make effective these forms of control, resulting in the deprivation of liberty. Due to the commonality and pervasiveness of coercive control, Stark (2007) identifies it as the most dangerous context in which women are abused. According to him, coercive control is 'comprised of structural forms of deprivation, exploitation, and command that compel obedience indirectly by monopolising vital resources, dictating preferred choices, microregulating a partner's behaviour, limiting her options, and depriving her of supports needed to exercise independent judgement' (Stark 2007, p. 229). From this perspective, Stark reframes domestic violence as coercive control or a crime against women's liberty. The cumulative effect of coercive control (e.g. in the form of intimidation, denigration, isolation) can have devastating consequences on women's lives, causing, for instance, low self-confidence and self-esteem, depression and other physical and mental health issues. The personhood of a woman subjected to coercive control is continuously under attack.

Johnson (2008) refers to different types of violence and claims that it is necessary to be able to make such differentiation to be effective in terms of assessment and intervention. His typology includes intimate terrorism (coercive control in Stark's terms), situational couple violence, violent resistance and mutual violent resistance. The distinction between them is vis-à-vis the exercise of control. Violent resistance occurs when the person resists or defends herself from the violent and controlling partner by the use of violence. That is, the partner is violent and controlling, and the resister is not controlling but is (or

becomes) violent (e.g. fighting back). Mutual violent resistance is a rare case when both are violent and controlling. It is when both partners battle for control in the relationship. Intimate terrorism and situational couple violence can be equally severe in frequency and form of violence and abuse, but only the former aims to control. Intimate terrorism is unilateral, and it involves the exercise of control and power of one partner over the other. Situational couple violence is not aimed at controlling the other, and it may be uni- or bilateral; it is usually the result of couple disputes, violent personality, communication and anger issues.

Johnson (2008) argues that intimate terrorism is what most people mean by domestic violence, which agrees with Stark's point of view. Johnson mentions that coercive behaviour includes the use or threat of negative consequences to get the person to do what she does not want to do; making clear the willingness to impose punishment; ensure that all demands are being executed; monitoring the person's actions and movements; destroying one's ability to resist. It can be exercised through physical violence; through economic deprivation and control over property or other material/financial means; through humiliation, blaming and isolation. When there are children involved, they are often used in one way or another to support the partner's control over the other parent (or the children). Johnson (2008, p. 8) adds, 'a pattern of power and control cannot, of course, be identified by looking at violence in isolation or by looking at one incident. It can only be recognised from information about the use of multiple control tactics over time, allowing one to find out whether a perpetrator uses more than one of these tactics to control his or her partner, indicating an attempt to exercise general control'.

Researchers emphasise that understanding coercive controlling tactics and patterns is essential to comprehend domestic violence more thoroughly (Dutton and Goodman 2005; Johnson 2006; Stark 2007). However, such tactics are not easily identifiable, and analysis may offer some challenges. For instance, Kuennen (2007) identified that some of the issues encountered by legal professionals when analysing coercion are that it is highly subjective, context-related, and it may occur in a variety of forms and degrees (better understood as on a continuum of severity). These factors make it difficult to standardise a measurement procedure which could be equally applicable to all circumstances. Nevertheless, researchers have been working towards developing frameworks that help to recognise and measure it. Dutton and Goodman, for example, based on French and Raven's model of social power, developed a 'model of coercion in intimate partner

violence' (Dutton and Goodman 2005, p. 746), which takes into consideration elements of the social ecology (i.e. the context); types of demands, coercion and surveillance; response to and outcomes of coercion. The authors suggest that this model can serve as a guideline for researchers, helping them to design interviews, surveys, etc. as it can potentially make coercive tactics visible.

In previous research, Dutton (1996), called attention to the necessity of analysing the social context of the battered woman and the meaning that she attaches to it. The social context includes, for instance, the woman's personal history: significant life events and emotional, physical and behavioural strengths and limitations. It also consists of the woman's networks such as friends, family, co-workers, and those with whom she interacts directly. The relationships and interaction between the perpetrator and those who are part of the woman's networks is an equally important factor that must be considered. At a macro level, the social context includes the broader community networks in the form of institutional policies and practices, and society regarding its attitudes towards violence, roles and beliefs. The overlapping of these dimensions, as well as the meaning that the woman ascribes to them, should also be analysed. Dutton (1996, p. 123) suggests, 'the next decade of work with battered women is compelled to address the real complexity and diversity of battered women's experience – across women who vary from each other according to race, ethnicity, social class, age, sexual preference, and physical ablebodiness'. She argues that the social context analysis can be useful to explore such complexity and diversity. Over the years, contextual elements have been incorporated into measurement procedures such as questionnaires and risk assessments used by researchers and practitioners to identify, highlight and distinguish domestic violence and coercive controlling practices.

To conclude, in the first part of this chapter, I have discussed the concepts of family, home, and domestic violence to demonstrate that, although interconnected, each field has its levels of complexity. Ideas of family, home and violence are influenced by different levels of personal histories, societal and institutional norms, and contextual circumstances. As a result, individuals have a particular interpretation of and expectations about family and home. Likewise, the perception of violence and abuse is not the same. What might appear a dysfunctional family and a violent home for one individual (or institution) may not be for another, even in the same family. To understand domestic violence (and other social practices), it is necessary to investigate the interconnection



between different personal, structural and contextual layers and how individuals interpret it. It leads to the reflection on the relevance of time and space to the meaning-making process. Taking this into account, in the remaining part of this chapter, I discuss Sociological and (Socio)Linguistic concepts that can support the analysis of the relationship between social situation, social structure and social action. I begin by reviewing the Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope and its application to explore ways of understanding the time/space/personhood relationship and the interconnection between context levels.

#### ***2.4. Bakhtin and the unfinalisability of the world***

In Bakhtin's oeuvre, which extends to ethics, philosophy and literary theory, he has coined terms widely applied in literary studies as well as in social sciences. Concepts such as heteroglossia, polyphony and chronotope, came about as a reflection of Bakhtin's 'prosaic' way of understanding the world (Morson and Emerson 1990). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, novels were a flourishing form of literature, which formalists and structuralists tended to dismiss as an (artistic) literary expression because (from their point of view) it lacked consistency and stylistic devices (i.e. as in poetry). Bakhtin (as well as Voloshinov and Medvedev) argued that it was precisely this characteristic of novels (prose), that made it important (or even superior) as a genre because it reflected (the importance of) the ordinary, the everyday, the real, the prosaic. Morson and Emerson note that for them (Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Medvedev) 'the everyday is a sphere of constant activity, the source of all social change and individual creativity. The prosaic is the truly interesting and the ordinary is what is truly noteworthy' (Morson and Emerson 1990, p. 23). The understanding of constant activity and social change led Bakhtin to oppose all forms of '*semiotic totalitarianism*' (as coined by Morson and Emerson), or the tendency to assume 'that everything has a meaning related to the seamless whole, a meaning one could discover if one only had the code' (Morson and Emerson 1990, p. 28).

Contrary to formalists and structuralists ways of thinking, Bakhtin (1981) argues that it is a tendency to disorder and uncertainty that prevails in the world but not to a point when there is no order at all, as relativists would suggest. For Bakhtin, because of this natural tendency, cultures (and languages as a cultural expression) are always subject to opposite forces – centripetal and centrifugal forces – one attracting to an ordered centre what is

dispersed in a (primarily) heterogeneous world. That is, a word/an utterance is never entirely the result of the (free) choice of the individual uttering it; neither is it 'whole', but it is relatively constrained in several ways by time, space and actors operating in a two-way process. Meanings of words are continually being altered and re-evaluated in everyday life into new meanings, and tones (heteroglossia) and, in this sense, words (and persons) are never finalised, but they are always open to new, renewal, change and transformation; they are dialogic.

Time is open, in Bakhtin's ethical point of view regarding human existence. Events never (perfectly) repeat themselves and individuals have the freedom to make choices. It makes creativity possible and responsibility necessary (Bakhtin 1984). There is always the possibility of choosing something else and, therefore, of becoming someone else (Morson 2010). In his analysis of the characters in some of the Dostoevsky's work, Bakhtin (1984, p. 59) notes 'as long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word'. A person is never entirely known and predictable, and he should be treated as 'unfinalizable' (Bakhtin 1984). As ethical beings, our 'humanness' requires a world of possibilities where uncertainties promote agency and living is a process, not a product. Morson (2010, p.110) states, 'humanness demands a chronotope that allow for real agency and ensuring that, at every moment, the next could be more than one thing. It's life that matters, nothing but life – the process of discovering, the everlasting and perpetual process, not the discovery itself, at all'.

This notion of process, of possibilities that allow agency and creativity (and responsibility) orient me in this thesis. My reading of Bakhtin is that, although there are sets of (social, institutional, contextual) norms or behaviours assumed and expected in given circumstances (e.g. in family life, in an intimate relationship), because of the constant dialogue between personal histories (of different people), contexts (local, non-local) and times (now, then, to come), what individuals bring into a situation (despite the norms) affects how it is understood and what will be taken away from it. Becoming is a result of the struggle between the given and the open possibilities. It is from this point of view that I approach the theory presented in this chapter, the methodology, and the analysis.

Bakhtin's idea of unfinalisability is central to the concept of the chronotope and the dialogic notion of the language that will be discussed in the following sections, where I explore different chronotopic aspects in relation to micro and macro levels of discourse.

## ***2.5. Chronotope***

### ***2.5.1. Chronotope in the literary genre***

The term chronotope (literally timespace), is defined as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (Bakhtin 1981, p. 84). It was used by Bakhtin to distinguish the relationship between time, space and personhood (or 'image of person') on texts from different literary periods (from Greek romance to novels). He observed, for example, that in novels of the ordeal (adventure and chivalric) time was technical/abstract and sequences were reversible (i.e. ordeals/adventures did not affect places and characters). In those novels, space was interchangeable as what occurred in one place could just as well have occurred in another. They were marked by otherness (an alien word), and characters were passive to the role of fate and chance, remaining unchangeable (i.e. they didn't change despite the test of adventure/ordeals).

The adventure novel of everyday life was characterised by transformation (metamorphosis) in one's life and history. Bakhtin's (1981) discussion of this chronotope focuses primarily on 'the Golden Ass' (of Apuleius). Time in this genre was irreversible and marked by critical moments and turning points, and it was progressive, despite limitations. Private facts started to become available through narrative, and space was composed of living (real) meaning. Characters were not entirely an object of forces of fortune as there was an element of responsibility, of agency. An individual's identity was separated from society. A person's life was his/her own business, not affected by society and not affecting it. In the (auto)biographical genre, time corresponded to the whole life of an individual in the public sphere and in relation to the state (i.e. about what happened in the life of the individual that made him who and what he publicly was). The identity of the individual was public and from the public point of view regardless of who wrote it, whether it was him/herself or someone else.

It was with the modern novel genre that literary narrative became closer to real-life when spatial values and temporal dimension gained proportion. In Dostoevsky's work, for

instance, with which Bakhtin engaged extensively, spaces were real (concrete) and time (present, past and future) was linked by the process of growth where change was not arbitrary but involved continuity and creativity. There was a sense of becoming: an individual's change was neither entirely determined by history and social change nor dissociated from it. Thus, while in the previous genres, individuals lacked development and did not emerge, in the modern novel, they emerge through the narrative, as they had the ability to improvise and change history. Characters were unfinished (not entirely known or predictable, growing), although in the literary genre, they represented real people living in a real-world and in real-time. It is this aspect of the modern novel observed by Bakhtin that makes his concept of chronotope appealing to different areas of the social sciences as it offers a starting point to the analysis of the relation between time, space and personhood.

### ***2.5.2. Chronotopic motifs***

Chronotopic (or individual) motifs are 'constituent elements in novelist plots' (Bakhtin 1981, p. 97), which relate to utterances, figures and images, whose meanings and values often reflect a particular genre or situation. In other words, certain chronotope motifs index specific timespace frames and orient to specific meanings and forms of action. For instance, the chronotope of the threshold, (which can be represented by the front door/the porch) that is often present in idyllic family novels, is always metaphoric and symbolic. It is fundamentally a 'chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in life' (Bakhtin 1981, p. 248, emphasis in original). The threshold is a chronotope 'highly charged with emotion and value' (Bakhtin 1981, p. 248), and it indicates a spatial division between what is known in the family home to what is unknown in the outside world; time in this chronotope is instantaneous. Bakhtin (1981, p. 248) says, 'the word threshold itself already has a metaphorical meaning in everyday usage (together with its literal meaning), and it is connected with the breaking point in life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes life (or indecisiveness that fails to change life, the fear of stepping over the threshold)'.

Other motifs such as meeting (and parting) and road (and their variations) are present in most genres and constitute many plots. The motif of the 'meeting' is for Bakhtin (1981), the most universal and one of the most important. It is present not only in literary work but in culture and everyday life. In any meeting, he says, 'the temporal marker ('in one and the same time') is inseparable from the spatial marker ('in one and the same place')'

(Bakhtin 1981, p. 97). He points out that everyone recognises the importance of the real-life chronotope of meeting in the organisation of social and governmental life. Meetings in fiction as well as in real-life have the potential to change one's fate, to alter one's life; they are when inter-action occurs. For instance, two persons' lives can change after a meeting (e.g. a date), when their time and space first cross and might become entangled and change their perceptions, actions, expectations. Moving together represents the threshold (the stepping out from what is known/familiar to the unknown/unfamiliar) mentioned in the paragraph above, as well as the decision of splitting up if the relationship does not work. It might be easier to cross the threshold to live together than to split, though, and disentangle the time, space and personhood of those involved (e.g. couple, children, families, friends). While one represents acquisition, the other represents a loss. In the analytical chapters, especially Chapter 5, the notion of chronotopic motifs help me to identify and reflect upon some decisive moments in the women's stories and flesh out values, meanings and functions attributed to places in the home (e.g. kitchen, toilet, bedroom) when violence occurs.

### ***2.5.3. Chronotope: from the novel to everyday representation***

The contrast frame between fiction and real life, Agha (2007) suggests, is what make the concept of chronotope attractive to other areas of study, as it is 'not a contrast between novelistic chronotopes but a contrast between chronotopes of the novel and those articulated through everyday representations' (Agha 2007, p. 323). It makes the concept of chronotope accessible as an analytical device, and it has been borrowed and applied to different disciplines and in different ways as a form of understanding the world and its plurality. De Fina and Perrino (2019) mention that three essential elements are underlined in research with chronotope: the connectedness of time, space, and personhood in timespace representation; the dynamic and changing nature of such representations; and the connection between histories represented by shared knowledge, ideologies and value systems. The analysis of chronotopes and chronotopic relations (time and space connection) allows ideologies and values to be made salient in the fabric of narrative and discourse, the emergence and negotiation of identities, as well as meaning-making processes and discursive practices in different domains (De Fina and Perrino 2019).

One way of understanding temporal and spatial connections is by looking at the storytelling. Stories or experiences are usually narrated in the past tense, creating a

separation between the narrated world (there-and-then) and the narrating (here-and-now). The boundaries or alignments between the story and the storytelling, however, are not always straightforward, especially (but not exclusively) on narratives emerging in interaction, where shifts in alignment may occur in many different ways (and for different reasons). By exploring the relationship between the story (narrated) and the storytelling (narrating) chronotopes, Perrino (2007, 2011, 2015) expands Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope to the empirical study of oral narratives in discursive interaction. She argues that, although by default self-narratives are frequently presumed to be temporally marked as past, the temporalisation effects created by the speaker are generally more complex and varied. In the narratives of Italian and Senegalese storytellers, Perrino (2007) explores cross-chronotope alignments such as 'historical present', where past events are narrated as co-occurring in the present, and what she called 'participant transposition' – the transposition of a member of the audience (e.g. the interviewer) into the narrated event as a character. She explores the use of spatio-temporal deictics and other linguistic resources by which the there-and-then and the here-and-now are made distinct and also, at times, conflate, fusing past and present. Perrino (2007, p. 227) claims that 'this juxtaposition of temporalization effects can be used to align the spatio-temporal universe of the story (the denotational text) and the here-and-now storytelling event (the interactional text) as "coeval", as if they were part of the same spatio-temporal or "chronotopic" frame'. She claims that the manipulation of these alignments by the narrators during the storytelling makes the story more believable, tangible and convincing.

The boundaries between the narrated and narrating worlds also conflate when the storyteller, for example, stops the flow of the narration to introduce an evaluation/orientation through evaluative indexicals, which are 'any signs that presuppose some evaluation of the people or objects being described, of the speaker, audience and others in the narrating event, or of relevant context – any signs that associate people or objects with some recognizable social type and evaluate that type' (Wortham and Reyes 2015, p. 52). Evaluative indexicals are context-related (i.e. the same sign can mean different things in different contexts) and, as they refer to a larger category of signs, they require broader social and cultural knowledge from the participants in the interaction (and from the analyst to identify it). Evaluations are the expression of (sometimes shared) opinions and values, and they are linked to the purpose of the text. As units of analysis,

evaluations can give important information about context, characters, participants, intentions and organisational structure of texts (Wortham and Reyes 2015). Repetitions in storytelling are considered evaluative devices used to support the narrators' argument, to make claims more believable, and to create involvement (Kuo 2001; Labov 1972; Tannen 2007a). Reported speech (constructed dialogue), as someone else's words uttered in a different time and space and brought as narrated voices into the story, is a form of repetition and an evaluative device for this effect. In this study, coercive controlling tactics are often indexed in the women's stories through evaluative statements and devices, as well as the effect of abuse on their physical and mental health.

Places and people represented in narratives may also evoke particular meanings across time and space. Looking at trope as chronotopic representations, Creese and Blackledge (2017) explore how the characterisation of a sister-in-law (who they called Mami Ji), who is physically absent but part of the family's histories, appears as a trope, an 'archetype character' in the interaction of a mother and daughter across three speech events. Through the use of linguistic strategies such as 'ventriloquizing, constructed dialogue, repetition, details, and translanguaging' (p. 203), the iconic sister-in-law is constructed as an undesirable role model, 'a figure of fun', whose invocation in the interaction creates a connection between mother and daughter through shared memories. Mami Ji's indexical value connects the contemporary world of mother and daughter with their longer family histories (p.203). In another study, Creese and Blackledge (2019) draw on the idea of the stereotype and the chronotope (as the interrelationship between author, characters, time and space) to investigate the authoring of the characters of the peasant and the cosmopolitan deployed in the interaction of two migrant women among colleagues in the women's identity work. The figure of the peasant is characterised in the women's discourse with the rural and negative attributes of backwardness, naivety, ignorance, oppression and in a distant and closed time and space configuration. The figure of the cosmopolitan is constructed as future-oriented, open-minded, educated, and situated in the present, contemporary. By authoring those characters and evoking stereotypes, sometimes to challenge negative images of the migrant and sometimes to promote friendliness, the two women transmit ideology, morality and values (p. 19). The women distance themselves from the peasant character and often tackle discrimination by discursively constructing their migration journey as cosmopolitan and emphasising values such as learning, change, pluralism and enlightenment. Creese and Blackledge

argue that by holding characters apart from the author, as originally proposed by Bakhtin, the agentive nature of identity work is made visible, through the values that are projected.

All the examples mentioned above show different ways in which chronotope and chronotopic relations occur in narrative and discourse. It guided my attention to how the women position themselves in relation to figures and characters, to people in their networks, to their personal histories, to plans for the future. The analysis of such chronotopic relations in the women's stories helped me to map intentions, values and ideologies, the meaning-making processes and identity work.

Agha (2007) argues that representations of time cannot be separated from representations of space and personhood and that these representations (time-space-personhood) are performed within particular participation frameworks 'in which they are experienced, and through which they are maintained or transformed' (Agha 2007, p. 324). These participation frameworks involve modes of semiosis with different scales of relevance: interpersonal mode (small scale) to (mass) mediated mode (large scale), which are interlinked in various ways. Agha (2007) discusses mass-mediated practices as multiplied participation frameworks. He explains that, although mass media may not play any direct role in some (interpersonal) everyday encounters (e.g. between husband and wife), the cultural forms that orient such encounters are mass-mediated (i.e. mass media helps to proliferate norms and regulations about such encounters). In Agha's (2007, p. 326) words, 'mass-mediated representation of such cultural forms (e.g. depiction of spousal relationships, of office life) are recycled and recontextualised in the course of such biographic lives in various non-mass-mediated frameworks (e.g. conversations about or with spouses, conversations about or in places of work), and also in various semiotic practices that involve extended trajectories of co-participation (e.g. staying married, keeping a job) in at least some segments of which mass media play no role'. Likewise, mass-media via the internet such as social media and websites, for instance, helps to regulate and proliferate norms of what constitutes domestic violence and its victims, as well as people's opinions and attitudes towards the issue and the victims. These mass-mediated representations have a bearing on the women's perception of their experience and themselves and their response to the problem, as we will see in the analytical chapters.



Blommaert refers to chronotope as context or ‘chronotopic contexts’ (2018a, p. 7), and he argues that looking at ‘context’ chronotopically allows a more critical and precise way of understanding it. By putting the two concepts (‘chronotopic contexts’) together, Blommaert reflects on identities, sets of meanings, norms of behaviour and actions in relation to the situations that enable them, as well as the moral judgements of how others will react to one’s response to situations and how it reflects on the way one is socially recognised (or recognisable). He suggests that this approach to context allows researchers to consider the relationship between social situation, social structure and social action together. Otherwise, these aspects of the context could be neglected. He argues that ‘everyday social life can be seen, from this perspective, as a sequence of such chronotopically defined situations through which we continuously move, adapting and adjusting in the process our identities and modes of conduct in interaction with others’ (Blommaert 2018a, p. 6).

#### ***2.5.4. Chronotope and identity***

Blommaert (2005) and Blommaert and De Fina (2017) elaborate on the idea that contemporary identity work is organised in and with reference to specific timespace configurations (or ‘contexts’). These configurations, they argue, ‘enable, allow and sanction specific modes of behaviour as positive, desired or compulsory (and disqualify deviations from that order in negative terms). And this happens through the deployment and appraisal of chronotopically relevant indexicals – indexicals that acquire a certain recognisable value when deployed within a particular timespace configuration’ (Blommaert and De Fina 2017, p. 3). It means that identity work is tightly related to and oriented by the situation at hand. In this sense, the timespace configuration operates as an identity framing constraint which regulates roles, interactions, dress codes, and so forth.

Blommaert and Varis (2015) argue that in the context of superdiversity (in which practices evolve in real-life and also in virtual contexts), people’s choices follow different logics in different parts of life, and specific identity repertoires are employed to adjust to the situation at hand. They say that ‘the robust hegemonies that appeared to characterise Modernity have been traded for a blending within one individual life-project of several *micro-hegemonies* valid in specific segments of life and behavior, and providing the

‘most logic’ solution (or the ‘truth’) within these segments’ (Blommaert and Varis 2015, p. 4, emphasis in original).

Blommaert and Varis (2015) and Blommaert (2018b) discuss how dressing, objects or other personal possessions and also qualities (e.g. speaking English fluently) are used by an individual to perform identity and by others to recognise and ascertain the person’s authenticity. I want to pause here to explore the relationship between identity and personal possession in more detail. Consumer research, for instance, has a great interest in exploring the relationship between personal possessions and identity. Belk (1988, p. 39) categorises possessions as extended selves and states that they are significant contributors to and reflections of identity. Thus, the loss of possessions can be profoundly unsettling and equivalent to a loss of identity, especially when it is involuntary (as in the case of theft, fire, violence, etc.). In a study conducted by FitzPatrick et al. (2018), victims of domestic violence mentioned that their attachment to certain personal items (which sometimes were kept hidden and protected from the abuser) helped them to cope with the circumstances and reminded them of who they were. The close link between possessions and identity has also been explored by Goffman (1991). In his work *‘Asylums’* he observes that in total institutions (prisons, care homes, mental hospitals), where the exercise of control is extreme, individuals have their identity involuntarily removed from them through the dispossession of personal properties. Because of the feeling of selfhood associated with personal possessions, in such places, individuals are stripped of their material possessions, their contact with the outside world, and often of their names. The dispossession impacts the individual’s sense of identity and progressively change his/her self-perception and the way that s/he perceives the significant others. Goffman notes that, although institutions have to provide some substitutions for the possessions that have taken (e.g. uniforms, numbers as ID), these substitutions are marked as belonging to the institution. Any sense of identity that may emerge from the attachment to these controlled possessions is externally given. It reduces or eliminates the individual’s sense of uniqueness and self (Belk 1988). Possessions give the individual a sense of identity and inform others of who one is. It is argued that ‘possession and display of a feature – my shoes, my car – triggers recognisable identity features’ (Blommaert and Varis 2015, p. 54). Being oneself is a constant work of seeking ratification from others; it is a work that requires elaborate and complex forms of accountability and explanation (to others).

Blommaert (2005) claims that people organise repertoires of identities tied to the spatial position from which they speak. He proposes that identities should be seen as ‘*chronotopically organised moralised behavioural scripts*’ (Blommaert 2018b, p. 57, emphasis in original), which is what he meant by microhegemonies. From the premise that identity is not something that people have but perform, identity work is dynamic and continuously adjustable to the particular demands of different contexts or timespace configurations. In other words, identities are performed by following norms of behaviour (*behavioural scripts*) in accordance with the specific demands of specific situations (*chronotopic*). These norms of behaviour are polycentric, reflecting different scales of localised and non-localised expectations or requirements, against which identities are judged (*moralised*) as satisfying or not the contextual demands. In many cases, such judgement is based on the perception of ‘enoughness’, whether one has enough features of a specific identity to be categorised as belonging to a particular group (Blommaert and Varis 2015).

Blommaert explains that context is ‘a concrete timespace configuration in which particular forms of identity are expected, required or optional, and in which, consequently, we need to deploy highly particular resources drawn from what we can conveniently call ‘identity repertoires’’ (Blommaert 2018b, p. 58). To say that identities are performed to the expectations of particular timespace configurations, does not remove people’s agency. People do decide how to behave and take the best course of action. However, to determine the best course of action, it is necessary to recognise the situation; and it is recognised or not because of prior expectations. Upon recognising it, one can decide whether to conform or subvert (for instance) the norms. Likewise, to say that identity work is a dynamic process and adjustable to the context does not imply that identities are ephemeral. Identities are lasting (some more than others), and people do get attached to some of them, creating expectations for themselves and others. So much so that sometimes some identities may become a form of entrapment, as will be discussed in the next section.

## ***2.6. Goffman: Roles, performance and face***

It was discussed above that contexts (or social settings, situations) to a great extent, direct and limit behaviour to social expectations. For instance, a teacher is expected to behave as a teacher in the classroom, and this expectation precedes the local social interaction

between teacher and students; it was 'there' before the teacher (and the students) enter the class, and s/he (and they) was (were) aware of it. 'Teacher', in this example, is simultaneously a social status, a social position held by a person, and a 'role', a set of behaviours, moral obligations and privileges attached to that social status. Values attributed to social statuses and role expectations attached to them vary from one society to another, and from one individual to another. In another example, 'wife' can be a desired and valued status for some women and in some societies but not necessarily for/in others. Likewise, the wife's role expectations can differ considerably among women and cultures. Schiffrin (1996, p. 196) explains that 'roles are not viewed as properties of individuals alone: our roles and statuses are bound together by sets of reciprocal expectations and obligations about what to do, and about how and when to do it'.

Goffman demonstrates the relationship between context, roles and behaviour at length in his work. For each situation, there is a socially established set of possible behaviours (roles), which bring with them assumptions and expectations of how those roles ought to be performed. Individuals invested in a role have the moral obligation or commitment to maintain the set of meanings attached to the performance – to maintain 'the expressive order' of the performance, but also the moral right to expect that he will be valued for his social characteristics (Goffman 1990). When performing roles, one aims to give a good impression of oneself by attending to others' expectations and gain recognition. Goffman uses the theatre as a metaphor to explain social interactions and everyday life, in what is known as the dramaturgical approach. He says that people perform roles for each other (e.g. there are performers and audience) as if they were on a stage (e.g. the front stage is where the show is performed; the backstage where it is rehearsed). People (with a common goal) cooperate in creating and maintaining an impression, they are a (performing) team. The team must act with responsibility to avoid causing (performance) disruptions – 'incidents' or 'scenes' (Goffman 1990, pp. 205-206) – which threaten the reality of the performance. To prevent disruption, they are loyal to the moral obligation inherent in the roles they perform. To protect the show, they are disciplined and overlook, excuse or conceal inappropriate or disruptive behaviour caused by a teammate. In the interest of the team, they are circumspect, exercising prudence and self-control. They are people with 'presence of mind' (Goffman 1990, p. 210). In order to protect moral standards, decisions often favour the institutional unit or 'the team' over the individual. Goffman argues that cultural values 'will determine in detail how the participants are to

feel about many matters and at the same time establish a framework of appearances that must be maintained, whether or not there is feeling behind the appearances' (Goffman 1990, p. 234).

In social interaction (face-to-face or mediated) people act a *line*, what one (willingly or in effect) says or does to express his perspective of the situation and (consequently) his evaluation of others and himself. By doing so, those present form an impression of him. People naturally strive to create a good impression on others and to build a good image of the self. Goffman (1967) calls this self-image 'face', which he defines as 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact' (p. 5). The tie between face and social values implies that it reflects how people behave while performing social roles. The face is positive when people attend to role expectations and negative when they do not. So, for instance, a 'good teacher' or a 'good wife' is the one who behaves following the socially valued norms for someone in the position. Goffman (1967) explains that once a person takes on a face for himself, he is expected (has a moral obligation) to live up to it, performing any actions required to maintain that face at any cost. A social face is not personal property, Goffman explains, but a loan from society which can be taken away at any moment if one's behaviour devaluates it. He adds that 'approved attributes and their relation with face make of every man his own jailer; this is a fundamental social constraint even though each man may like his cell' (Goffman 1967, p. 10). It is in this sense that identity performance might become a kind of entrapment; a position from which it is difficult to exit due to personal and societal anticipations, and personal investment.

While individuals like to keep the characteristics that are valued in society, society expects to see characteristics in individuals that are befitting to the positions that they are occupying. In this way, expectations are created around people, actions and situations. Blommaert refers to 'expectations of iconicity' that are 'expectations about mappings of style and content; correspondences between ways of speaking and topics or domains' (Blommaert 2005, p. 85). He explains, for instance, that people expect to hear stories of suffering and abuse in the narrative of those who have undergone a traumatic experience. If the themes of their narratives do not refer to those of suffering and abuse (or not enough), not attending, therefore, to the 'expectations of iconicity', the voice of those narrating their stories may not be heard. A victim is expected to talk like a victim, and she is framed as such when her demeanour and discourse are aligned with others'

expectations of how a victim should be and talk. In relation to the representation of domestic violence in courtrooms, for instance, advocates and activists struggle to find a way to retell the stories of violence, abuse and control in a way that is faithful to the experience and able to evoke public's understanding, sympathy and action (Polletta 2009, p. 1490; see also Van Dijk 2009). If a victim's story does not fit the expected plotline, it can be misunderstood or misjudged, and the response (e.g. institutional action, court decision, etc.) might be disproportionate or inappropriate. Polletta says, 'if the story that they do hear defies those expectations, if the protagonist behaves in ways that stray too far from the familiar plotline, if the ending fails to match up with the expected one, audiences will probably find the story unsatisfying, confusing, or implausible' (Polletta 2009, p. 1495). I return to the topic of victims' narratives in the next chapter when discussing narrative research. For now, I am building on the argument that it is through expectations that people perceive and organise reality. Expectations are the basis of notions such as 'frame' or 'framing', 'scripts' or 'schemata' used in different disciplines to explain the perception of reality.

## ***2.7. Tannen: Structure of expectations***

In Tannen's oeuvre, she is interested in interpersonal relationships as well in the role of expectations and involvement strategies in naturally occurring interaction as well as in interview narratives (Tannen 1993, 1996, 2007a and b, 2008). About expectations, Tannen (1993, p. 15) says that 'the only way we can make sense of the world is to see the connections between things, and between present things and things we have experienced before or heard about. These vital connections are learned as we grow up and live in a given culture. As soon as we measure a new perception against what we know of the world from prior experience, we are dealing with expectations'. Tannen examined the narrative of Americans and Greeks talking about a short film that they had watched as part of an experiment. The participants framed their stories according to different levels of expectations: as subjects to an experiment; as storytellers; as film viewers; and in relation to the content, objects and the events of the film. She refers to these overlapping and intertwining levels of context and content represented in their accounts as 'structure of expectations' (Tannen 1993).

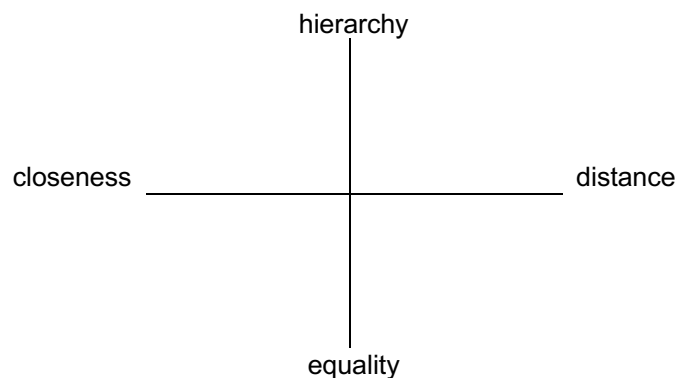
Tannen (1993, p. 41) explains that 'structures of expectations are constantly mediating between a person and her/his perception, and between those perceptions and the telling

of them. These expectations operate on all levels, from the broad level of context and activity (interview, subject to experiment) to ideas about episodes and actions, to objects and people'. She demonstrates how expectations are made evident in the narratives through linguistic strategies and discursive markers, including omission, repetition, false starts, backtracking, hedging and other qualifying words or expressions, negatives, contrastive connectives, modals, inexact statements, generalisation, inference, evaluative language, interpretation, moral judgement, incorrect statements, and addition. Through the analysis of these linguistic features, the expectations that created them can be revealed.

In her study on sisters' discourse, Tannen (2008) observes that American-born women tend to organise their sister discourse around the concepts of closeness/distance and sameness/difference. She noticed that whenever she asked women to talk about their sisters, they would refer to how similar or different and how close or distant they were, and they would spend most of the interview or talk describing how different they were from their sisters. So much so that Tannen concluded that (at least in America where the study was conducted) 'they were reacting to an assumption that sisters ought to be similar' (Tannen 2008, p. 212). The women she interviewed in that study tended to explain how and why they are similar/different or close/distant to their sisters by telling stories to demonstrate or support the claim that they were making. Tannen suggested that sister discourse was organised around three narrative types: Master Narrative, big-N Narrative and small-n narrative. Master Narrative corresponds to cultural and ideological assumptions circulating/available in society (e.g. the assumption that sisters ought to be similar and close). Big-N Narrative is the storyline or themes motivated by the Master Narrative, which provides a cause or explanation as to why sisters are similar/different/close/distant (e.g. sisters are close because of an illness that one of them suffered during childhood). Small-n narrative refers to descriptions of events and interactions between the sisters; it is stories told that support the point made by the narrator (e.g. the narrator tells a story of when she was ill, and her sister took care of her, or not, and since then they are very close/ distant). At this level, 'involvement strategies' such as repetition, constructed dialogue (this is how she refers to reported speech) and details together create scenes that demonstrate similarity or difference, closeness or distance.

In her work on interpersonal relationships, Tannen (1996, 2003, 2007b, 2008) has been interested in the dynamics of power and solidarity. She expands Brown's and Gilman's (1960) power and solidarity framework used to analyse forms of second-person pronouns in European languages. In that framework, power and solidarity were at opposite ends of a continuum, where formal pronouns would indicate or signal asymmetric relationships of power. Tannen expanded this model and proposed a multidimensional framework in which hierarchy (power) and connection (solidarity) are represented as two intersecting axes: vertically, the axis of hierarchy ↔ equality, and horizontally, the axis of closeness ↔ distance (Tannen 1996, 2001, 2003):

*Figure 1. Tannen's multidimensional model*



She explains that power and solidarity in discourse are not marked as clear opposites but, considering the characteristics of ambiguity and polysemy of the language, they might appear intertwined. What people say can potentially mean different things to different people, not only because of cultural differences but because of the very nature of language. It means that the same way of speaking may indicate either power or solidarity (ambiguity) or simultaneously both (polysemy). Concerning gender discursive differences, for instance, she claims that (male) domination and (female) powerlessness cannot be located solely in the ways that men and women speak, as a linguistic strategy in one context may infer domination, and in another, connection. She gives an interaction between a couple as an example, where one says, 'I am going for a walk', the other replies, 'wait, I'll go with you. I just have to make a phone call first' (Tannen 2007b, p. 4). The answer is ambiguous, she claims, because it may indicate a power strategy (i.e. to make one wait), or the intention to be close (i.e. walk together); and it is polysemic because it may indicate both simultaneously.



Although on different levels, family-like relationships are potentially hierarchical (in some societies more than in others) with power distribution varying in degree between members (i.e. between parents/children; one partner over the other; elder/younger siblings), Tannen (2007b, p. 17) observes that ‘being in hierarchical relation to each other does not preclude being close and being closely connected does not preclude being involved in struggles for power. Quite the contrary, being members of a family entails, both struggles for power and struggles for connection’.

## **2.8. Conclusion**

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of different aspects of family, home and domestic violence in terms of social practices and research, which inform my study. I discuss the complexity involved in such practices and the challenges it represents to research. Family is objective because it is highly regulated and controlled by the state, institutions and social and cultural practices. It is subjective because, in a diverse society, individuals develop personal ways of living, being and feeling. Violence in the home, domestic violence, adds different layers to the complexity, and is also objectively defined and regulated but subjectively perceived. One of the challenges for researchers, practitioners and often for the victims themselves is to recognise and measure hidden forms of abuse as coercive control, for instance. The literature reviewed reflects the necessity in domestic violence research to account for the diversity of the women’s experience of violence and abuse and the diversity of meanings attributed to it. It highlights the importance of investigating the personal, social, cultural and contextual levels of the experience.

Building on this idea, in the second part, I have explored literary and discursive theories. In undertaking this review, I have strived to demonstrate that the concepts of chronotope and chronotopic identities, the dramaturgical approach, and structures of expectations can lend themselves as theoretical and analytical frameworks to uncover the influence of different layers of experience, expectations and assumptions to the meaning-making process. Those concepts also provide linguistic and discursive strategies and tools to investigate the representation of violence and abuse in the women’s narratives.

Bakhtin’s, Goffman’s and Tannen’s scholarship give general epistemological and analytical guidance and reference in my approach to the data and also offered me

sensitising ways of looking at the different levels of the women's experience holistically. Bakhtin allows me to explore and understand the interconnection and interrelation between macro and micro levels of context and personhood. Goffman's work gives me guidance and points me to directions to take in order to understand the relationship between situation and identity at a micro level of the social interactions represented in the narratives. Tannen's work offers me ways of exploring and understanding the discursive and linguistic strategies employed in interaction to create meanings. They resourcefully help me 'to adjust the focus', map, identify and explain what the women are making relevant in their narratives and the meanings they are conveying.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### ***3.1. Introduction and research design***

My aim is to investigate how female residents of a shelter for victims of domestic violence construct their identities and perceive violence, how broader narratives influence their perceptions and the construction of their identities and how these broader narratives are interwoven and represented in their stories.

The research questions I seek to answer in this study are:

1. How do women victims of domestic violence perceive violence and construct their identities in their narratives?
2. What roles do broader social and cultural discourses play in those women's perception and identity construction?

To understand the social practice of domestic violence, I intend to explore violence, abuse and broader social and cultural discourses from the women's perspective, focusing on their sense-making and subjective interpretation of their experience. This approach aligns my research with the qualitative/interpretive paradigm, which as Cresswell (2013, p. 44) explains, 'begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem'. In Cresswell (2013), some of the common characteristics of qualitative research include a natural setting for data collection; an emergent design that adapts to changes during the research process; focus on the participants' meaning; and researchers' positionality and reflexivity. In the following sections, I explore these characteristics and how they are addressed in the research.

### ***3.2. Natural Setting***

In interpretive research, the social issue is preferably to be studied within the natural context or setting where the participants experience it (Cresswell, 2013). However, domestic violence being usually a hidden phenomenon, research in the natural setting is unlikely to happen. In the previous chapter, it was argued that, in general, family life

research in the home or household (the family's natural setting) is often problematic. Gubrium and Holstein (1987) suggest that one way of alleviating this problem is 'the relocation of *home* from a geographic domain to a location by-product of descriptive practice, and the transformation of the privileged access from a technical research problem to a topic for study on its own right' (Gubrium and Holstein 1987, p. 783, emphasis in original). Family studies are possible whenever the family becomes a topic and family research focuses on the assigned meaning given to matters of the home by the household members or those with whom they interact. Building on this perspective, domestic violence can also be studied whenever and wherever those involved (e.g. victims, perpetrators, etc.) talk about it. In this sense, shelters for those fleeing domestic violence and abuse is a privileged setting to investigate the issue as it often emerges as a theme in interactions and practices. My research was conducted in one of these places in the Midlands area of England/UK. It is a temporary shelter for women, and in there, I listened to stories of violence and abuse in the home, as experienced by these women.

### ***3.2.1. The Shelter***

The shelter is a charitable organisation, purposely-built to accommodate 23 women at the time with their children in self-containing bed-sitting flats. The common area shared by all residents comprises a lounge, a laundry, an outdoor playground area and open space. There is also a full-time Nursery providing childcare for the residents' children. It is a temporary accommodation and the average time the women stay is three to six months, usually until they are re-housed. It means that women are moving in and out all the time. While in the shelter, the women receive the support that they need to reorganise their lives. They are encouraged to attend the courses that are offered in the shelter (liaising with other institutions). Some of the courses available during the data collection were Promoting Healthy Parenting, Arts and Craft, and Freedom Programme. Support workers cater to women's needs developing together specific action plans. The women come from different circumstances and locations, and they often have different cultural backgrounds, beliefs, social classes, languages and race. As the lives of most of them (women and children) are at risk, the shelter is a confidential and protected space, secured by cameras and personnel 24/7; it also has a help-line that operates 24/7.

### ***3.2.2. The researcher in the context***

#### ***a) Gaining access***

Shelters have strict rules concerning the safety and confidentiality of the residents and the location and, therefore, gaining access to this kind of setting is not easy. In my case, however, it was relatively less complicated because I had worked in the shelter in different capacities for about four years altogether prior to this research and I had also conducted a smaller research project there for an MA degree. After being awarded the scholarship for this study, my link with the shelter was occasional, being asked to work sporadically at weekends when there was the need. The gatekeepers (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) were the chief executive officer (CEO) and two managers, from whom I requested consent by a written letter explaining the purpose of the research, how I intended to conduct it, who would be the participants, and how and where the results would be reported. I was acquainted with the routine and rules of the shelter, the management and the staff members, and they knew me, thus my access was granted. Hence, in relation to the shelter, I can be considered an insider-researcher because, as noted by Bonner and Tolburst (2002), I understood the ‘culture’ of the place; I expected that my presence would not be perceived as unnatural, and therefore, not interrupting the flow of the interactions; and the established familiarity between the staff members and myself should promote the telling and judging of the truth.

However, being ‘an insider’ also posed some unanticipated challenges and sometimes it was difficult to separate the staff and the researcher positions. For instance, while doing fieldwork in the staff office, they occasionally expected me to answer the phone (if they were busy), overlooking the fact that I was not on duty but doing research. The same happened with the residents, and with them, I considered the issue to be more delicate. On one occasion, for instance, all support workers were busy and one of the residents asked me for a reference number from her file. She was on the phone with the council, and that reference was being requested. I gave it to her. For these reasons and others that I discuss in another section in this chapter, I decided to reduce my time in the staff office doing fieldwork.

#### ***b) Insider-outsider researcher***

If for the shelter I was an insider, for the problem that I was investigating, domestic violence, I was an outsider, as I have not experienced the phenomenon myself. Dwyer

and Buckle (2009) discuss that not having experienced the problem under investigation may be seen negatively by some of the participants who fear they will not to be fully understood. It did not seem to be the case with my participants. When I invited the women to participate, I made it clear that the study aimed to understand domestic violence through their experience. Nevertheless, I also told them that I had worked in the shelter for some years before, notifying them, therefore, of some form of insiderness; it facilitated rapport and turned me into an ‘informed outsider’. I was not asked if I had ever experienced the same, but they knew that I had (theoretical) knowledge about the subject and also about the shelter, as is indexed in the interviews. Other forms of group membership that I shared with them, such as being a woman, a mother and, in some cases, a Muslim, are also noticeable in my notes, as I discuss in section 3.6 below.

While being an insider, or a member of a group facilitates acceptance into the group, the familiarity with the experience may influence the researcher’s perception and affect analysis, as it may be difficult for the researcher to separate between his/hers and the participant’s experience (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). Likewise, although it might be more difficult for an outsider to build trust and rapport with participants, the distance from the experience may facilitate its conceptualisation and the perception of its complexity, as life experiences are not always transparent and available for those experiencing them. Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 59) point out that, ‘often others external to the experience might be able to appreciate the wider perspective, with its connections, causal patterns, and influences, than one also internal to the experience’. The different aspects of being an insider or an outsider are unavoidable on any qualitative study, but the researcher can (and should) be aware of it in all stages of the research. Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 61) note that ‘the intimacy of qualitative research no longer allow us to remain outsiders to the experience under study and, because of our role as researchers, it does not qualify us as complete insiders. We now occupy the space between, with the cost and benefits this status affords’.

### ***3.3. Emerging design***

This research started as a linguistic ethnographic study. My initial goal was to interview the women living in the shelter to understand how their perceptions and identity construction were marked in the narrative-in-interaction, while they interacted with support workers and people from different agencies/institutions such as social workers,

police, instructors, and the other women. To this end, I visited the shelter weekly for almost five months (on different days of the week and times of the day). I spent several hours doing field observation, writing notes, talking to people and audio-recording interviews. However, from the very beginning, I realised that observing the interactional events would be challenging. The encounters between the residents and other people (support workers, social workers, etc.) took place at random times, not necessarily when I was present. In most of the cases, it was a private conversation where no one else was allowed to attend. It was something that, despite knowing the shelter's routine, I had failed to anticipate. It was also difficult to observe the interaction between support workers and residents during key-working sessions (one-to-one meetings to discuss their action plan and several topics such as personal, emotional, legal, financial issues) because they occurred in the evening at the resident's convenience (i.e. without prior arrangement) or at times when I was not there. Initially, I was able to observe sessions of the Freedom Programme (course designed to promote awareness by examining 'the roles played by attitudes and beliefs on the actions of abusive men and the responses of victims and survivors') offered weekly to the residents, but after four meetings, my note-taking became an issue. I wrote in my diary about it:

### *Example 1*

Today there is a Freedom Programme session. Just before leaving home to go to the shelter, I received a phone call from the support worker who facilitates the meetings telling me that she had spoken with the other two facilitators and they are not feeling comfortable with me observing the sessions. She said that she hadn't thought before about the implications of the observation, which is the note-taking. She said that the Freedom Programme is a space where confidentiality is a must, and when she realised that observations resulted in notes, she was no longer comfortable with it. I told her that all residents that attend the Freedom Programme had given me consent to take notes. She understood but preferred that I didn't take notes anymore. It was an uncomfortable call and made me a bit confused and nervous. Then I thought that it is just part of the research. It is not always easy to gain access to spaces, and I'd been fortunate so far. (Fieldnotes 6/3/17)

I decided to no longer to attend the sessions because there, the women shared details about their experience, and it would be difficult to observe without taking notes. At the same time, I started to stay less in the office; firstly, because I was not able to observe any interactional event as initially intended; secondly, as explained in the previous section, my presence at times became disruptive. I reflected on it in my diary:

### *Example 2*

Today, when I arrived in the shelter, the manager wanted to talk to me. I thought it would be related to the observations in the staff office, and it was. She told me that my presence in the office was being considered disruptive by some of the support workers who were feeling uncomfortable about my note-taking. (Fieldnotes 9/3/17)

### *Example 3*

I was a little upset after this discussion and had the feeling ‘OMG, now all my research is over’. However, as I walked down the corridor to the staff office, I realised that it is just part of the routine of a researcher. It is the reality of the words ‘**voluntary**’ and ‘**withdraw participation**’ written in bold on the participants’ leaflet and consent form. This kind of negotiation is part of that sensitive (and sometimes fragile) relationship between subject and researcher that is talked about in research training courses but that we expect will not happen to us (as often, at least). (Fieldnotes 9/3/17)

When doing qualitative research, the researcher must be prepared to adapt or change the initial plan in response to what is found in the field (Cresswell 2013). Hence, although residents and support workers initially agreed to the observation in the office and of interactional events, it was not entirely achieved because of the particularities and contingencies of the setting and participants. Although I knew the support workers, the setting and the routine of the shelter, I was unable to anticipate the impact that my presence as a researcher and some aspects of the research (e.g. note-taking) would have on the support workers in their space. Despite some obstacles, I was able to maintain my primary purpose, which was to learn about domestic violence from the women’s perspective through their narratives. The interviews were reasonably easy to arrange, and the majority of residents were willing to participate. I collected rich and in-depth accounts of the women’s experience of violence and abuse and, as a result, this study emerged as narrative research with (remaining) elements of ethnography.

### *3.4. Narrative Research*

Narratives are the focus of interest in different social and humanities disciplines employing a variety of approaches and methods of analysis. In social research, the concept of the ‘narrative turn’ emerged as a reaction to the traditional and positivist way of doing research. The complexities of the (post-modern) society required an interpretive paradigm that favoured subjectivity over objectivity, and the interest on personal experiences gained space in several different disciplines from the premise that to understand society it is necessary to understand the meanings that people make and bring into it (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012).



According to Riessman (2008), narrative analysis is distinguished by its attention to sequences of action, with the analyst focusing on particular actors in relation to particular places and times. Narratives or stories (terms used interchangeably in this research) have different functions and may be used for varied reasons. They are, first of all, a remembrance of past events through which people understand their experience. For instance, when faced with disruptive events that break expectations of continuity (e.g. chronic illness, infidelity, divorce, infertility), individuals make sense of the experience through storytelling, as ‘telling stories about difficult times in our lives creates order and contains emotions, allowing a search for meaning and enabling connection with others’ (Riessman 2008, p. 10).

On the one hand, stories can be used in therapeutic sessions, courtrooms or by the media to create arguments, persuade and convince an audience of a particular cause, viewpoint and veracity, or, on the other hand, to dissuade or mislead an audience about a problematic or undesired ‘fact’ or point of view (Riessman 2008). Used by groups and resistance movements, narratives are powerful ways of prompting people into social action that lead to social change (see also Polletta 2006). Narratives are highly entertaining; they create involvement and engagement that allow listeners, readers or viewers to experience the feeling and emotions that are being narrated. They are also an important locus for the investigation of identity and self-expression (Bamberg 2011; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Ochs and Capps 1996; Riessman, 2008).

### ***3.4.1. Narrative and identity research***

Identity is explored in narrative-based research in different disciplines and traditions and through varied methodologies and approaches (De Fina 2015). The definition of identity depends on the theoretical inclinations of the researcher and the field of investigation, which may regard identity as an individual’s property or as emergent in social interaction; as cognition or as social behaviour; as dependent or independent of the context; relative to an individual or a group; personal or relational (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012). The notion of identity as an essential property of the individual, as stable and fixed has been surpassed by another which perceives identity as embedded in interaction and social practice and being simultaneously affected by the world as well as affecting it (Bamberg 2007; De Fina et al. 2006). From this viewpoint, identity is often referred to in the plural ‘identities’, signposting the idea of ‘a repertoire of choices socially available’ (De Fina

2003, p. 16) to individuals or groups; the idea being that individuals change, adapt, evolve, create identities depending on the situation, the contexts and interactants. Bamberg (2011) tends to use the terms identity, self and sense of self interchangeably, as related to varying social categories (gender, age, ethnicity, group membership, etc.) and as a sense of being in the world.

Narrative as a methodology has been largely used to investigate individual as well as group identities within the social sciences, broadly from two main approaches: biographical and interactional (De Fina, 2015; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012). In the biographical oriented approach, narratives and storytelling are seen as a means by which a coherent and positive self is created, and through which one can often cope with problematic life events. For this reason, stories in this approach have cognitive and psychological implications (De Fina 2015). The retrospective dimension of (any) narrative is of great importance in this approach. It is argued that, by narrating past events, the teller distances herself from them and, through reflection, makes sense of herself and her experience. According to Freeman (2007), reflection allows one to step out of the flow of everyday life and understand events more positively and productively. He argues that this distance and reflection makes this approach important for interpretive analysis that goes beyond the moment. Freeman (2007) explains that although the self that emerges from reflection and is a product of a reflective process might reinforce the notion of an identity that is more continuous and stable, it is, nonetheless, an aspect of the self and is available to the investigation of the analyst.

From the interactional point of view, identity is perceived as emerging in interaction in the form of a relational process where participants perform different actions, based on reciprocal understanding and reaction (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012). The focus of this approach is in the strategies used by those involved in the interaction (narrators, co-narrators, audience) in the process of identity construction. While in the biographical approach there is an interest in the cognitive (mental) aspects of the semiotic process, interactionists are invested in the social constructions through which ideas and images are created and circulate; identity is not in the thinking, but in the doing (De Fina 2015, p. 352). Considering the complexity of the identity work, the notions of biographical and interactional approaches gave me scope and flexibility in the analysis to investigate both identities emerging from reflection and in interaction.

In the interactional approach, attention is given to the orientation of the participants, on how they construct a sense of self in interaction (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008), which is often combined with positioning theory and analysis (Bamberg 1997, 2004; Davies and Harré 1990). From the assumption that an individual possesses several possible identities that may be made available in the process of the interaction depending on the position that interactants assume in relation to each other, positioning was defined as a discursive practice ‘whereby selves are located in conversation as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced lines’ (Davies and Harré 1990, p. 48). Positioning is an invaluable concept for the analyses of how people make sense of themselves and others, and of how identities are constructed as a joint endeavour in narratives. Bamberg (1997) suggests the idea that there are three different levels of positioning concerning time and space. The first level refers to the storied world when individuals as characters in the there-and-then of the narrative are situated vis-à-vis each other (e.g. perpetrator/victim, etc.). The second level relates to the storytelling moment when tellers position themselves vis-à-vis the audience in the here-and-now of the narrative (e.g. introducing, excusing, etc.). At the third level, tellers position themselves vis-à-vis master narratives/social discourses available in the society and orient the audience as to how they want to be seen in more general terms outside the level of the interaction. Positioning is made evident in the narrative through certain indexicals or positioning cues (Wortham 2001), such as linguistic choices and discourse strategies (e.g. the use of specific verbs, of reported speech or constructed dialogue as in Tannen’s, evaluative indexicals). For instance, evaluative indexicals (e.g. statements, passive/active verbal forms) may indicate the characters’ positions (e.g. as demanding, as passive) and the narrators’ position in relation to them (e.g. as sympathetic, as a victim) (Wortham 2000).

In a study focusing on stories about family issues told by Jewish-American women, Schifffrin (1996) observes that experiences are verbalised through the content of the narrative and also through linguistic strategies such as syntactic forms, information status and contextualisation cues used by the women to convey pragmatic meanings related to the story’s theme. She explains that experiences verbalised as text (e.g. narratives) are globally and locally situated. That is, stories’ themes, topics and points are based on (global) cultural knowledge and expectations of typical courses of action in relation to particular situations, and made locally relevant to the audience, setting and interactional

concerns. Together, form, content and performance are important sources of understanding of the self. She says, ‘narrative is a means by which to arrive at an understanding of the self as emergent from actions and experiences, both in relation to general themes or plots and as located in a cultural matrix of meanings, beliefs, and practices. The form, content, and performance of narrative thus all provide sensitive indices of our personal selves and our social and cultural identities’ (Schiffrin 1996, p. 194). As a self-portrait, Schiffrin argues, the teller is displayed in a story through both the tale and the telling. Through the tale and the telling, some aspects of our identity are made more salient to our interlocutor than others.

Researchers interested in elicited narratives in interviews claim that both interviewee and interviewer collaborate in the construction of the narrative (Chase 2011; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012; Mishler 1986; Riessman 1993). Identity claims are based on the assumption that both the interviewee and interviewer share the same cultural understanding of what constitutes valued identities (Mishler 1986). Often, interviewees highlight in their narrative those personal traits considered more socially commendable (e.g. being responsible, confident), to avoid being degraded in relation to the interlocutor. There are instances, however, when narrators are expected to underline personal traits that are not so commendable (such as powerlessness) to satisfy particular audiences, as in the case of stories of victimhood. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are in society stereotypes and preconceived images of victims that an individual must attend to, in order to be ‘trusted’ as a victim. Often victims’ stories are retold by professionals in reports and statements (for instance) for specific purposes, and in this process aspects of the narrators’ identity are neglected, ignored and lost, and only the identity of the victim is stressed. I discuss this issue and the use of narrative approaches in different fields below.

### ***3.4.2. Narrative research in different fields***

During the third year of my PhD, I spent some time studying at INTERVICT as a visiting researcher. The International Victimology Institute Tilburg, at Tilburg University (Netherlands), promotes interdisciplinary research on the empowerment and support of victims of crime and abuse of power. During my visit, I interacted with victimology researchers and researched at the institution’s specialised library, obtaining new insights on theoretical and methodological issues regarding victims/victimhood/victimisation

research. Victimology scholars underline the importance of understanding and representing the ‘voice’ of the victims to avoid (for instance) misjudgement and second victimisation. At INTERVICT, researchers discuss the relevance of adopting a narrative lens to understand the victim’s experience more comprehensively and to challenge social discourses on victims/victimhood.

Van Dijk (2009), for instance, argues that victim labelling and social narratives of victimhood (e.g. the stereotypical image of the victim as weak, passive, helpless) may cloud victimology’s understanding of victimhood and reinforce social discourses, potentially resulting in second victimisation, and he adds that ‘a possible way to try to understand the authentic voices of the victims is narrative analysis’ (Van Dijk 2009, p. 8). The use of narrative methods of data collection and analysis, such as diaries, in-depth open interviews and focus groups, could help in developing in society a less stereotypical image of victims whilst expanding the victimological body of knowledge. Van Dijk (2009, p. 25) claims that ‘analyses of victim labelling could help to create more opportunities for crime victims in Western societies to freely express their real feelings and wishes both in informal settings and in court. It would, in other words, help to liberate victims from existing cultural constraints’.

Similarly, Pemberton et al. (2018) discuss the effect that severe victimisation has on the sense-making, as it disrupts one’s life story, bringing uncertainty and discontinuity. They argue that the symbolic damage of victimisation affects two areas of one’s life: agency (respect, control and status); and communion (the connection between victims and close and distant others) (p. 406). Having social support and the story of victimisation acknowledged, can contribute to the victim’s coping process and help the victim to regain a sense of control and self-continuity. However, Pemberton et al. remark that having one’s story acknowledged is not a straightforward matter, mostly for the reasons discussed above (e.g. social and cultural narratives of victim-blaming, victim stereotypes). Pemberton et al. say that, at the same time that the criminal justice process has the potential of restabilising the victims’ autonomy, giving them a voice (more in restorative justice, however) and generating communion through shared values, it can also override and dismiss the victims’ narratives, again causing second victimisation. They explain that, although the importance of the victims’ input through their narratives in the criminal justice process is recognised, such narratives are often viewed as a therapeutic expression or as a means for a more favourable outcome (e.g. in court). In

Pemberton's et al. view, apart from challenging social and cultural narratives of victimhood to create a more favourable view of the victim (as suggested by Van Dijk), the adoption of a narrative lens can bring to light the intricacies of trying to integrate the victim's perspective in restorative and criminal justice processes.

Victims of domestic violence tell their stories repeatedly in several different contexts (e.g. home, hospital, police station, shelter, court), to different audiences (e.g. family, friends, police, social and support workers, GP, counsellor, legal professionals, etc.), and for various reasons (depending on the context and audience). These stories are retold orally or in writing in conversations, reports and statements, and they are usually recontextualised, or entextualised (Silverstein and Urban 1996), for specific purposes and audiences. The retelling of stories of domestic violence and its challenges is discussed by Trinch (2003), whose ethnographic study investigates reports prepared by legal professionals based on the narrative of Latina women victims of domestic violence living in the USA. Similar to what was previously discussed, in applications for a protective order, Trinch (2003) observes that the stories are often transformed by legal professionals into a (Labovian-like) linear structure of events. On the one hand, these transformed to 'normal' narratives emphasise the victim identity, which is undoubtedly relevant for the protective order application. Yet, on the other hand, other aspects of the women's identities are not presented in court nor recorded and documented in the archives (as a historical record), as if the other identities never existed. Women's stories are transformed into texts that are accepted in court as interpreted versions, not necessarily in the women's actual words. Trinch (2003, p. 278) states, 'the reproduction of women's powerlessness is achieved through omission, alteration, disfiguration and distortion of their stories in order to achieve a temporary and individual solution to the insidious and societal problem of violence against women'. It is not those women's voices that are recorded but what is considered significant by the law. The representation of their lived experience is missed.

Researchers at INTERVICT seemed deeply invested in finding appropriate analytical tools and frameworks to pursue a narrative approach to victimology research. Nonetheless, it was pointed out that the pressure in academia for publications and to obtain research funding was a matter of concern for some of them. Considering that narrative research is not traditionally used in victimology, there is the fear that texts might not be accepted, and funds be denied if an interpretive paradigm is used or proposed.

Although it seems that this view was based on researchers' opinion rather than on the experience of having a paper/funding rejected on that ground, journals and research councils in some disciplines and countries appear to be more inclined to quantitative-like approaches, as Riessman identified, as being the case in social work research.

Social work is another field in which narrative plays an important role. As this discipline is concerned with (problems and problem-solving in) human relationships, stories are part of the social workers' routine. They listen to their clients' accounts and retell them in reports/statements to update colleagues and other agencies of the situation and to inform actions as well as to propose interventions (Riessman and Quinney 2005). In a critical review of social work papers where narrative research was used or mentioned, Riessman (in Riessman and Quinney 2005) asked a series of questions which she related to standards for 'good enough' narrative inquiry (which I adopted as guidance in my study as well). Some of the questions were: 'Was the work empirical, that is, based on systematic observation? Did analysis attend to sequence and consequence? Was there some attention to language, and were transcriptions made and inspected? Did analysis attend to the context of production (research relationships, and macro institutional contexts)? Were epistemological and methodological issues treated seriously, that is, viewed critically, seen as decisions to be made, rather than 'given' – unacknowledged?' (Riessman and Quinney 2005, p. 397). By investigating the social work papers against those questions, Riessman and Quinney, observed that a significant number of analysts did not reach the standard. In a considerable number of papers, the analysts neglected the context of production of the narrative; did not give enough attention to the language being used and did not produce detailed transcripts; reduced stories into summaries; overlooked the research process and focused on the outcomes instead.

In contrast, such characteristics were found in those studies considered 'good enough'. Riessman and Quinney (2005) observe that, although in social work narrative concepts are often used for practice knowledge, they are used less frequently in research, where the vast amount of approaches to narrative inquiry (see also Larsson and Sjöblom 2010), its cross-disciplinary nature and ethnographic elements seem to represent a challenge to researchers. The quantitative/qualitative dilemma is also an issue in social work, as Riessman mentions (in Riessman and Quinney 2005). She observes that in the USA, the majority of publications in social work journals are quantitative, and ethnographic works may not pass the review process. She notes, however, that it is different in the UK and

some European countries, where research councils tend to support qualitative, interdisciplinary research.

### ***3.4.3. Narrative research in the social sciences***

In the social sciences, the interpretive approach to narrative recognises the centeredness of the teller, who is viewed as the primary source of the meaning, which is derived from broader social structures external to the teller (Bamberg 2007). Different approaches and models of analysis of personal experiences emerged, some of them focusing on the form or structure with close attention to language use and function (Labov 1972; Labov and Waletzky 1967); some with focus on the content and themes (Riessman 2005, 2008); some focusing on the interaction (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Mishler 1986; Ochs and Capps 2001), where the emphasis rests on the interaction between teller, listener and context, and storytelling is seen as a process of co-construction. Also focusing on the co-construction of narrative and in the narrative as a social action, Riessman (2008) mentions the dialogic/performance approach. This approach, which contains structural and thematic elements, invites the researcher to investigate different features of the narrating and the narrated events, to include (for instance) the positioning of the characters, the narrating and narrated contexts, the narrated dialogues (reported speech/constructed dialogues), language features and the audience's response and positioning (Riessman 2005, 2008). Riessman argues that stories are composed and received in contexts; they are 'social artifacts, telling us as much about society and culture as they do about a person or group' (Riessman 2008, p. 105).

Riessman's dialogic/performance approach is inspired by Goffman's and Bakhtin's work. The dialogic aspect of the approach stems from Bakhtin's notion that an utterance always responds to another to a greater or lesser degree (Bakhtin 1986, p. 92); that the meaning is found not only in the words and intentions of the speaker but also in those who receive them. From Goffman, Riessman proposes to look at storytelling as performance, from the viewpoint that narrators act and enact stories in ways that preserve their 'face' in the storied and the storytelling worlds (i.e. in relation to characters and audience). In this approach, the relevance of the narrator and the audience (the interviewer, for instance) in the meaning-making is acknowledged by the analyst, and great attention is given to the broader contexts beyond the interview and ethnographic situation. The approach is based on the understanding that narratives are multi-voiced,



co-constructed and context-related. Riessman draws on elements of structural (which focus on how something is said) and thematic (which focus on what is said) analysis. However, she expands the scope of those modes of inquiry to investigate the complexities of the dialogic environment. She explains that unlike in the other two approaches 'meaning in the dialogic approach does not reside in a speaker's narrative, but in the dialogue between speaker and listener(s), investigator and transcript, and text and reader' (Riessman 2008, p. 139). Considering that words are packed with meanings from previous usages, from ideologies, political and historical discourses, and ambiguities, the analyst should be prepared for the possibility of readers/audiences having a different interpretation of the data being presented. Riessman (2008) suggests that to support and evidence the analysis and counter (or answer for) different interpretations, the analyst can start by focussing on the structure of the story, its organisation (sequence) and linguistic strategies and functions. It is equally helpful to give contextual details of the interview, settings, and participants, which are known only to the analyst, as I have strived to do in this chapter and whenever relevant in the analyses.

Cresswell and Hawn (2012) suggest that by interfacing Goffman's and Bakhtin's works, human experiential realities can be made epistemologically more visible and, in this way, both Goffman's analysis and qualitative research can be enhanced. Both Bakhtin and Goffman draw on aesthetics. While Bakhtin contrasts characters with people in the real world, Goffman compares the real world with the theatre and people as characters. Cresswell and Hawn argue that, on the one hand, Goffman's analytical framework allows such experiential immediate realities to be seen as resources rhetorically manipulated and controlled, depending on the settings and the individuals' frame of expectations. On the other hand, Bakhtin's work on aesthetics and human action allows investigating factors beyond the experiential reality that compel individuals to act and frame situations as they do. As Cresswell and Hawn explain, 'the realities that people cognitively know and ethically act towards involve linguistically constituted knowledge and action that is experientially compelled. Understanding includes apprehending this experiential dimension and such experience is thereby an epistemological imperative' (2012, p. 13).

This thesis explores the depth and breadth of the women's experience of domestic violence, which involves different layers of personal histories, relationships between characters (and their histories) as well as diverse social, cultural, local and trans-local contexts. I agree that the theoretical and analytical frameworks found in Goffman's and

Bakhtin's scholarship can make the multi-layers of meanings in discourse visible as proposed above and at length in the previous chapter. Therefore, they offer an adequate lens to investigate women's narratives. I am inclined towards Riessman's dialogic/performance approach, and her drawing on elements of structural and thematic analysis for its encompassing characteristic. Riessman highlights the importance of analysing interactional negotiations between interviewee and interviewer and the co-construction of the narrative. Although I acknowledge and explore it in my analysis, I am more interested in the dialogic aspects in the storied world. Hence, I add to my analytical framework the concept of the chronotope to investigate the time-space-personhood connections and Tannen's work to examine linguistic strategies and structure of expectations. I explain the analytical process in more detail in the data analysis section below.

### ***3.5. Participants***

Participants in this research are women who were temporarily residing in the shelter at the time of data collection. Their selection was purposive (Patton 2002; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012), based on specific pre-established criteria (e.g. their personal experience of violence and abuse), and by convenience (Cresswell 2013) because they were living in the shelter to which I had access. 29 residents were invited to participate in the study. Of these, seven did not wish to participate, five did not want to be interviewed but allowed fieldnotes from observation to be taken, and 17 agreed to be interviewed and allowed fieldnotes. Those 17 participants who were interviewed were from different countries, age groups and were in various types of relationships. Because the shelter is temporary accommodation, it was difficult to arrange more than one interview, and most of them were interviewed only once.

After reading all transcripts, I considered two ways of proceeding with the analysis: by exploring emergent themes and features across all interviews or by producing in-depth analysis of a smaller number of interviews to explore emergent themes and features within each of them. I opted for the latter as it can capture the women's perception of abuse and themselves better, as well as how their perceptions have changed over time, if they have changed at all. In-depth analyses tend to be long and time demanding and, considering the word and time limitations imposed on this project, I selected three

participants from the 17 interviewed, in order to analyse their narrative in depth. The selected participants are called R10, R8 and R20 in this research, and their stories are in chapters four, five and six, respectively. R10 is the youngest participant, 22 years old, and is British, belonging to a Traveller community, and in a non-cohabiting relationship (not married nor living together but sharing a sexual relationship). R8 is 34 years old, also British, in a cohabiting relationship. R20 is the oldest among the participants, 43 years old, African, married. Although all stories were about domestic violence, they were all different in many aspects. For instance, I noticed that violence and abuse did not seem evident at first to R10 and R8, and I wanted to investigate how they came to understand that they were in an abusive relationship. I wanted to explore how abuse was being linguistically indexed and described in their narratives when it was not being perceived as such. I chose R20 because, although she realised that her relationship was violent, she was being prevented from leaving her husband by factors that I wanted to investigate. I understood that the narratives of these three women could capture some of the complexities of the issue of domestic violence and the language used to represent it. It can instantiate why and how sometimes abuse goes unnoticed and why people sometimes stay in the relationship despite the abuse. It was not an easy choice, though, and the remaining interviews were equally important and valued. I intend to return to them as I take my research further and continue the investigations started in this study.

### ***3.6. Data Collection***

Two methods for data collection were employed: participant observation and unstructured interview; and these methods generated field notes, audio-recording and transcripts.

#### ***3.6.1. Field observation, field notes and research diary***

In the beginning, the experience of observing and writing field notes was daunting, as I did not know what to observe (or what was observable) and what and how to describe. Blommaert and Jie (2010) suggest that, at the initial stage of the research, the researcher should observe ‘everything’ to get an overall image of the setting’s dynamics. It helps the researcher to understand where she is and what she is doing there. In this way, the researcher starts to recognise the particularities of the setting and people and creates patterns of expectations that help the researcher to more or less anticipate what she might

encounter, and, therefore, start doing more focused observation. Following these steps helped me to produce more thorough notes. As an observer, my participation was moderately active, as I sometimes got involved in the conversation that I was observing. I observed four Freedom Programme sessions, one Art and Craft session, four Promoting Healthy Parenting sessions, and I stayed nine days in the staff office at different times of the day on average one to three hours each day, over four months (for a summary, see Table 1).

**Table 1. Summary of Participant Observation**

<i>Session/event observed</i>	<i>No. of sessions/days observed*</i>
Freedom Programme	4 sessions
Art & Craft class	1 session
Promoting Healthy Parenting	3 sessions
Family Support Workers' Office	9 days

(\*Two hours of observation on average per session/day)

Observation resulted in several notes, which sometimes were typed down straight onto my laptop, and sometimes written in a diary. When I was observing the Freedom Programme, in the case of interaction between several participants, I first typed notes in the 'flow' as quickly as I could, and immediately after leaving the field, I organised and structured them, and filled any gaps. Most of the entries from my research diary I later typed onto my laptop.

However, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, my note-taking made some of the support workers uncomfortable and, unable to take notes, I stopped doing observations. Nonetheless, some notes collected during the Freedom Programme are referred to in the analytical chapters in support of my analysis. Deciding not to take notes during the interviews was an ethical decision. The women I interviewed were sharing sensitive events of their lives with me, and I wanted to give them my full attention, as a listener not as a researcher. I wrote down my thoughts and impressions in a research diary after the interviews, when I listened to the recorded interview again.

Also, in the diary, I wrote some self-reflection during the research process. My notes demonstrate a constant consideration of the interviewing process and its consequences: is it correct to do it, is it ethical, does a good researcher do it. Below there are some entries from my diary:

#### ***Example 4***

I advised her and made evaluations – ‘have to be careful with social media... no pictures, different names...’; ‘I’m happy that you are safe now’; ‘I’m glad that you are feeling better now and feeling safer’; ‘I think it’s better’; ‘always seek advice...’; ‘it’s a good plan’; ‘just have to be a little bit patient’. Is it correct? Can a researcher do that? I have to read more about interviews’. (Notes ref. interview 1)

#### ***Example 5***

Evaluation - ‘Good to be in control of your mind again’; ‘it is very difficult, isn’t it?’; ‘... ‘Good to take your confidence back’; ‘I’m very proud of you’...’ (Notes ref. interview 2)

I asked myself many questions related to the research process and about being a researcher, and what I can see now is that the researcher is only one of my identities and not the only one that plays a role when I am doing research. But at that time, at the outset of this research, it was a new identity, which I was learning how to perform, as reflected in the examples above. The interviewees were aware of my different identities (and I was mindful of theirs). Thus, as previously discussed, taking into consideration that I had worked in the shelter for many years, the knowledge that I acquired inevitably emerged during the interviews, in the form of suggestions, advice or information (as in the examples above).

The telling about their experience was distressing, and all 17 women interviewed cried at one point or another and offering them a positive evaluation (examples 4 and 5) was a form of acknowledgement and an attempt to make them feel better. When talking about the relationship between the researcher and the researched, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012, p. 59) state that it ‘requires researchers to attend to the humanity of those who give their time, and perhaps other resources, in helping the researcher gain greater understanding of her research topic – to treat them in their full human-ness and not just a means to an end (e.g. “my informants”, “my data”)’.

I must refer here to the researcher humanness as well, and to the emotional aspect of researching violence and abuse. I agree with Schwartz-Shea and Yanow when they say that ‘field research on various forms of violence – domestic, institutional, or political, such as insurgency-related events – may expose the researcher to physical and/or emotional brutalities which he has not anticipated’ (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, pp. 116-117). Although domestic violence and first-hand stories of domestic violence were not unknown to me, the depth of the stories they were sharing with me has been on many

occasions very unsettling. I often wrote down in my diary reflections about my emotions as in the examples below:

### ***Example 6***

She was very emotional most of the time. She cried. I cried. Her story was in my mind for the rest of the day.

I could not sleep well at night and cried many times at home. (Notes ref. interview 4)

### ***Example 7***

It was one of the most distressing stories I have heard so far. She asked me many complex questions related to her case and related to Islam – ‘what should I do?’, she asked – and I found myself aware of the interview situation, so I answered superficially, as I deemed appropriate for a researcher. She did not seem to see me as a researcher, though. She was talking to a woman, a Muslim, and someone who understood her problem and who could advise her. In the end, she said that she had never talked to anyone (staff or residents) about all those things. It was intense. (Notes ref. interview 11)

Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 61) mention that in qualitative research, ‘the stories of participants are immediate and real to us; individual voices are not lost in a pool of numbers. We carry these individuals as we work with the transcripts. The words, representing experiences, are clear and lasting. We cannot retreat to a distant ‘researcher’ role. Just as our personhood affects the analysis, so, too, the analysis affects our personhood’. I have remediated this kind of emotional overcharge by taking time out of the field and by talking to others about my feelings, sometimes with someone at the shelter or friends, sometimes with my supervisor. In example 7, I overtly became aware of my other identities during the interview, and it affected the way that I answer her questions. However, I believe that my woman identity and talking to another woman (in distress) is covertly reflected throughout my notes as, for instance, in the positive evaluations (examples 4 and 5 above), in my crying with them, and in the way that I described feelings (theirs and mine). There are other instances in my notes that seem to reflect my inclinations as a woman,

### ***Example 8***

She is a beautiful woman and apparently likes to take care of herself. Her hair was tied in a bun, and she had light make up. Her nails were amazing and made me think of hiding mine ☺ (Notes ref. interview 2)

There was a nice decorative watch hanging on the wall, a big picture of her son on the table. She put two single beds together in a corner, and they were covered with a bluish king size blanket. There were also some cushions on the bed. Near the door, on a bedside chest, there was a vase with blue flowers matching the blanket. (Notes ref. interview 6)

As a metacomment, it is important to mention that what I classified as ‘woman’s inclinations’ is based on my assumptions that as a woman I am more disposed to empathise with another woman’s ordeal; that it is easier for me to talk about my feelings and cry (and say that I cried) and pay attention to nails and décor. The interpretive research recognises that researchers are not blank-slates, and their sense-making is inevitably based on intellectual and emotional inclinations and expectations. It also recognises that through self-awareness and reflexivity, researchers (as human beings) become aware of their biases and prejudice and learn (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012).

### ***3.6.2. Interviews***

The stories the women shared with me, which are the core of this research, were elicited through a narrative interview (Kartch 2017). In this form of interview, the roles of interviewer-interviewee are shifted into narrator-listener. As I was not looking for the answer to specific questions, I used the unstructured interview format to elicit the stories. Kartch (2017) observes that in preparation for a narrative interview, it is necessary to consider how to encourage the story by asking the appropriate (initial) question. In my first two interviews, for instance, I noticed that my asking was not successfully eliciting a fully-fledged account of their experience. My opening questions were:

#### ***Example 9***

... So, first, could you tell me what brought you here? why did you end up coming to a shelter?  
(Interview 1)

... I would like to ask you, why did you end up coming here, to the shelter, if you would like to share with me (Interview 2)

In response, both participants started narrating the last event just before they came to the shelter, and not the whole experience as I had expected. Reflecting upon it, I changed my initial approach, choosing a more focused question:

#### ***Example 10***

... So, I would like to talk to you about your experience ... of domestic violence ... a little bit about the past and about how it is now... (Interview 3)

... Would you like to tell me what happened to you? Was it your husband who was violent against you? If you could tell me from the beginning, how you met him, how was the wedding, and... (Interview 4)

... Yeah, what I would like to ask you ... if you would like to share with me your experience ... if you could start from the beginning when you got married and... (Interview 5)

By suggesting a temporal dimension (e.g. from the beginning, when you first met him, since the wedding) at the beginning of the interview, in most of the cases the narration of the experience progressed more or less in chronological order as a fully-fledged account. At this part of the interview, I refrained from participating as much as possible. Apart from backchannelling (e.g. nodding or using phatic expressions such as 'yeah', 'uhum', 'ok'), I just interrupted the narration when something was unclear (a word/expression or an event). Another part started when the end of the (fully-fledged) narration was signalled by the narrator (e.g. 'that's what happened', 'that's how I ended up here'), and we shifted to a conversation mode with both of us sharing the floor. Yet, the follow-up conversation was still based on the narrator's sequencing and themes.

Hollway and Jefferson (1997), consider open-ended questions and following the narrators' themes less intrusive and appropriate to elicit narrative of traumatic events (e.g. those of domestic violence and abuse). The unstructured interview is particularly useful in research that explores personal experiences and sensitive topics and, as it resembles a conversation, it helps to build better rapport with the interviewee, and enables the researcher to explore topics and information relevant to the participant (Bryman 2016; Cobin and Morse 2003). Instead of talking about aspects of the experience assumed by the interviewer to be relevant, the unstructured interview allows the interviewee to narrate what she considers significant. In this way, it is not the interviewer who controls the interview but the interviewee, who can freely choose what and how to narrate the experience. As revisiting the experience can be unsettling and upsetting, giving the narrator the freedom to decide what to reveal is overall an ethical choice. Cobin and Morse (2003) acknowledge the possibility of qualitative research using unstructured interviews on sensitive topics causing some emotional distress to the participants, but no greater risk than everyday life. To prevent distress, they argue that it is essential for the interviewer to observe strong ethical guidelines (see section 3.8 for further discussion on ethics).

There is a concern that the interviewer may be influenced by the relatively informal atmosphere created by unstructured interviews, potentially leading to biased questioning. However, the unstructured interview can be as much affected by biases as any other type of interview, and interviewers should be aware and avoid this (Chauncey 2014). In oral



accounts and interviewing, data are affected by the audience and the context in different ways and not only by the questioning (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Potential bias cannot be avoided completely, but the likely bias that some questions may introduce can be assessed beforehand and, in many cases, ameliorated or avoided (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). During the interview, I tried to assume a listener's position and ask questions based on the story they were telling and related to the storied context. As I am interested in what the women considered significant in their experience, I tried not to ask questions about particular types of abuse or known abusive behaviour to avoid influencing or limiting their narratives. However, by reflecting about my questions now, I can see that when the story did not appear in chronological order (e.g. R10's narrative analysed in Chapter 4), I asked more direct questions about violence and abusive behaviour. In general, I noted that, although certain questions imposed specific topics, the women produced elaborated answers, often instantiated within a story, which was the focus of my analysis.

### ***3.6.3. Audio-recording and transcripts***

Blommaert and Jie (2010) highlight that, in research, recordings mainly have two finalities: after fieldwork, they provide raw data to support and instantiate analysis; during fieldwork, they register the steps of the research process and make it possible to see changes of focus or perceptions. Interviews are usually audio- or video-recorded. Riessman (1993) notes that audio-recording and transcribing are vital to narrative analysis, as it makes an oral account available for scrutiny in a text format. I audio-recorded only the interviews (and not the sessions that I observed), using a portable audio-recording device, and after each interview, I downloaded the recording onto my laptop. I have audio-recorded about 20 hours of narrative data. I listened to the recording once or twice immediately after the interview and wrote down notes and reflections, without attempting to transcribe.

At the transcription phase, I typed it into a Word table with three columns. The first column I reserved to number the lines during the analysis; the second column I reserved for the participants, where 'Re' referred to the interviewer (myself in this case) and R followed by a number to the interviewee (e.g. R10); the third column was reserved for the text. At first, I typed without paying attention to pauses or contextual details and without rewinding the recording. If a word or a passage was not clear, I marked it as '*not*

*clear*)'. Then I listened again twice or three times to fill any gaps left, to add contextual details and anonymisations, and to mark short and long pauses. I transcribed word-by-word, as it was said. Example 11, below, has an excerpt that instantiates the final version of a transcript.

**Example 11**

12	Re	he- he was not violent with you
13	R10	no
14		no, no, never
15		never violent, never raised his hand, never raised his voice
16		he never
17		when ( <i>toddler's name</i> ) was born
18		all of the newborn appointments
19		he'd come with me, and
20		he's got, he's even come to the birth of this one ( <i>pointing to the pregnancy bump</i> )
21		to be my birth buddy for this one
22		so
23		he is supportive, he is
24		not a bad man at all
25	Re	that's good
26	R10	yeah, I wish I stayed with him ( <i>laughs</i> )

Copland and Creese (2015) discuss the importance of adopting an appropriate transcript convention, which represents the researcher's intentions towards the text. As it can be noticed in example 11, I chose a simple transcription convention, where short pauses are signalled with a comma and long pauses with a change of line. Contextual details and names of people or places that were anonymised are written in round brackets and italic (see Table 1 below).

**Table 2. Transcript convention**

,	Short pause (less than a second)	no, no, never
change of line	Long pause (more than a second)	no no, no, never
<i>(italic)</i>	Contextual detail	<i>(laughs)</i>
<i>(italic)</i>	Anonymised names of people and places	<i>(toddler's name)</i>
''	Reported speech	'oh no, it's not a problem'

Stressing turn-taking, overlaps and other interactional features, for instance, is not a priority in my research because my focus is not in the interactional negotiations, and exchanges were minimal during the interviews. Instead, I intended to foreground the

interviewee's words and rhythms, and make textual patterns such as, for example, repetitions and reported speech, and rhythms such as short and long pauses easily accessible to the reader.

### ***3.7. Data Analysis***

#### ***3.7.1. Data organisation***

Once I had typed all field and diary notes and transcripts, I started to organise data digitally into files. I compiled folders for field notes, interview notes, interview recordings and transcripts. When typing field and interview notes, I used black ink for notes coming from observation, blue for personal reflections and red for notes coming from other sources. By going through the files, it became clear that the most robust data to help me answer my research questions were the interviews, on which I focused my attention. I read all transcripts a few times, aiming to select the main participants and chose three among them (I discuss the selection criteria in section 3.5 above). Then I opened an individual folder where I collated data related to each of them. Next, I printed a few copies of each of the three selected transcripts for reading and making notes. Full transcripts of the three interviews analysed are found in Appendices 5 (R10's interview), 6 (R8's interview) and 7 (R20's interview). The parts of the transcripts (Excerpts and Examples) that appear in the analysis chapters are marked in bold.

#### ***3.7.2. Data analysis***

I analysed each transcript separately. I listened to the audio recording and read the transcripts several times, manually making marginal notes and highlighting in different colours similarities within each transcript, not across them (see Appendix 4 for pictures). I identified how each story was organised and sequenced, whether in chronological order, (recurrent) themes and events. By understanding the structure of the stories, I was able to investigate the language use and interrogate intentions and turning points: discursive strategies and linguistics features in relation to the events and the narrated context.

I reflected on the stories to understand the women's sense-making and searched correlates in the literature. I approached the transcripts from the theoretical perspective that meanings are not unified but historically loaded and contextually dependent, and that

meaning is attributed to a situation when indexical signs are recognised (Blommaert 2005).

### ***3.7.3. Narrative analysis***

The analysis followed different stages of the investigation. I first tried to comprehend how the stories were structured. The narratives of the women were a detailed account of their experience that included the time when they met their partners, when the abuse and violence started, when they left, the present time in the shelter and also considerations about the future. To understand lengthy accounts, I segmented them into events: when they met, got married (see Appendix 4 for pictures). This process was important because it allowed me to see the connections between the events and decide which excerpts had to appear in full in the analysis and those which could be summarised and retold. In each of the events, I looked for topics and characters. I organised characters in a table (see Table 3, below, for an example), in accordance to their importance (as major/minor) in the experience and in relation to talking roles attributed to them in the form of reported speech (as salient voice, minor voice, and no-voice). Some of the components of the Labovian model (Labov 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967) – abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation – often helped me to reflect on what the story was about, when and where it had happened, who was involved, the sequence of events and the feelings, thoughts and impressions of the narrator.

**Table 3. Table of characters (R10's story)**

	Characters	Major	Minor	Salient Voice	Minor voice	No voice
1	Jeff	✓		✓		
2	Toddler		✓			✓
3	Toddler's Dad	✓			✓	
4	Baby		✓			✓
5	The woman (at the clinic)		✓			✓
6	Mum	✓		✓		
7	God (?)		✓		✓	
8	Sister		✓			✓
9	Toddler's grandmother		✓			✓
10	Travelling friend		✓			✓
11	Travelling girls		✓			✓
12	Friends		✓		✓	
13	Black friend		✓		✓	
14	Jeff's sister		✓		✓	
15	Some girls		✓			✓
16	Granddads		✓			✓
17	Uncles		✓			✓
18	1 <sup>st</sup> sister		✓			✓
19	2 <sup>nd</sup> sister		✓			✓
20	Dreadlock man		✓			✓
21	Black kids		✓			
22	Oldest sister's father		✓		✓	
23	Father		✓			✓
24	Brothers		✓			✓
25	Travellers		✓			✓
26	Aunties		✓			✓
27	Nanny		✓			✓

By focusing first on separate events, I was able to identify linguistic features and strategies that were being employed and the relationship between the events. In the process, themes began to emerge both in terms of topics (e.g. expectations, violence, feelings) and recurrent linguistic features and strategies – such as discursive markers, repetitions, constructed dialogues – which allowed me to investigate the connection between themes and linguistic strategies, and the meanings that were being created. Below there is an example of how a linguistic strategy (repetition) is presented in the analysis chapters.

**Example 12**

you know,	because	I <b>still</b>	wasn't sure	
		I <b>still</b>		had to read it over and over again
	because	I	wasn't sure	
	because	I <b>still</b>		felt like,
		I <b>still</b>		questioned it

To understand the meanings that were being created through the description and ordering of events, topics, themes and by the use of discursive strategies, contextual particularities had to be considered. As Riessman (2008) argues, the interrogation of ‘how’ a narrative is structured (structural analysis) and ‘what’ it talks about (thematic analysis), may overlook some aspects of the context and purpose of the narration (the ‘when’ and the ‘why’), and to cover these dimensions she proposes the dialogic/performance approach discussed previously in this chapter. In my analysis, dialogic/performance and chronotopic consideration inspired me to consider the narrators’ use of constructed dialogue (and different intonations) and other linguistic strategies, as well as the narrators’ positioning vis-à-vis characters, cultures, events and contexts. All these details created scenes through which meanings emerged. Tannen’s and Goffman’s scholarship offered valuable support to the analysis as it will be demonstrated in the following three analytical chapters.

### ***3.8. Ethics: further consideration***

The WHO (World Health Organisation) designed recommendations and guidelines for those who intend to research domestic violence against women, specifically focusing on the ethical and safety issues involved in the planning, conducting and disseminating of such a research (WHO 2001). Although most of these recommendations are addressed to those conducting community research or in the household where the violence is perpetrated, they offer general principles relevant to any research on the sensitive topic of domestic violence, and which I strived to observe at all stages of my research. Some of these principles include the importance of the women giving their fully informed consent; the importance of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity to protect the women’s safety and data quality; making clear that they can withdraw participation at any stage of the research; giving them the opportunity to stop the interview at any time or not answering questions asked by the interviewer. Although the observance of these principles applies to any research project with potentially vulnerable people, in the case of research with victims of domestic violence, they ensure the victims’ safety

(considering that their lives are at risk), protect their well-being and prevent second victimisation.

To conduct my research, after having the approval of the university's ethics committee, I sought the shelter's gatekeepers permission by a written letter. Once permission was granted, I invited the participants by giving them a participant leaflet and a simplified recruitment letter explaining the research's details, purpose, forms of data collection, confidentiality, and anonymity (Appendices 1 and 3). I read the letters with them, stressing that their participation was voluntary and their right to withdraw consent at any time until the specified date. Those who accepted to participate have signed consent forms (Appendix 2). I was also required to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance.

Kubanyiova (2008) explains that researchers should consider macro and microethics when conducting a study. Macroethics include the approval of the research project by an ethics board following strict guidelines, while microethics refer to the specific requirements of the situation at hand. That is, during the research process, different ethical decisions must be taken depending on the situation. In qualitative research, and specially when interviewing participants about their experiences and on sensitive topics, researchers find themselves often, and sometimes subtly, in situations that they did not expect, as when a distressing event is disclosed by the interviewee, or when the interviewee demonstrates discomfort when answering a question or shows vulnerability (Cobin and Morse 2003; Guillemin and Gillam 2004). For instance, the women that participated in my research often got emotional and cried during the interview. When that happened, I offered them the opportunity to stop the interview, asked them if they wanted me to leave or if they needed anything. In all events they chose to carry on with the interview. Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 262) refer to these events as 'ethically important moments' in doing research – the difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing research'. In the case of interviewing victims of violence, for instance, there is always the dilemma of how far the researcher should go when asking the participants about a distressing experience.

On the one hand, there is the importance of giving a voice to the victim and, on the other hand, the need to protect the participant from harm. Orb et al. (2001) argue that a reasonable option in this case is leaving it to the participants to decide. Guillemin and

Gillam (2004) observe that, although there are clear guidelines related to procedural ethics (i.e. macroethics), microethics guidance is limited. They argue that dealing with those ethical events demands reflexivity as an ethical research practice. They say, 'being reflexive in an ethical sense means acknowledging and being sensitized to the microethical dimensions of research practice and in doing so, being alert to and prepared for ways of dealing with ethical tensions that arise' (Guillemin and Gillam 2004, p. 278). It allows researchers to think ethically at all stages of the social research from the proposal to the dissemination of the results.

### ***3.9. Conclusion***

This chapter provides an overview of the research process and context. I have discussed my methodological choices and reflexively revisited the challenges experienced in the field. The decision-making process throughout the research is based on theoretical, practical, situational, personal and ethical considerations. By giving a detailed account of the settings, methods, approaches and people involved, I hope to have demonstrated my journey through each phase of the study, as well as my personal growth as a researcher, and I have justified my methodological choices vis-à-vis my theoretical inclinations.



## **Chapter 4. Underlying assumptions and expectations regarding intimate relationships**

### ***4.1. Introduction***

This chapter is about R10, a 22-year-old woman, the youngest among my participants. She identified herself as British and coming from a Traveller community. At the time of the interview, she was temporarily living in the shelter where I was doing my fieldwork. She is the mother of a toddler boy (18 months), and she was pregnant with a baby girl. Her children are from different fathers, and she was fleeing from Jeff, father of the baby she was pregnant with, who was also a Traveller. She was not married nor living with him, but they shared a sexual relationship (i.e. they were in a non-cohabiting relationship). R10's son's father and previous partner, (whom she identified as) an Asian man, was not abusive nor violent. She was still in contact with him and his family, and they were supportive. The interview took place in her flat (in the shelter) and, while we were conversing, her son was playing near us. The informal/unstructured interview was 29 minutes long, and it was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed and anonymised.

Her narrative referred to 28 people, called 'characters' here. Four were major characters: Jeff, her son's father, her mother, and Travellers (in general), all with salient voices but her son's father. Jeff was the only character referred to by his proper name. R10's narrative was triggered by a question about whether she was in the shelter because of her partner and follow up questions about the continuing conversation. Most of her narrative did not follow a structured storyline (e.g. a temporal sequence of events, beginning/middle/conclusion), but it could be divided into (interconnected) reoccurring themes, mostly related to R10's experience with: a) Jeff and other Travellers; b) her son's father and his family; and c) R10's mother and family. In her narrative, R10 talked about Jeff's abusive behaviour towards her and about how it affected her. She related it to his Traveller expectations and to the fact that she did not conform to cultural rules, not being, therefore, like other Traveller girls. She talked about her previous relationship with her son's father and also with her mother. With these relationships, she pointed to her perceptions of cultural expectations and practices, and of what constitutes a healthy and abusive relationship.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in Tannen’s (2008) work about sisters’ discourse, she defines three forms of narratives: master narratives (ideological assumptions available in society about sisters’ relationships), big N-narratives (storylines/themes motivated by master narratives that sisters ought to be close/distant), and small n-narratives (stories told that support the narrator’s argument). Drawing on Tannen, I will discuss in this chapter, how R10’s perception is oriented by underlying assumptions and expectations regarding an intimate relationship, father/mother/child relationship and cultural practices. I will explore R10’s use of reported speech, constructed dialogue in Tannen’s (2007a) terms, and investigate its function especially in relation to social *voice* (Bakhtin 1981, 1984; Blommaert 2005) and the meaning it creates. To explain the resourceful identity work demonstrated by R10, I employ the idea of microhegemonies (Blommaert 2018; Blommaert and Varis 2015), which proposes identity as a dynamic work tightly connected to time-space. As in Creese and Blackledge (2017), I explore how the invocation of Jeff, R10’s son’s father and her mother as characters in the narrative index specific values and afford the construction of specific identities. These concepts are thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2, the Literature Review.

Hence, in section 4.2, I analyse R10’s account of Jeff’s cultural proclivities and controlling behaviour and in 4.3., how it affected her. In section 4.4., I talk about R10’s perception of herself and other Traveller girls. In section 4.5 and 4.6, I discuss R10’s experience with her son’s father and with her mother, respectively, and the influence of these experiences in R10’s life. In section 4.7, I summarise my observations and findings. As R10’s narrative was organised thematically and not chronologically (i.e. it does not follow a chronological order of events), the interview followed a conversational mode and, in the excerpts, ‘**Re**’ stands for the researcher.

## 4.2. ‘*Because he is a Traveller*’

At the beginning of the interview, R10 explains that she was in the shelter because of Jeff, the father of the baby she is pregnant with, not the father of her son, and narrates how she met him:

### *Excerpt 1*

1	Re	would you like to tell me how- how did you,
2		when did you meet him
3	R10	I met him

4	Re	and how it was
5	R10	I met him before I got with him,
6		I- I met him about,
7		about, a year bef-,
8		a year before I got with him
9		he was alright,
10		not like, not that I've seen him often but when I did see him,
11		because he is a traveller,
12		when I did see him, he always seemed to be alright
13		and then,
14		when I got in a relationship with him
15		that month,
16		month, about, a month or two down the line he's just
17		his actions changed
18		and then when I told him I was pregnant,
19		he didn't,
20		he didn't want me to have the baby,
21		he told me to go and get an abortion
22		and then,
23		just telling me not to wear makeup and,
24		not to dress
25		funny
26		and 'don't do your hair like that'
27		d'you know,
28	just trying to control me	
29	Re	Ok
30	R10	but I realised that straight away

R10 is saying that she met Jeff a year before she got into a relationship with him and that he seemed to be alright at the beginning, although she had not seen him often because he is a Traveller (line 11). Then she explains how shortly after they got into a relationship, his actions changed, how he reacted to her pregnancy and to the way she dressed or had her hair done. She evaluates his actions as being an attempt to control her (line 28), which she promptly realised (line 30). She introduces her narrative gradually, with a series of repetitions:

**Example 1**

3	I met him		
5	I met him		before I got with him,
6	I met him	about	
7		about, a year	bef-,
8		a year	before I got with him
9	he	was	alright,
13	he always seemed to be		alright
10			when I did see him
12			when I did see him

15	that	month,
16		month,
	about, a	month or two down the line

In this first excerpt, she gives some (positive) identity hints. She says that she knew him for about one year before being together, suggesting that she was not precipitate. She thought he was alright, which seems to justify her entering into the relationship, but she had not had the chance to see him often, which explains her misjudgement of him. Through repetition, R10 gradually formulates her response to my question. According to Tannen (2007a), repetitions can serve many purposes in the discourse, such as giving time to the interlocutor to organise thoughts; producing efficiency and fluency of language; facilitating comprehension; connecting sentences and organising ideas as well as bonding participants to each other's discourse, creating, therefore, interpersonal involvement. R10's repetitions at the beginning of the interview, seem to fulfil these purposes.

Repetitions can be synchronic or diachronic (Tannen 2007a). Those discussed above are instances of synchronic repetitions, which are recurrent words and collocations within an event. As the narrative continues, we find cases of the diachronic type, which are repetitions of utterances that occurred at another time before the interview. Reported speech is an example of this type of repetition. In excerpt 1, between lines 18 to 26, a series of reported speeches occur. In line 18, '**I told him I was pregnant**'; line 21, '**he told me to go and get an abortion**'; lines 23 to 26, '**just telling me not to wear makeup/ not to dress funny/ don't do your hair like that**'.

With the notion of the participation framework, Goffman (1981) explains the different roles that people take in interaction. In his framework, the speaker can assume the position of 'animator' – who utters the words, often described as the talking machine; of 'author' – who is responsible for the words expressed; of 'principal' – whose words are represented in the utterance, whose beliefs are being told and who is committed to the words being said. Also included in his framework is the position of 'figure' – the characters who are talked about. Schiffrin (1990) explains that, unless the contrary is explicitly marked, we assume that what the speaker says is her/his position, that s/he is committed to her/his words and that s/he believes in what is being said. Each one of these positions is regulated by specific norms of conduct, which are expected to be followed. Although often the speaker is simultaneously the animator, the author, and the principal

of the utterance, there may be shifts in alignment of these positions or changes in footing (in Goffman's terms). The way we define or frame a situation depends on the alignment or footing taken up by participation. Change in footing results in the alteration of the participation framework and in the way the situation is perceived (Schiffrin 1990, p. 242).

For example, from line 3 to line 20, R10 is the animator, the author and the principal in the story and Jeff, is represented as the figure, whom she is talking about, as the pronouns '**he**', '**him**', and '**his**' indicate. However, from line 21 there is a shift in footing when through indirect reported speech the figure's words are represented, and he becomes the principal – '**he told me to go and get an abortion**' (line 21); '**just telling me not to wear makeup/ not to dress funny**' (lines 23, 24 and 25). In line 26, a direct report speech – '**don't do your hair like that**' – turned the figure into animator, author and principal.

### Example 2

21	he t- he told me to go and get an abortion
23	Just telling me not to wear makeup and,
24	not to dress
25	funny
26	and 'don't do your hair like that'

At the beginning of the narrative, her evaluation of him is somehow neutral (e.g. '**he was alright**', '**he always seemed to be alright**'). It changes as his controlling inclinations started to emerge (**just trying to control me**'). She evidences his control by letting him speak by himself (through reported speech). Repetitions in other parts of her story show similar examples,

### Example 3

it was hor-, he was horrible at first it was, <b>'don't dress that way'</b> ... and then, he tried, just put his, like he tried to put his rules down like, ' <b>don't dress like that</b> ', <b>'don't wear like this'</b> ( <i>pointing to the curly ponytail that she was wearing</i> ), <b>'don't wear them'</b> ... and yeah, and then, he tries tell me like, <b>don't wear</b> my hairpieces, ... and then it's just got to the point, like, he told me to stop wearing my hairpieces,
--

so I just had my hair down and straight it,  
then my makeup took over,  
**'don't put that much makeup on'**,  
and I was like,  
ok

Repetitions of this kind used in storytelling are considered evaluative devices (Labov 1972), usually used as a form of dramatisation, and to support the point of the story. Or as Kuo (2001, p. 183) argues, 'direct quotations can also be used to provide evidence in support to the speaker's claims, making what they say more believable'. So, by shifting footing and turning Jeff into animator (putting the words in his mouth), R10 is inviting the listener (myself in this case) to agree that Jeff was indeed controlling. However, did Jeff utter those words precisely as R10 reported? Tannen (2007a, p. 112) argues that 'when speech uttered in one context is repeated in another, it is fundamentally changed even if reported accurately'. She says that in most cases, dialogue, as represented in the narrative, has never happened in the way it is represented if it happened at all. Therefore, instead of reported speech, Tannen prefers to call it 'constructed dialogue' (2007a, p. 17). For instance, R10's direct reports often were introduced by 'like' (... **like**, 'don't dress like that'), and in almost all instances she said '**like that**', '**like this**', '**that way**'. As Tannen argues, dialogues constructed in interaction are instead discourse strategies to communicate ideas more effectively and create involvement. Thus, R10's constructed dialogues are most likely not something necessarily said, but R10's representation of Jeff's behaviour as she perceived it.

When constructing these dialogues, there was also change on R10's intonation as she spoke with a demanding (falling) intonation showing command/aggressiveness. She represented his words in a way that sounded demanding and rude or, in other words, she used a socially recognisable 'voice' to describe Jeff's words. *Voice* here is a metaphor referring to ways of speaking that index a specific type of person and/or social attributes of the speaker (e.g. professional jargons, a particular accent, a particular intonation, etc.) (Agha 2005; Bakhtin 1981, 1984; Blommaert 2005). It is a complex concept related to the heteroglossia of language – that a word uttered by someone inevitably carries meanings conveyed previously by someone else. As Blackledge and Creese (2014, p. 10) explain, 'a word in language is half someone else's', and they explain that 'all utterances, then, have a history and an anticipated future'. In this sense, 'voice' encompasses a continuous give-and-take process, where new meanings are added to a taken utterance,

and it is given back to be taken again anew, reflecting the Bakhtinian dialogic characteristic of the word. Schiffirin (1990) argues that, in order to strengthen the speaker's claims, s/he selectively interprets the story from her/his perspective and presents events and sentiments that highlights the aspects of the experience that are more favourable to the position being argued and, in this way, leads the listener to accept the position being proposed. Thus, in the examples above, in all dialogues attributed to Jeff, R10 changed her intonation, stressing '**don't**' (e.g. **don't do your hair like that/ don't dress that way/ don't put that much makeup on**), adding, therefore, the intention, i.e. to show Jeff as demanding, rude and controlling and by doing so, she is inviting the audience (me) to see him in the same way. Another similar instance of discourse is found below in excerpt 2. R10 was saying that all her sisters and brothers lived in sites with the Traveller community in another city. She recalls how some Travellers reacted to her 'half-Asian' son when she took him to the site for the first time.

***Excerpt 2***

31	like, when I first went out to the site with him
32	it is like, 'oh he's a bit dark, isn't he'
33	I thought 'but he is half-asian', I don't hide it
34	d'you know,
35	he's half-asian and I am not ashamed to say that,
36	my son is beautiful,
37	do you know what I mean
38	like, 'he's half-asian, and why, what's your problem'
39	and they'd always, 'oh no, it's not a problem'
40	but you know
41	when you got there it's a big conversation,
42	'oh yeah, she's got',
43	'a mum with an asian kid, she's got one',
44	do you know what I mean
	...
45	we got caught up in an argument with, any of them,
46	traveller family,
47	because they like the chit-chat too much
48	they'd always be, 'oh, the black man's wife'
49	do you know what I mean

When R10 went to the site for the first time with her son, people made comments about his skin colour and about her being with a man of a different race, and it was always a reason for arguments between her and other Travellers. R10 introduces a series of constructed dialogues, some representing her thoughts or what she would have said to the Travellers and some what the travellers would have told her. It is unclear if the constructed dialogues are attributed to someone in particular, or if it is figuratively representing the kind of things that Travellers (in general) in the site would say. My

interpretation is inclined to the latter. Tannen (2007a, p. 114) refers to this kind of general representation dialogue as ‘choral dialogue’, attributed to a group to instantiate what they say. The constructed dialogues representing the Travellers’ comments are introduced by a change of intonation and the discourse marked ‘oh’:

**Example 4**

32	it is like, ‘ <b>oh he’s a bit dark, isn’t he</b> ’
39	and they’d always, ‘ <b>oh no, it’s not a problem</b> ’
42	‘ <b>oh yeah, she’s got</b> ,
48	they’d always be, ‘ <b>oh, the black man’s wife</b> ’

In CA (Conversation Analysis), the particle ‘oh’ prefacing the answer to a question often indicates surprise or that the question was considered problematic from the answerer’s point of view. The discourse marker ‘oh’ indicates a change of the state of the speaker, either of attention or knowledge (Heritage 1998). However, the examples above are not part of a naturally occurring conversation but a representation through constructed dialogue. Trester (2009, p. 147) suggests that the occurrence of the particle ‘oh’ prefacing constructed dialogue ‘works both to *display* and *evaluate* quoted material for the purposes of identity construction in interaction’ (emphasis in original). In this sense, R10 represents the Travellers’ surprise about her son’s colour ‘**oh he’s a bit dark, isn’t he**’ by using the ‘oh’ prefacing particle, but also displays and evaluates them as racists. If R10 would ask them what the problem with her son being half-Asian was:

**Example 5**

39	and they’d always, ‘ <b>oh no, it’s not a problem</b> ’
40	but you know
41	when you got there it’s a big conversation

They will say it’s not a problem ‘, **but you know, when you got there it’s a big conversation**’ (lines 40 and 41). The contrastive ‘**but**’ indicates that they would say one thing meaning the opposite. With ‘**it’s a big conversation**’ in line 41, R10 alludes to the kind of discourse circulating in the community about interracial relationships, and she articulates it in a way that resembles gossiping:

**Example 6**



42	'oh yeah, she's got',
43	'a mum with an asian kid, she's got one',
48	they'd always be, 'oh, the black man's wife'

Blommaert states that *voice*, 'stands for the way in which people manage to make themselves understood or fail to do so. In doing so, they have to deploy discursive means which they have at their disposal and they have to use them in contexts that are specified as to conditions of use' (Blommaert 2005, p. 5). He said that the use of *voices* is what causes an individual to come close to the desired contextualization (p. 45). In this sense, R10 uses socially recognisable *voices* to contextualise the events she is narrating and transmit a specific meaning: Jeff as controlling and Travellers (in the site where her family lives) as gossiping and discriminating, therefore, evaluating them negatively. As her narrative progresses, such evaluation is reinforced as she associates Jeff's (abusive) behaviour to his Traveller cultural expectations.

In excerpt 1, R10 says that she did not meet Jeff often **because he was a traveller** (line 11). This statement seems to carry no evaluation associated with being a traveller other than as a Traveller he used to travel. However, similar statements reoccurred in R10's narrative, where other characteristics and evaluations were associated with being a Traveller. For instance, when R10, Jeff and Jeff's sister were at McDonald's one day, and R10 greeted her (black) friend from school with a hug, Jeff got angry and grabbed her by the back of her neck.

### *Example 7*

	when he turned on me, 'f*** off, you made a show of me'
	'hugging up your black man when you're standing beside me',
	...
	he grabbed me from the back of my neck,
	he was like, 'you are trying to make a show of me'

She then attributed his reaction to his expectations as a Traveller (repeating '**because he's a traveller**' as in line 11 of excerpt 1).

### *Excerpt 3*

50	<b>because he's a traveller</b>
51	traveller girls aren't meant to associate with other males
52	and, when he sees a black man, or an asian man,
53	I don't know, they are kind of funny about the situation
54	so,
55	I was like, I am allowed friends,

56	he was, 'yeah, don't, you can say hello to him when you are not with me'
57	so, <b>he expected me to walk around with my head down when I am with him</b>

R10 is saying that because he is a Traveller (and R10 being a Traveller as well), he expected her to walk with her head down and not to associate with other males, as this is what is expected from Traveller girls. I will discuss line 51 (**'traveller girls aren't meant to associate with other males'**) of this excerpt later, along with other instances of when R10 talked about Traveller girls' characteristics or attitudes. For now, however, I want to show more examples of Traveller characteristics and expectations associated with Jeff.

I asked R10 if Jeff was working and she said that he does the 'normal' job that Traveller boys do.

### *Example 8*

he did do like, block pavement and stuff like that, not, <b>just normal what traveller boys do,</b> just block paving and, star-making, and stuff like that
--

Or when she was telling me that she could not understand why Jeff did not want the baby and asked her to have an abortion, she said.

### *Excerpt 4*

58	like why should I have to go and get rid of
59	'because of your feelings',
60	'are you gonna be looking after it',
61	'no, you will not',
62	'are you gonna be doing nights for it',
63	'no, you're not',
64	<b>because travelling man don't do that anyway,</b>
65	'so what'
66	'you just don't wanna a child with me because of the fact of what'
67	do you understand,
68	I didn't understand why he didn't want me to keep,
69	because, it's not like he'd, he wouldn't, 've been there for her-,
70	been there for her anyway, so
71	so, I didn't wanna him to,
72	I didn't have the fact,
73	why I shouldn't have kept it,
74	and all of this and that
75	'what, for your feelings',
76	'what about my feelings'
77	cause I would be mentally bloody traumatise for how many years later,
78	to get rid of my own child,

79	I've never thought about getting an abortion,
80	I never will,
81	do you know what I mean

She could not understand why he did not want her to keep the baby as she would not expect him to be there for it. Recalling Goffman's participation framework discussed previously in this chapter, R10 is animator, author and principal in this event, and she was referring to Jeff as a figure. However, as we see in lines 59 to 63, 65, 66, and 75, R10 shifts footing by addressing Jeff directly as if he were in her presence as personal deictics **you/your** signal:

**Example 9**

59	'because of <b>your</b> feelings',
60	'are <b>you</b> gonna be looking after it',
61	'no, <b>you</b> will not',
62	'are <b>you</b> gonna be doing nights for it',
63	'no, <b>you</b> 're not',
65	'so what'
66	' <b>you</b> just don't wanna a child with me because of the fact of what'
75	'what, for <b>your</b> feelings',

R10's dialogue seems to represent the way she thought and felt about the situation. She asks Jeff rhetorical questions and answers herself in a hypothetical conversation, as the use of **should** and **would** (lines 58, 69, 73, 77) suggest, representing what Tannen (2007a) calls dialogues as inner speech – when thoughts are reported as dialogue. Then, in line 64, '**because travelling man don't do that anyway**', the boundaries between narrated and narrating events are blurred, and it is not clear if this is part of the (hypothetical) conversation or if she is addressing the actual listener (myself) with an evaluation. What is clear, however, is that R10 believes that Traveller men do not help their wives with the children.

In sum, drawing on Tannen's (2008) three types of narratives, we can say so far that R10's central assumption (the Master Narrative) was that Traveller men are strongly driven by culture, not reacting well in situations where cultural expectations are challenged, as '**because he is a traveller**' (big-N Narrative) suggests. She, then, recalls events and constructs dialogues to support her central assumption (small-n narrative). R10 seems to position Jeff as aligned with cultural practices as represented through

constructed dialogue and socially recognised *voices*. At the same time, she shows herself as non-aligned in relation to her culture by making her own choices, this being a cause for Jeff's abusive behaviour. In the following section, we will see how his behaviour affected R10.

### ***4.3. 'I call it mental abuse because I went ... a bit depressed after it'***

R10 tells us how Jeff tried to determine her looks by controlling her way of dressing, hairstyle, and makeup, as well as who she could befriend. R10 says in excerpt 1, line 28 that Jeff was '**just trying to control me**'. Stark (2007) says that 'control is comprised of structural forms of deprivation, exploitation, and command that compel obedience indirectly by monopolizing vital resources, dictating preferred choices, microregulating a partner's behaviour, limiting her options, and depriving her of supports needed to exercise independent judgement' (Stark 2007, p. 229). Examples of some of these controlling patterns in R10's story have already been mentioned in the previous section, as in the excerpt below:

#### ***Excerpt 4***

82	and yeah, and then,
83	he tries tell me like, don't wear my hairpieces,
84	ahm, 'you are not a black girl',
85	and like, stuff like that,
86	and I was like,
87	it's not because I'm black or anything,
88	it's because I wanna wear it
89	for my own,
90	to make me feel better,
91	do you know,
92	I like looking good and,
93	and then it's just got to the point,
94	like, he told me to stop wearing my hairpieces,
95	so I just had my hair down and straight it,
96	then my makeup took over,
97	'don't put that much makeup on',
98	and I was like,
99	ok

R10's looks were important for her and made her feel good (lines 88 to 90). She liked fancy dressing, hair styles and makeup, and had a personal style and a way of expressing her self that Jeff disapproved of and perceived as emblematic of black girls. He systematically started to dictate his preferred choices, microregulate her behaviour and

limit her self-expression. He told her to stop wearing her hairpieces (lines 83 and 94), so she had her hair straight down (line 95). Then not to wear makeup (line 96) and eventually, she complied – ‘ok’ (line 99). So, Jeff was not **trying** to control her. He was effectively doing so.

As when she got pregnant, Jeff did not want the child and told her to have an abortion. Although she did not want to terminate the pregnancy, Jeff pressured her into making an appointment. She went to the clinic, but the procedure had to be cancelled (I will talk about this in more detail in another part of this chapter). However, had it not been cancelled, she said that she would most likely have had the abortion because of the stress she was going through.

**Example 10**

at the time I probably, would've  
 because I was a bit,  
**under stress and everything,**  
**I was** **a bit depressed**  
 ...  
**I went** **a bit depressed for the first stage**  
 I went down to 6 and a half stones,  
 lost all my weight,  
 lost,  
 looked ill all the time

She explains how the situation was making her ‘**a bit depressed**’ and was impacting her physical health (causing her to lose weight and look ill). Jeff’s controlling behaviour was causing emotional distress.

**Excerpt 5**

100	and then,
101	he tried, just put his,
102	like he tried to put his rules down like, ‘don’t dress like that’,
103	‘don’t wear like this’ ( <i>pointing to the curly ponytail that she was wearing</i> )
104	‘don’t wear them’
105	wear,
106	you know, just constantly
	...
107	mental abuse after men-,
108	now, I call it mental because <b>I went a bit,</b>
109	<b>a bit depressed after it</b>

When the women first come to the refuge, they usually just describe the violence and abuse they experienced without naming it. In the shelter, support workers and/or other

agents (social workers, police officers, etc.) classify their descriptions according to institutional terms. In line 107, she calls the experience ‘**mental abuse**’, and in lines 108 and 109 she explains the term with a metacommentary – ‘**now, I call it mental because I went a bit, a bit depressed after it**’, seemingly reproducing the shelter’s discourse. Perhaps, the word **control** in – ‘**just trying to control me**’ – in excerpt 1, line 28, also reflects a professional terminology. As these terms are amply available in the shelter (on printed material, Freedom Programme, etc.) and support workers’/other agents’ discourse, it soon becomes also part of the women’s vocabulary. As the temporal deictic ‘**now**’ (line 108) seems to suggest, it is a newly acquired knowledge, learnt by exposure, I would argue, becoming part of her repertoire. R10 was talking to me (the interviewer, who possessed such discursive knowledge) from a common ground, using the expert language. It hints at the shelter’s role on the women’s sense-making process and understanding of their experience.

In sum, Jeff’s demands caused R10 to alter her way of being, impacting her mental and physical health. Jeff telling R10 to change her hair and style would not be characterised as controlling if she had not felt somehow compelled to change. She mentions her clothes and hair accessories several times in her narrative, indexing the relevance of those objects in her life as forms of self-representation. When she felt compelled to abandon those forms of self-expression, she got ill. By calling it mental abuse, R10 acknowledges what happened to her as abuse. I was glad to see that in the interview she was wearing the hairpiece that she referred to in her narrative. I interpreted it as a sign that she was reclaiming her identity back. I talk about other aspects of her identity in the next section.

#### ***4.4. ‘I am a travelling girl myself’***

R10 perceived Jeff’s actions as grounded in cultural expectations – ‘**because he is a traveller**’ he behaves as he does; Jeff is an object of his ‘culture’. But at the same time that R10 seems to distance herself from some aspects of the travelling culture, she makes clear that she is also a travelling girl, as in the excerpt 6 below. She could not understand why Jeff was so obsessed about not wanting the baby and her way of being. She said:

##### ***Excerpt 6***

110	I don’t know if it’s funny because I am not married
111	and <b>I’m a travelling girl myself</b> , I’m not married
112	and, I’m not,

113	I got an asian kid and it's not really part of <b>our culture</b>
114	it did, he was embarrassed to bring me around among the travellers,
115	and things like that

She is a Travelling girl (line 111) and refers to travelling culture as ‘**our culture**’ (line 113), or one of which she is part. At the same time, she is saying that she does not conform to it, as she is not married (lines 110 and 111), and she has an Asian child (line 113). She concludes that because she does not conform Jeff was embarrassed and did not want to be seen with her by other Travellers. She identified herself also as a Traveller but, while Jeff was guided by his culture, she positions herself as critical, as not entirely guided by it but as exercising her own independent choices. Blommaert and Varis (2015) discuss how contemporary identity practices are complex and how people follow different logics in life without contradicting themselves and without being ambiguous. They say that ‘identity discourses and practices can be described as discursive orientations towards sets of features that are seen (or can be seen) as emblematic of particular identities’ (Blommaert and Varis 2015, p. 5), which may include personal style, places, ideas, etc. These features should be recognised as emblematic by the individual using/acting them as well as by others. They may orient towards association and disassociation to particular groups, towards conforming to or rebelling against something, towards the traditional and/or the new. Blommaert and Varis argue that one should have enough features (‘enoughness’) of a group to be recognised (self-recognising and recognised by others) as a member of that group. For example, I have shown above several examples of Jeff’s characteristics, which R10 associated with being-a-Traveller. Below I will show some of the Traveller features that she associated with herself.

Travellers are nomadic, this being one of the group’s distinguishing features. R10’s whole family were Travellers, and they travelled until her mother became unwell, and they had to settle.

### *Example 11*

<p><b>I was travelling and stuff until I was 7 years old,</b>  and then,  we moved into a council estate house cause my mum was not very well,  and that’s when we went to a <b>normal</b> school and seen, <b>normal</b> people,  as not- not saying that travellers are not normal but,  ...  we didn’t see colour of skin and,  you got to be married when you are 16 to 18</p>
--

Before settling and going to school, she only knew the Travelling mode of life and culture. She indicates that going to ‘**normal school**’ exposed her to different ways of living, cultures and ethnicities; the way of living of ‘**normal people**’ (not Travellers). It made her and her siblings different from other Travellers because for them skin colour was not a problem (as it could be among Travellers), and they did not observe Traveller’s rules (e.g. that a girl should get married early). Because of their experience with other people, they became different, while still being part of the (Traveller) community. R10 said that all her family now live on sites (although she does not) with the community:

**Example 12**

My sister, like **all our family lives on sites** and stuff like that

She socialised with Traveller friends. She said that Jeff was introduced to her by a friend, a ‘Travelling friend’ when they were going out on Sundays:

**Example 13**

I met him  
through  
my friend,  
cause he knew my friend  
so,  
**my travelling friend**  
he knew her and,  
when I was meeting up with her  
she was obviously,  
he’d come along like,  
**all of us just go out**, like,  
to bowling and stuff like that  
every sunday and that’s how I got to see him a few times,

Apart from these characteristics, R10 also demonstrated she had insider knowledge of Traveller girls’ behaviours and of the cultural expectations towards them (just as she showed to have cultural knowledge of Traveller men’s expectations, as discussed above). However, she distances herself from these rules showing that she does something else. For instance, in excerpt 3, line 51 (previously discussed), she was saying that Traveller girls are not expected to have male friends, but she contested this, saying that she was allowed friends.

**Example 14**



**traveller girls aren't meant to associate with other males**

...  
so,  
I was like, **I am allowed friends,**

And when she was talking about Jeff's controlling behaviour, she said that as Traveller girls were supposed to follow their husbands' rules, Jeff thought that he could impose them on her. She said, however, that things are different with her.

### *Example 15*

and I think he was trying  
**because most travelling girls**, they get,  
when they marry, they  
he asks how they want them, kind of thing, like  
it's hard to explain  
they,  
**cause they are married**  
**she has to abide by his rules**  
and he thought that he could do that to me  
**and no, things don't happen like that**

Or when she was saying that, traditionally, Travelling girls should get married very young and, because of this, some girls go out before getting married and hide it. R10 said that her mum did not want this life for her,

### *Example 16*

16 all, to about, 16 to 21,  
if you go over 21, 'why are you not married yet, there's something wrong with you',  
do you know what I mean  
that's how it is, and **half of traveller girls are hidden**,  
like, half of them, like, **all go out, and, not being married**,  
and, **go doing what they are doing**  
and then come back and marry at 16, do you know, or 17, 18  
**and, my mum just didn't want us to live this life**

To summarise, R10 said that she is from a Travelling family, that she was travelling until she was seven years old, that all her family live on sites, that she has Travelling friends and that she knows both Travellers' men and women behaviour and expectations, indexing, therefore, her authenticity as a Traveller and, at the same time, using her authentic position to support her claims about Jeff and other Travellers' behaviour.

Nonetheless, she positions herself (and her family) as a different kind of Travellers – one that does not conform to the norms. As mentioned above, contemporary identity practices are complex, and people organise their lives following different logics (Blommaert and

Varis 2015). Individual life-projects, then, become a dynamic complex of repertoires or ‘micro-hegemonies valid in specific segments of life and behavior’ (Blommaert and Varis 2015, p. 4). This means that individuals trigger different (identity) repertoires, adjusting them to time, space and purpose, according to their logic and without being confused or ambivalent about them; without being caught between cultures, and without contradicting themselves in different topics. But, where does R10’s perception of good/bad cultural norms and good/bad relationships come from? Her narrative suggests two different sources: from her first relationship (with her son’s father) and her mother (as she hinted in the last line of example 16 above – ‘**my mum just didn’t want us to live this life**’. I will discuss this in more details in the following sections.

#### 4.5. ‘*he is supportive, he is not a bad man at all*’

R10 said that she started a relationship with her son’s father when she was 15. They stayed together for a few years but, by common accord, they decided to split. They kept in touch, though, and he and his family have always been present in her and her son’s lives. R10 explains:

##### *Excerpt 7*

116	Re	and then,
117		when you were, in
118		with his father ( <i>toddler’s father</i> )
119	R10	yeah
120	Re	he was a traveller as well
121	R10	no, he is asian
122		his- his dad is an asian man
123		and
124		no, his dad is fine,
125		his dad is great with him
126		cannot ask for a better one
127	Re	he- he was not violent with you
128	R10	no
129		no, no, never
130		never violent, never raised his hand, never raised his voice
131		he never
132		when ( <i>toddler’s name</i> ) was born,
133		all of the new-born appointments,
134		he’d come with me, and
135		he’s got, he’s even come to the birth of this one, ( <i>pointing to the pregnancy bump</i> )
136		to be my birth buddy for this one
137		so,
138		he is supportive, he is,
139		not a bad man at all
140	Re	that’s good
141	R10	yeah, I wish I’ve stayed with him ( <i>laughs</i> )
142	Re	so,

143		so you had a good experience
144	R10	yeah, yeah, that's why I knew

In lines 121 to 126, R10 is saying that her son's father is not a Traveller but Asian and she praises him as a father. In lines 128 to 139, she is saying that he was not violent, and he was and still is supportive, and she praises him. She then acknowledges that it was a good experience. We can notice some repetitions in this excerpt which are used to emphasise her son's father's good qualities, to make a point that he was '**not a bad man at all**' (line 139).

**Example 17**

121	no, he		is asian		
122		his- his dad	is an asian man		
124	no,	his dad	is fine,		
125		his dad	is great with him		
128	no				
129	no,				
	no,	never			
130		never violent,			
		never	raised his	hand,	
		never	raised his	voice	
131	he	never			

With a series of negations – '**no**' (3 times) and '**never**' (5 times), stressing intonation when saying '**never**' (lines 129 to 131), she constructs a positive image of him, covertly opposing him to Jeff. In line 124, for instance, after I asked R10 if her son's father was also a Traveller, she said, '**no, his dad is fine**', it can be read as – 'no, he is not a Traveller, he is fine' – implicitly comparing Jeff (Traveller man – not fine) and her son's father (non-Traveller man – fine). She said that he has '**never raised his hand/never raised his voice**', which is the opposite of what Jeff used to do (e.g. he grabbed her by her neck once and was rude and aggressive in his manner of speaking).

Also, in lines 132 to 139, R10 says that her son's father was supportive when his son was born and will even support her now, being her birth buddy, while Jeff wanted her to have an abortion. She evaluates her son's father positively in lines 138 and 139 – '**he is supportive/ he is not a bad man at all**', and in line 141, she regrets not staying with him. My (Re's) conclusion was that she had a good (relationship) experience (line 143), with which she agreed and said, in line 144, '**that's why I knew**' – i.e. that her

relationship with Jeff was not good. Below are more examples showing the positive image that she builds of her son's father:

**Example 18**

**he's a good supportive actual dad**, he pays for him  
...  
**he is fine** with *(toddler's name)*  
**he is fine** with this one as well *(pointing to her bump)*  
...  
**his dad is not a bad looking boy**  
...  
**he is good** with *(toddler's name)*, and  
**his dad is good** with me, talking, to me, and that as well  
this is my son's dad, with him *(showing me a picture)*

It appears that R10's son's father instantiates a good relationship and good fathering, becoming a positive reference and influencing her perception about intimate relationship. I proposed earlier that Jeff's and other Travellers' voices represented through constructed dialogue at the same time characterised R10's evaluation of their behaviour and invited the listener to agree with her perception. In the case of her son's father, she does not represent his voice in the narrative but describes his actions and virtues. She invites me (the audience) to agree with her evaluation and perception of him by showing me a picture of him and their son neatly dressed in traditional Asian costumes.

As I suggested previously, R10's experience with her mother and her family (as well as her mother's own experiences) also appears to influence her perceptions as I intend to show below.

**4.6. 'We kind of got it lucky'**

R10 refers to her mother, who died a few years before the time of the interview, several times in the narrative. She mentioned things that her mother said and did, usually in relation to her mother's own experience. R10's mother had an arranged marriage at the age of 16, with a Traveller man who turned out to be abusive and violent. She had a daughter with this man before leaving him at 22. She then married R10's father, also a Traveller but not abusive/violent, they had four other children (two girls and two boys), R10 being one of them. R10's father, although good to his family, had been in prison for a long time (as '**he's still a wild man**' and '**he is used to prison life**', said R10), so her mother raised the children mostly alone. They travelled and lived on sites with other Travellers until she (the mother) became unwell and they moved to a council estate. The

fact that R10 said so much about her mother suggests how important she was in R10's life, influencing her to be who she is and guiding her in her decisions.

For instance, Jeff wanted R10 to have an abortion and made her book an appointment at the clinic. When she went to the appointment, there was no anaesthetist present and the termination had to be cancelled. R10 mentioned her mother for the first time in our conversation, as she understood that the cancellation was due to her (deceased) mother's intervention.

### *Excerpt 8*

145	and then I realised that
	...
146	it was
	...
147	my mum probably, cause my mum passed away,
148	she probably made the doctors didn't come in or something,
149	I don't know
150	I just sensed it as a god's gift, like,
151	'don't get rid of it'
152	'it's not your choi-, like, your,'
153	100% isn't my choice,
154	it's more his choice than it was mine

In line 147 and 148, R10 is saying that probably the doctor did not come because of her mum's intervention, and in line 150 she said that she sensed that the baby was god's gift. Then, in lines 151 and 152, she constructs a dialogue:

### *Example 19*

151	'don't get rid of it'
152	'it's not your choi-, like, your,'

It is unclear here, whose dialogue R10 is constructing whether her mum's, whether God's, or whether they are her own thoughts. In lines 153 and 154, she reaffirms that the abortion was not her choice, but his. R10 still perceived her mother's presence and help in her life even after she passed away, hinting at to the importance that her mother had in her decisions. She often mentioned her mother's advice:

### *Excerpt 9*

155	like, things that my mum used to tell me, that,
156	like, sat down and told us, <b>'don't let a man disrespect you'</b>
157	<b>'you have your own lives', 'women are strong',</b>
158	like, she- she told us all

159	...
160	but my mum's always told us like, <b>'don't ever see a man for his colour, or whatever'</b>
161	...
161	so my mum said <b>'I didn't want you to live the life that I had to live for a few years'</b>
162	...
162	she even tells me, like, <b>'I don't want you lot to go through, because it's horrible'</b>
163	...
163	my mum had an arranged marriage, she was 16
164	<b>she told us to live our lives,</b>
165	...
165	we didn't see colour of skin and,
166	you got to be married when you are 16 to 18,
167	or you will not what,
168	d'you know what I mean
169	we didn't see none of that, my mum,
170	like, <b>my mum never brought us up like that because she's had that life and she knows</b>
171	<b>that it isn't a good life,</b>
172	do you know what I mean
173	...
173	and, <b>my mum just didn't want us to live this life</b>
174	<b>so, she never looked down on ours, that she had, half,</b>
175	<b>like, mixed-race grandkids,</b>
176	<b>she never, she never put any of us down</b>

Most of her mother's advice, recommendations and comments are based on personal experience of an abusive relationship and imposed cultural practices. After leaving that abusive relationship, her mother married R10's father. Culturally, breaking a marriage was not well accepted, and a divorced woman, especially with a child, most likely would not be able to remarry. However, it was not a problem for R10's father:

### *Excerpt 10*

177	my dad has got, like all my sisters and brothers now,
178	even including ( <i>sister's name</i> ), the oldest one isn't his,
179	for a traveller man,
180	that's
181	do you know what I mean
182	taking someone who has already been married,
183	and got a kid
184	and she remarried my dad, like,
185	everyone kind, put their nose down a bit but,
186	my mum and my dad they didn't care,
187	that's why they didn't want us to live the lives that, my mum and dad had to live
188	so, we kind of got it lucky
189	that we could look,
190	any man that we wanted to, and did not had to marry at 16

R10 shows how her father's behaviour is atypical **'for a traveller man'** (line 179), and the community was not happy with it (line 185). But her parents did not mind and in line 187 – **'that's why they didn't want us to live the lives that, my mum and dad had to live'**. In lines 186 to 190, R10 concludes that her parents' refusal to conform and to dare

to live differently, allowed R10 and her siblings also to live their lives as they chose – ‘**we kind of got it lucky**’ (line 188). By narrating her parents’ experiences, R10 reinforces the assumption that Travellers are culturally oriented. However, by daring to break the rules, they become role models, whose defiance and bravery ought to be emulated. R10 represents her mother as strong, sensitive and assertive despite the circumstances in which she lived, being able to reject some imposed cultural practices, and it seems to validate R10’s way of living.

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

Multiple chronotopes (Bakhtin 1981) are layered simultaneously, bringing together different and, many times, contradictory points of views and voices. She identifies herself as a Traveller and talks at length about Traveller’s “do’s” and “don’ts”, but, despite the cultural expectations, she exercises her choice of not following them. She rejects being determined by culture without rejecting the culture itself. Hence, she constructs the identity of an open-minded Traveller, a multicultural and savvy young woman, mostly by positioning herself vis-à-vis three characters, namely Jeff, her mother and her son’s father. As in Creese and Blackledge’s (2017, 2019) work, the invocation of each of them in the narrative indexes specific values and afford the construction of specific identities. Jeff and R10’s mother appear in the stories as the embodiment of cultural orientation and subversion, respectively. I draw on Tannen’s (2008) types of narratives – master narrative, big-N and small-n narratives – to explain how R10 framed Jeff’s behaviour as culturally oriented. Jeff is represented as closed-minded and aligned with cultural rules, and this orientation causes him to be controlling when the expectations are not met. He as a character evokes stories of conflict and control in which R10 struggles to be who she is, but which also allow her to become more knowledgeable (through the first-hand experience) about Traveller men and abuse. Her mother is portrayed as open-minded and ahead of her time; a sort of heroine, who lived through ordeals but stood strong and dared to go against the culturally imposed norms. It is her legacy that R10 tries to live up to; a role model to be emulated. Stories around her mother are about overcoming difficulties and being truthful to oneself, and they legitimise R10’s choices.

Through R10’s use of constructed dialogue (Tannen 2007a), there is a constant shift in footing (Goffman 1981) in R10’s narrative and often Jeff and her mother are turned into animators, authors and principals, as R10 allows them to speak by themselves. She adds

specific intonations to their words representing particular socially recognisable *voices* (Agha 2005; Bakhtin 1984; Blommaert 2005) characterising Jeff as hostile, Travellers as discriminating against her son, and her mother as strong, and in this way, R10 invites the audience to evaluate and perceive them as she did. Her son's father is also an important character. He is not given a voice, but his virtues and qualities are described by R10. There is no struggle when he appears as a character, and the stories are about companionship, friendship, support, understanding. He is the one she could count on and who let her be who she was. He is a good father, a good friend and was a good partner. His character invokes easiness, and in relation to him, R10 is balanced and struggle-free.

The concept of microhegemonic identities (Blommaert 2018b; Blommaert and Varis 2015) helped me to explain how R10 could simultaneously navigate between different cultures, having Traveller and black friends, being white and wearing clothes and accessories usually associated with black girls and having an intimate relationship (and a child) with an Asian and later also with a Traveller man. R10's personal objects such as dressing and accessories, appear in her narrative as strong indicators of identity performance, resonating Blommaert and Varis's (2015) observations. When she (unwillingly) stopped wearing them, she felt physically and mentally ill. Jeff exercises control by coercing her to remove those forms of self-expression, and the coercion is implicit in her compliance. I compared R10's description of Jeff's behaviour against Stark's (2007) concept of coercive control to highlight his controlling tactics and abuse.

The notion of chronotope as an epistemological orientation, helped me to reflect on how R10's perceptions and actions were influenced by different levels of experience accumulated over time; her own experience and also the experience of others related to her (e.g. the life experience of her parents). Based on them, R10 formulated assumptions and expectations about people and situations, which informed her decisions and actions. As an analytical tool, for instance, the notion allowed me to explore how Jeff and R10's mother as characters brought into the narrative afforded the construction of different identities by the R10's positioning in relation to those characters. The chronotope as a sensitising tool allowed me to reflect on the likely influence of the shelter's discourse on R10's discursive repertoire at the moment of the interview as she refers to mental abuse and control and on my influence as the interviewer on her use of those words with me.



The analysis has shown how R10's identity has been affected by Jeff's controlling behaviour and, although she left the relationship at the early stages, she still felt in her body and mind the effects of it. Thus, I take to the next chapter two main observations as departing points: that expectations and assumptions based on previous experience play a vital role in recognising (or not) new situations; and the damaging effects of control.

As a *post scriptum*, R10 left the shelter a couple of weeks after the interview to be rehoused in the area that she wanted.

## **Chapter 5. Coercive control represented as a breach of expectations**

### ***5.1. Introduction***

The story analysed in this chapter was told by a woman whom I will call R8. She is 34, (self-identified) British, the mother of three children. Her two older children – daughter (15) and son (13) – are from a previous relationship, and her youngest daughter (10 months) is from the partner from whom she is fleeing. Before having this baby, she had an abortion. Only her son and baby were living with her in the shelter, and her older daughter was living with her father. R8 was interviewed in her flat (in the shelter) while her son was at school and the baby was asleep. The interview, which was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed, was over 25 minutes long. She referred to 13 persons in her narrative, mostly family members or those with whom she had recently been in contact for one reason or another (e.g. friends, support workers). Apart from the interview, I took notes on R8's comments and participation during the Freedom Programme sessions and occasionally from her interaction with support workers. This material is part of my observation field notes, and I refer to it in my analysis whenever it becomes relevant.

The interview was unstructured, and her narrative was triggered by my asking about her experience of domestic violence. In the first five minutes of the interview, she narrated a fully-fledged account of her experience. She summarised in temporal and causal order four major events, describing: 1. when verbal abuse started; 2. when she got pregnant and was physically assaulted; 3. when her daughter left home to live with her father; 4. when she went to counselling and started to realise that the relationship was not right. At this point, she left her partner, definitively. Once the end of the full account was signalled in the narrative, the remaining 20 minutes was a follow-up conversation when we interacted, and she provided more details about those four events and also talked about two other themes: 5. reflections about herself and her experiences and, 6. plans for the future. I present below in Excerpt 1, the transcript of the first five minutes of R8's interview, the fully-fledged account of her experience:

#### ***Excerpt 1***

I stayed with my partner for about 3 years  
there was a couple of, ahm,  
a couple of little issues but  
when you meet someone  
and you are getting on you don't really, you know,  
you don't say anything, you just let it go over your head  
ahm, we moved in quite quickly,  
and that was him wanting to move in  
ahm, so we did  
...  
ahm, and then I started working in a pub  
that's when things kind went,  
downhill from there  
ahm, he started drinking more,  
he kept coming into the pub  
ahm  
...  
he used to come into my work all the time  
ahm, he'd leave the kids,  
he had 3 children as well,  
and he'd leave the kids in the house,  
come to the pub where I was working, ahm,  
and I left the job because he thought I was having an affair with an old man in the pub (*she smiles*)  
and then, ever since then things kind of went downhill, ahm,  
he was always calling me names when he had a drink,  
even when he hadn't had a drink  
ahm, I left him  
and then I went back,  
...  
ahm,  
and then  
ahm, I think a kin-, a major incident happened 2 years ago  
ahm, I got pregnant and,  
after about two weeks he turned around and said he didn't want the baby  
and we had a massive argument and he assaulted me, ahm,  
in the kitchen  
I phoned the police  
...  
ahm, so, I didn't, ahm (*the baby wakes up and she laughs at some noises the baby is making*)  
I did end up not having the baby,  
I had an abortion  
and then, ahm,  
I was still talking to him,  
he got me to drop the charges cause he didn't want to go to prison, he didn't wanna lose his house,  
and not see his children  
so I felt bad, ahm,  
and then eventually I moved back in, ahm,  
...  
and then it was just,  
it was just weekly arguments,  
he just started on me every week,  
to something kind of thing  
ahm, yeah, it was just horrible,  
he threatened to kick me out all the time,  
and I had nowhere else to go, he threw my stuff out, ahm,  
everything like that  
...  
and then, ahm,  
my daughter moved out because of it,  
me older daughter,

she moved to her dad's  
 ...  
 ahm, she ended up,  
 I mean,  
 in between that time I left him probably about 4 times altogether,  
 and gone back  
*(baby starts babbling, she laughs)*  
 ahm, and my daughter- my daughter left  
 ahm, we had a big argument  
 he kept,  
 he used to take my phone off me all the time  
 ahm, go through my phone all the time,  
 plug it into the computer and then he ended up breaking my phone  
 I had to get another one or he had to get me another phone  
 ahm, and then him and my daughter had a big argument cause he took the phone off me  
 and she ended up leaving that night and went to her dad's  
 ahm,  
 and I stayed, ahm  
 and then I left a bit after  
 and then I went back,  
 ...  
 ahm,  
 and then,  
 I think,  
 then I had, I went to, ahm, relationship counselling but on me own,  
 cause he didn't wanna come  
 ahm, and I think from going to that made me start to think like what, you know,  
 what's,  
 this is, isn't right, it's, you know  
 ahm, and then, I just, it took me weeks and weeks and weeks to pull up the courage  
 and I kept saying to him 'it's not working, I don't wanna be with you'  
 and every time I done that it started a fight  
 and, then he threatened that he would take *(baby's name)* from me  
 ahm, and then, in the end, we ahm,  
 I think we just had,  
 I think I just had enough and, we had an argument and he drove off in the night,  
 and I packed,  
 I didn't have a lot of stuff cause over the time he made me get rid of most of my stuff  
 he-he used to say 'you don't need this'  
*(she picks up the baby from the cot)*  
 he would say, ahm,  
 he would say 'you don't need that, you don't need that, we got it'  
 cause it was his house and all his stuff, so, it didn't take me long  
 and then,  
 and then I managed to pack my stuff with my son and *(baby's name)*  
 and I took it to the neighbours  
 ahm, and that's when I left  
 so,  
 that's basically the general,  
 you know, what happened

R8's narrative in temporal order allows us to understand how her perception of the relationship with her partner changed over time. It was not bad at the beginning, but soon it started to deteriorate; there were constant arguments; she tried to improve the relationship but realised that it was not working, and she left the relationship definitively.

She (subtly) describes instances of abuse and violence (e.g. ‘he was always calling me names’; ‘he assaulted me’).

Acts of violence between intimate partners are not all the same. Johnson (2008) argues that to assess and intervene in intimate partner violence effectively, it is essential to recognise the different types of violence. He proposes a typology (see Chapter 2, for complete typology) which includes what he calls ‘intimate terrorism’ (‘coercive control’ in Stark’s (2007) terminology). According to Johnson, this type of violence is characterised by being unilateral and involving tactics of coercion and control: the exercise of control and power of one partner over the other. Johnson (2008) mentions some of the elements that must be present to identify/classify behaviour as coercive. It includes, for example, the use or threat of negative consequences to get someone to do what she does not want to do; making clear the readiness to impose punishment; making sure that all demands are being executed; keeping a close watch on the other’s actions and movements; eroding one’s ability to resist. This pattern of behaviour can be manifested through physical violence; through economic deprivation and control over property or other material/financial means; through humiliation, blaming and isolation. The effects of coercive control are pervasive and cumulative, and can potentially devastate one’s life. For this reason, Johnson (2006) and Stark (2007) emphasise that to understand domestic violence, it is essential to understand coercive controlling tactics and patterns.

Elements of coercion and control seem to be present in R8’s narrative. It is important to note that my research was not designed to identify nor to highlight coercive controlling tactics. Instead, it is something that naturally emerged from the narratives, sometimes explicitly and at other times implicitly. Hence, to identify those elements, I will analyse her story in light of the coercive control notion to understand how it was linguistically indexed. Referring to Tannen’s (1993) work on structures of expectations, I will discuss how instances of abuse and violence were discursively marked in R8’s narrative as a breach of expectations as for most of her relationship with her partner she was uncertain of what exactly she was experiencing. Drawing on Douglas’ (1991) chronotopic dimension of ‘the home’, I will discuss the ambiguity of the familiar/unfamiliar concerning expectations. Finally, inspired by Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984) notion of the chronotope and the unfinalised self, I discuss the process of becoming through the process of knowing and sense-making in relation to timespace.

Thus, in the following sections, I intend to demonstrate instances of abuse and control, and how R8's perception of her experience and herself changed over time. In section 5.2, we will see that at the beginning events occurred according to R8's expectations, and actions with future consequences were informed by (familiar) past knowledge. Then, in section 5.3, I will identify signs of controlling behaviour from R8's partner, starting to create unfamiliar circumstances and being indexed as a breach of expectations. In section 5.4, I investigate how the abuse escalates into physical violence. The unfamiliarity of the situation, as she cannot fully recognise the nature of what she is experiencing, leaves her without reference, and she continually has to renegotiate the present. Throughout her story R8 had many material and affective losses but, in section 5.5, it will be seen that when she lost the company of her elder daughter, because she left R8 to live with her father, R8 began to question her situation. It caused her to look for references outside her own experience, as discussed in section 5.6. Once she found new references against which she could check her own experience, unrecognisable/unfamiliar events turned into recognisable/familiar, making her, therefore, able to decide the future course of actions. However, in section 5.7, becoming aware of the abusive nature of her experience was a slow process. As a final point, in section 5.8, I discuss R8's reflections on her experience and herself, from the perspective of the unfinalisability of the self. In my analysis, apart from referring back to Excerpt 1 above, I will also refer to other parts of the interview and field notes.

## ***5.2. 'when you meet someone... you just let it go over your head'***

### ***Excerpt 2***

1	I stayed with my partner for about 3 years
2	there was a couple of, ahm,
3	a couple of little issues but
4	when you meet someone
5	and you are getting on you don't really, you know,
6	you don't say anything, you just let it go over your head
7	ahm, we moved on quite quickly,
8	and that was him wanting to move in
9	ahm, so we did

In line 1, R8 offers a temporal orientation for how long she stayed with her partner and then, from line 2 to 6, she explains why she entered a relationship with him. Despite '**a couple of little issues**' (line 2 and 3) apparently, before they moved in together, she did not say anything and went along with him (lines 4 to 6). By temporarily shifting her

narration from the first person ‘I’ to the third person ‘you’ (lines 5 and 6), she turned the statement into general and inclusive, suggesting her understanding that not saying anything and going along were common rules of engagement of a higher (social) order to which couples abide. Because he wanted (line 8), they moved in together ‘**quite quickly**’ (lines 7 and 9). In this introduction, we have a glimpse of R8’s perception of the events, and we can infer on her partner’s demanding behaviour.

R8 engaged in the relationship and moved in with him because, according to her knowledge about relationships, based on her social and cultural expectations, it was the right response to the particular situation. She evaluated events against her expectations about them, resonating with Tannen’s (1993, pp. 14-15) argument that ‘the only way we can make sense of the world is to see the connection between things and between present things and things we had experienced before or heard about. These vital connections are learned as we grow and live in a given culture. As soon as we measure a new perception against what we know of the world from prior experience, we are dealing with expectations’. Although at the beginning of the relationship, she noticed some issues, it was within the boundaries of what she considered adequate and acceptable in a relationship between couples. In other words, she perceived little issues and moving in together quickly because he wanted to as being normal for that context.

About her comments on her partner’s behaviour, looking at it through the lenses of the coercive control theory, it could be characterised as what Dutton and Goodman (2005) refer to as ‘setting the stage’ of coercion, when, for example, he wanted them to move in together quickly. They say that one of the ways of having the stage of coercion set is by facilitating dependency, and getting together quickly can be a way of facilitating it, as it tends to create emotional and (in many cases) financial dependency.

Although it seems that at the beginning R8 perceived the relationship as being within acceptable boundaries, in the following section her partner’s behaviour started breaching her expectations and events start taking unexpected turns, leaving her without (experiential) reference. More elements of coercive control become apparent, although she did not explicitly refer to it as such.

### ***5.3. ‘he was always calling me names’***

#### ***Excerpt 3***

10	ahm, and then I started working in a pub
11	that's when things kind went,
12	downhill from there
13	ahm, he started drinking more,
14	he kept coming into de pub
15	ahm
	...
16	he used to come into my work all the time
17	ahm, he'd leave the kids,
18	he had 3 children as well,
19	and he'd leave the kids in the house,
20	come to the pub where I was working, ahm,
21	and I left the job because he thought I was having an affair with an old man in the pub
22	and then, ever since then things kind of went downhill, ahm,

R8 noticed some changes in her partner's behaviour as she started working in a pub, as in lines 11 and 12 '**that's when things kind went, downhill from there**' and in line 22 '**ever since then things kind of went downhill**'. Throughout her narrative, repetitions as the one exemplified here appear fairly often, usually framing relevant points or events. Hence, in between this repetition, she explains what happened and how his behaviour changed.

- a) he started drinking more

In line 13, '**he started drinking more**', meaning that his drinking was not unusual but drinking '**more**' indicates unexpected behaviour.

- b) He kept coming into the pub

In line 14, 16 and 20, she mentions that he often used to go to her workplace.

### ***Example 1***

14	he	<b>kept</b>	<b>coming</b>	into the pub	
16	he	<b>used to</b>	<b>come</b>	into my work	<b>all the time</b>
20			<b>come</b>	to the pub where I was working	

The use of repetitions, of verbs that indicate frequency, '**kept coming**' and '**used to come**' indicates that R8 interpreted her partner's constant coming into the pub as deviance of 'normal' (adequate) behaviour. As suggested in Pomerantz (1986, p.228), the (extreme case) formulation '**all the time**' may propose unacceptable or wrong behaviour. It culminates with her leaving her job – '**and I left the job because he thought I was having an affair with an old man in the pub**' (line 21). As she qualifies the man in the pub as '**old**' (and smiles while saying it) seems to suggest that her partner's allegations



were absurd and (perhaps) caused by jealousy. There are here other controlling patterns. For example, stalking and monitoring her in her workplace, causing her to leave her job and depriving her of financial resources, facilitating, therefore, dependency and creating vulnerability (Dutton and Goodman 2005). He, then, started to abuse her verbally:

*Excerpt 4*

23	he was always calling me names when he had a drink,
24	even when he hadn't had a drink

In line 23, his behaviour of **always** calling her names is associated with his drinking, where '**when**' suggests that it was usual behaviour on his part (under the influence of alcohol). However, after a short pause, in line 24 she complements her statement, '**even when he hadn't had a drink**', where the hedging '**even**' paired with the negative '**hadn't**' turn her partner's behaviour into unusual and unexpected. In this case, '**always**' in line 23 is no longer related to/conditioned by the drinking, but it means all the time. In another part of the interview, she commented again on his behaviour of calling her names:

*Excerpt 5*

25	he always called me names as well,
26	and even in front of the kids,
27	he doing in front of the children,
28	all the time
29	like, if we dad- if we had an argument I'd send the kids upstairs,
30	and I'd try to keep him calm,
31	and I'd walk off, when I walk off he'd shout something, so,
32	and all the kids could hear,
33	like horrible stuff, like really horrible stuff
34	and, yeah, he do-, just to try to make the kids think that I am what he says I am

In this part of the interview, she repeats that he used to call her names (line 25). In this passage, the inappropriateness of his behaviour was again indexed by the hedging '**even**' - '**and even in front of the kids**' (line 26), but here it does not concern his drinking habits but to the children, which is repeated in line 27, '**he doing in front of the kids**'. Although calling her names would be something bad in itself, he was doing it without any (expected) reason (e.g. because of his drinking), and worse, he was doing it in front of the children, demonstrating unacceptable behaviour towards the children as well. The inappropriateness of his behaviour towards the children was also signalled in Excerpt 3, lines 17 and 19 when she said that '**he'd leave the kids**', '**he'd leave the kids in the house**' and go to the pub where she was working.

In lines 29 to 31, ‘**I’d send the kids upstairs, and I’d try to keep him calm, and I’d walk off**’, the use of the modal **would** (contracted ‘**d**’) suggests a habitual or usual response to the circumstances – the response perceived as appropriate. As a moral agent, she would try to remove the children from the scene and try to defuse the situation, although her efforts to calm him down and spare the children from listening to the abuse were in vain because he would shout, and the children could still hear what he was saying. In line 33, she makes an evaluation, ‘**like horrible stuff**’ to explain the kind of names that he used to call her and repeats it with an intensifier ‘**like really horrible stuff**’. The repetition of the evaluation with the intensifier ‘**really**’ indicates that the names were worse than one (or the interviewer) could imagine; it was beyond expectations. Stark (2007) notes that calling names is a degrading and humiliating coercive tactic used to depreciate the other and make her feel worthless. In line 34, she interpreted it as an attempt to demoralise her also in the children’s eyes, ‘**just to try to make the kids think that I am what he says I am**’.

As we read in her fully-fledged story (Excerpt 1), after each main event she left her partner and ended up going back to him.

***Excerpt 6***

35	ahm, I left him
36	and then I went back
37	and then eventually I moved back in, ahm, ...
38	and I stayed, ahm
39	and then I left a bit after
40	and then I went back, ...
41	ahm, and that’s when I left

As mentioned before, R8’s narrative shows that her relationship with her partner deteriorated and became more violent over time. So, at first sight, the action of leaving the situation may appear more logical or more appropriate while going back defeats common sense. However, as Dutton (1996) argues, to fully understand women’s experience of intimate/domestic violence and abuse, it is necessary to consider all contextual factors. It is only by identifying and recognising contextual complexities that we can adequately understand women’s response to events because ‘all human experience is situated in a configuration of events and circumstances that reside both

inside and outside the individual’ (Dutton 1996, p. 109). Elsewhere during the interview, R8 gives more contextual information about why she left and went back a few times:

*Excerpt 7*

42	cause I was in contact with him
43	and he would be messaging me all the time
44	ahm, you know, making me feel bad
45	then he’d get angry, then he wouldn’t, you know
46	ahm, and then when I left one of the times, he did bring me the car to use, ahm, you know,
47	when I look back it’s because he wanted to keep me thinking I needed him, I think
48	ahm, ah, yeah, just because I kept in contact with him
49	and he is really manipulative,
50	and he is really good with words
51	and, I used to feel bad all the time,

She went back to him because she was in contact with him (lines 42 and 48), he was always messaging her (line 43), face-timing her (according to fieldnotes) and, because he was very manipulative and good with words (lines 49 and 50), he would make her feel bad (lines 44 and 51) ‘**all the time**’. It reflects the unfamiliarity of the situation created by her partner’s actions, causing her not to know what to expect exactly nor where to stand. Unfamiliarity was created by stalking and by manipulative words, by him sometimes being angry and sometimes not (line 45), and sometimes being generous/helpful (line 46). Although she was unable to understand his tactics while she was with him, she realised after leaving him for good (‘**when I look back**’, line 47) that he intended to create a (false) sense of dependency (‘**because he wanted to keep me thinking I needed him**’, line 47). Coercive control causes a sense of confusion and unreality in one’s life. Williamson (2010) argues that the abuser creates his reality, which is imposed on the abused, causing her to doubt her judgement and to perceive herself in the wrong. For Williamson (2010, p. 1415), ‘one of the most difficult aspects of domestic violence for those experiencing it is reconciling the impact of small and often insignificant abuses which, when taken in isolation, make them, and not the abuser, appear (to the outsider) petty and controlling. The impact of capitulating to an abuser’s notion of reality rather than trusting one’s senses can have a severe impact on psychological well-being and the notion of self’. Although R8 had the power to leave him and of taking control of the situation (e.g. UK laws on domestic violence, shelters, etc.), he constantly delegitimised it by turning it into something negative, making her feel bad as a result. We will see another example of this tactic below.

#### 5.4. *'we had a massive argument and he assaulted me... in the kitchen'*

##### *Excerpt 8*

52	and then
53	ahm, I think a kin-, a major incident happened 2 years ago
54	ahm, I got pregnant and,
55	after about two weeks he turned around and said he didn't want the baby
56	and we had a massive argument and he assaulted me, ahm,
57	in the kitchen
58	I phoned the police

R8 mentioned here an event when she has been physically assaulted while she was pregnant, and he decided that he no longer wanted a child with her. They had a '**massive**' argument (not a normal one), he assaulted her in the kitchen, and she called the police. She described the same event in more details later in the interview (Excerpt 9, below) when I asked her whether signs of abuse/violence were visible in her relationship. She said that '**the only visible sign was obviously when... he's been physically and anybody seen it**' (lines 59 and 60, Excerpt 9 below). Like most people who are not trained to identify signs of domestic violence and abuse, she associated such 'signs' to physical violence. It is when violence is somehow materialised in bruises, cuts, broken bones and marked in black and blue; it is when it becomes something concrete and noticeable.

##### *Excerpt 9*

59	I mean the only visible was obviously when, you know,
60	he's been physically and anybody seen it,
61	but, I mean apart from split my head open,
62	and I left him at that time
	...
63	that's when we're arguing and I was pregnant 2 years ago
64	and he said he didn't want the baby
65	two weeks after we'd found out, ahm,
66	and I was quite happy
67	ahm, and we-we just argued about,
68	I said 'how can you say this now, you wanted a baby and now I am pregnant, now you don't want
69	the baby'
70	ahm, and that's how we-we had an argument in the kitchen,
71	and then he just got really angry 'why would I want a baby with you'
72	and then he just started throwing things at me,
73	he was kicking me around the kitchen, you know,
74	just chasing me around the kitchen, and dragging me around,
75	kicking me all over,
76	ahm, he locked me in
77	and then I run into the toilet

78	and then I phone the police while I was in the toilet,
79	and I think he was in the kitchen, so I managed to run out to the front door
80	and walk down the road

In line 61 ‘**but, I mean apart from split my head open**’, ‘**but**’ and ‘**apart**’ suggests that she has not perceived other signs of violence or abuse. She said, ‘**and I left him at that time**’ (line 62), where the coordinating ‘**and**’ indicates agreement between action and reaction, indexing the fulfilment of an expectation: she reacted as she perceived to be appropriate, or responding to society’s expectations from someone in that situation of visible violence as ‘**anybody seen it**’ (line 60). She narrates the unexpectedness and unfamiliarity of his behaviour, by his sudden change of mind about the child she was pregnant with (line 65) and by the situation abruptly changing from a moment of happiness (line 67) to another of horror, pain and panic (lines 71 to 81) – he kicked her, threw things at her, chased and dragged her around the kitchen. The suddenness and unexpectedness of his violent reaction was highlighted by the word ‘**just**’ repeated four times during the description of the assault:

*Example 2*

67	ahm, and we-we	<b>just</b>	argued about,
71	and then he	<b>just</b>	got really angry ‘why would I want a baby with you’
72	and then he	<b>just</b>	started throwing things at me,
74		<b>just</b>	chasing me around the kitchen, and dragging me around,

I want to talk here about the settings of the scene – ‘**the kitchen**’ (line 57 in Excerpt 8, and lines 70, 73, 74 and 79 in Excerpt 9), ‘**the toilet**’ (lines 77 and 78 in Excerpt 9), ‘**the front door**’ (line 79), ‘**the road**’ (line 80). Tannen (2007a) argues that the description of places or objects in narrative evokes shared imagination and communicates meanings. Referring to imagery as involvement strategies, she says that, ‘the particularity and familiarity of details make it possible for both speakers and hearers to refer to their memories and construct images and scenes: people in relation to each other engaged in recognizable activities’ (Tannen 2007a, p. 135), and through this shared imagination, meanings emerge. Places (and objects) evoke a set of possible behaviours, hence, certain expectations. Although it is possible to discuss the imagery created by R8’s story from different points of view (e.g. gender, role, power), I want to discuss the chronotopic aspect of it. R8 is saying that the scene happened in the kitchen, in the toilet, intimate/private parts inside the home, and she runs out to the road for protection (lines

79 and 80), crossing, therefore, the threshold (e.g. the front door) which separates private and public, familiar and unfamiliar. In his literary work, Bakhtin (1981) refers to the chronotope of threshold present in idyllic family novels as one of 'crisis and break in life'. He says, 'the word threshold itself already has a metaphorical meaning in everyday usage (together with its literal meaning), and is connected with the breaking point in life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes life (or indecisiveness that fails to change life, the fear of stepping over the threshold)' (Bakhtin 1981, p. 248). The chronotope of threshold usually indicates a crossing between what is known in the family home to what is unknown in the outside world. R8, however, crossed the threshold to the road because the familiar (inside) became unfamiliar, the predictable unpredictable, and the safe unsafe. The '**road**', that in Bakhtin's literary analysis is often related to discovery and quest (e.g. embarking on an adventure by taking the road), relates here to escape, a variant of the chronotope of the road (Ganser et al. 2006). Walking down the road here is not moved by the idea of conquering or exploring space and time but is more about creating space between her and her partner and (I speculate) gaining time until help comes.

Recalling the discussion in Chapter 2, home is usually a private, known space where one feels at ease and comfortable; a place with which one is familiar, and where one finds protection from the chaos, dangers and challenges of the unknown outside world. Home is a space of 'realisation of ideas' (Douglas 1991, p. 290), as people with different thoughts and ideas come together and work towards a common good. It is where provisions for the future are stored in the present based on the experience of the past. Home is a stable and predictable space where one fulfils needs. When the order is maintained, it provides material, emotional and psychological security and stability. In this sense, home is a space where one prepares herself (materially, emotionally and psychologically) in the present, based on information from past experiences, to function well in the future.

Nevertheless, home is also a space where violence between family members usually takes place, hidden from the public eye. Looking at the location where violence occurs in the home, Gelles (1987) observed in his study that the kitchen, the bedroom and the living room were often mentioned, where nonfatal violence occurred the most in the kitchen and fatal in the bedroom. The kitchen, he explains, because it was the most 'social' part of the house, where family members would often come together (e.g. for meals) and where sensitive topics would be raised (e.g. children's behaviour or performance at

school, couples' disagreements). The bedroom because it was the most intimate space and more secluded. Gelles noticed that there was no mention of violence taking place in the bathroom and, because it is one of the fewer rooms in the home that has a lock, it may well be a place where one runs for protection from violence, (as R8 did). Although, family dynamics in the home might have changed since Gelles' study (i.e. perhaps families no longer share meals in the kitchen as often as before nor spend time together in the living room), I observed in my interviews that these three rooms (kitchen, bedroom and living room) were still often the scenes of violent attacks and abuse. R8's home was unfamiliar because it became increasingly surrounded by uncertainty. As a result, the present has to be always renegotiated because expectations from the past no longer helped to understand the present and anticipate the future. It was the violent home described by Gelles (1987) and not the space with the potential of fulfilling one's needs, mentioned in Douglas (1991). The unexpected violent assault added a different dimension to the relationship: the fear of inflicted physical harm and pain that could come at any time and (apparently) unannounced. Gelles (1987) explained that 'when violence takes place in the home, there is often no place to go, and to leave the scene means leaving one's possessions, one's children, and one's territory. Thus, when violence occurs between family members, there are few people who the participants can turn to for help and often no place to which the victim or offender can retreat' Gelles (1987, p. 94). It adds to the reasons why R8 left a few times and ended up returning to her partner as previously discussed.

She continued her story:

*Excerpt 10*

81	ahm, so, I didn't, ahm
82	I did end up not having the baby,
83	I had an abortion
84	and then, ahm,
85	I was still talking to him,
86	he got me to drop the charges cause he didn't want to go to prison, he didn't wanna lose his
87	house, and not see his children
88	so I felt bad, ahm,
89	and then eventually I moved back in, ahm

Although she left home after the physical assault, she ended up having an abortion (lines 81 to 83). As they were still in touch, he made her feel bad (line 88) for exercising her right to protection, turning her power into something negative because of the consequences it would have on him. '**He got**' her to perceive him as the victim and she

as the villain because her action (i.e. calling the police) could potentially result on him being arrested, losing his house and not seeing his children (lines 86 and 87). He made her feel bad about it, and she dropped the charges and went back to live with him (lines 88 and 89). As she tells us more about her experience, we can see that the abuse escalated and became more frequent.

### *Excerpt 11*

90	and then it was just,
91	it was just weekly arguments,
92	he just started on me every week,
93	to something kind of thing
94	ahm, yeah, it was just horrible,
95	he threatened to kick me out all the time,
96	and I had nowhere else to go, he threw my stuff out, ahm,
97	everything like that

From my notes taken during my observation of Freedom Programme sessions and other assessments, she said that she used to feel as if she were always ‘treading on eggshells’ as simple things (e.g. her choice of TV programmes) could be a reason for arguments. I believe that this is what she is referring to in lines 92 and 93 when she said ‘**he just started on me every week, to something kind of thing**’. She describes the situation as ‘**just horrible**’ (line 94).

I suggested before that he created vulnerability by making her lose her job (she had other jobs after, but had to give most of the money to him), depriving her, in this way, of financial resources, and by manipulating her to believe that she was wrong and somehow causing him harm (i.e. by calling the police). I also suggested that not perceiving herself as a victim of abuse made her unaware of the protective measures at her disposal. In line 95, there is an example of how he took advantage of this vulnerability to input more fear and exercise more control over her, ‘**he threatened to kick me out all the time**’. Stark (2012, p. 7) points out that ‘the primary outcome of coercive control is a condition of *entrapment* that can be hostage-like in the harm it inflicts on dignity, liberty, autonomy and personhood as well as to psychological integrity’ (emphasis in original). Indeed, it seems that R8 felt at that time completely dependent on him and entrapped in that relationship with ‘**nowhere else to go**’ (line 96). In line 96, she also said that he threw her things out. From field notes, she once said at the Freedom Programme, ‘**he threw my nail polishing stuff out of the window, all my things, it smashed on the floor, all the colours, I loved that bag, I was collecting all of that for years, and he broke it**’. She



also said that he burned her wooden dog in a bonfire ‘**he smashed it and burned it, I had two of them, it was given to me when I was a child, five-years-old, they were huge, I loved them, loved them**’. In the last part in Excerpt 1 she said that it did not take her long to pack up her things to leave because he had made her get rid of most of them.

*Excerpt 12*

98	I didn't have a lot of stuff cause over the time he made me get rid of most of my stuff
99	he-he used to say 'you don't need this'
100	he would say, ahm,
101	he would say 'you don't need that, you don't need that, we got it'
102	cause it was his house and all his stuff...

It seems that he continuously tried to take away what was meaningful to her and what gave her a sense of ownership, of belonging, of identity, similar to what was discussed in the previous chapter. Goffman (1991) observed that the involuntary removal of individuals' identity through the dispossession of personal properties was common in places where the exercise of control was extreme (total institutions), because of the feeling of self-association with personal possessions. The dispossession impacts the individual's sense of identity and progressively change one's self-perception and that of significant others. R8's partner replaced her possessions with his, ‘**cause it was his house and all his stuff**’ (line 102). Goffman notes that institutions also offer a substitution to the possessions that were taken, but these substitutions are usually marked as belonging to the institution. In another part of the interview, R8 said that none of them (herself and the children) felt comfortable in the house, ‘**I didn't feel like it was my home, you know, and we-we had dogs as well, and I used to look after the dogs all the time, but when we had an argument, he'd say 'my dogs', you know, things, 'it's my house**’. Because of him she did not speak to her mother and stopped seeing her close brother and friends:

*Excerpt 13*

103	I fell out with my mum because of him
104	I didn't speak to my mum for 2 years, and, ahm,
105	my brothers, my one brother, we were really, really close
106	we used to live together,
107	and I hardly, probably saw him once in a year
108	and I used to see him every day
109	and he used to say 'oh you never no mind do you',
110	he did not know my mum,
111	I think it is because my mum she knew from the start that he wasn't good
112	but obviously she couldn't say nothing, cause I wouldn't listen
113	ahm, yeah,
114	I-I didn't see my friends anymore
115	ahm, I didn't have my friends in the house

116	because I just, just in case, like, you know,
117	I'd be worried,
118	I don't know why
119	because, like, there's nothing to hide or anything, but it was just,
120	it was strange
121	I just felt like I couldn't have my friends around,
122	that was very weird
123	and, he went on holiday once for 3 days and I had my friends around and it was really good
124	<i>(she laughs)</i>
125	it was like, we had dinner and all the kids came over, it was really good

R8's mother sensed that her partner was not good for her (line 111), and R8 explains, '**but obviously she couldn't say nothing, cause I wouldn't listen**' (line 112), where '**obviously**' not listening to the mother seems to indicate a personal inclination of independently making decisions, without the family's interference. She said that she did not invite her friends over yet could not explain precisely why, '**I'd be worried, I don't know why**' (lines 117 and 118), '**it was strange, I just felt like I couldn't have my friends around, that was weird**' (lines 120 to 122), possibly because she did not feel it was her house, as mentioned before. So, she isolated herself from family and friends. About isolation, Stark (2012, p. 11) explains that perpetrators, 'isolate their partners to prevent disclosure, instil dependence, express exclusive possession, monopolize their skills and resources, and keep them from getting help or support'. We can see in the example above that isolation due to coercive control can happen in subtle ways. She did not mention that he forbade her or demanded that she did not to see family and friends, but it can be inferred that his behaviour (e.g. calling her names, even in front of the children), his sudden mood changes (e.g. being angry and then not), made her self-conscious and '**worried**' that he could do something to her in front of her family, and this, perhaps caused her isolation. In lines 123 to 125, she tells a story of when he was on holiday, and she invited her friends over for dinner and '**it was really good**' (line 123), '**it was really good**' (line 124). It shows that isolation was not her choice (nor his explicit demand, apparently), but it was a result of the circumstances. His presence made her uncomfortable, worried and possibly afraid. We will see below that because of his behaviour, R8's daughter also left her and moved to her father's house.

### ***5.5. 'I think the thing that hurts the most is my daughter leaving'***

#### ***Excerpt 14***

126	and then, ahm,
127	my daughter moved out because of it,
128	me older daughter,
129	she moved to her dad's
	...
130	ahm, she ended up,
131	I mean,
132	in between that time I left him probably about 4 times all together,
133	and gone back
134	ahm, and my daughter- my daughter left
135	ahm, we had a big argument
136	he kept,
137	he used to take my phone off me all the time
138	ahm, go through my phone all the time,
139	plug it into the computer and then he ended up breaking my phone
140	I had to get another one or he had to get me another phone
141	ahm, and then him and my daughter had a big argument cause he took the phone off me
142	and she ended up leaving that night and went to her dad's
143	and I stayed, ahm
144	and then I left a bit after
145	and then I went back,

R8's partner used to go through her phone '**all the time**' (lines 137 and 138) and for this reason her daughter moved to her father's house after an argument with him. The act of her partner taking her phone, going through it, eventually damaging it, is in the background of the narration. In the foreground, the importance of this event is in her daughter leaving to go to her father's house (lines 127 to 129, line 134 and line 142), and it was reinforced later during the interview:

### *Excerpt 15*

146	I think the worse,
147	I think the thing that hurts the most is my daughter leaving
148	that hurt me the most
149	and I still,
150	it'll always, you know, it'll always hurt me,
151	even though we- we get on fine and I see her, you know,
152	she should be with me, you know,
153	that's what hurts the most, ahm,

R8 has mentioned many losses throughout her narrative (i.e. job, an abortion, objects dear to her, contact with family and friends), but it is evident above that losing her daughter was '**the worse**' (line 146) and what '**hurts the most**' (lines 147, 148 and 153) and '**will always hurt**' (line 151). She said that her daughter '**should**' be with her (line 153), indicating her judgement of what would be more appropriate. R8 seems to attribute some blame on herself for her daughter leaving when in lines 131 to 133 in Excerpt 14, she interrupts the flow of the narration to add an evaluation, '**I mean, in between that time I left him probably about 4 times altogether, and gone back**'. In line 134 she

complements her thought, ‘**and my daughter- my daughter left**’, where the conjunction ‘**and**’ suggests that what follows is a consequence of what preceded it: the fact that R8 left and went back a few times, implying that had she not gone back, her daughter would still be with her. Still, in Excerpt 14, R8 says that her daughter left (line 142) and R8 initially stayed, leaving after, and going back once again (lines 143 to 145). Perhaps, R8’s daughter moving away from her and the pain that it caused made R8 reflect on her situation. It represented a turning point in her life because, after that, she started questioning her relationship and seeking references from outside her own experience to explain her circumstances.

## 5.6. ‘*this ... isn’t right*’

### *Excerpt 16*

154	and then,
155	I think,
156	then I had, I went to, ahm, relationship counselling but on me own,
157	cause he didn’t wanna come
158	ahm, and I think from going to that made me start to think like what, you know,
159	what’s,
160	this is- isn’t right, it’s, you know

R8 started to take action to understand and change her situation and, although her partner did not want to go to counselling, she went on her own (lines 156 and 157). She started to reflect about her circumstances, began to ‘**think**’ about it (line 158). Lines 158 to 160 reflect her struggle to identify, qualify or name what she was experiencing, ‘**what**’, ‘**what’s**’, ‘**this is- isn’t right, it’s**’. The same difficulty also appeared in another part of the interview when she was talking about the Freedom Programme that she has attended while in the shelter, where she learnt about coercive controlling tactics.

### *Excerpt 17*

161	yeah, it’s made me realise that what was going on wasn’t right,
162	you know, because I did feel when I first left and before I left,
163	and then, I used to google what is, ahm,
164	what is abusive behaviour,
165	am I being abused, you know,
166	mentally, physically and all that,
167	and I started googling it,
168	and everything was ticking the boxes,
169	and I was thinking yeah, yeah, yeah,

Attending the Freedom Programme session allowed her to relate what she had experienced to something named, real, concrete, and made her able to conclude that

‘**what was going on wasn’t right**’ (line 161), corroborating the feeling that she had just before leaving her partner definitively (line 162). It seems that constant breach of relationship expectations eventually led her to associate her experience with abuse and violence. By ‘**googling**’ (line 167 and also line 163) about abusive behaviour and comparing with her own experience, it was ‘**ticking the boxes**’ (line 168). It reflects a change in contemporary society, where through internet and technology she could access other people’s experience beyond her immediate circle of family, neighbours, friends, and beyond time and space (Giddens 1991). It helped her to recognise signs of abuse in her relationship based on the experience of other people not necessarily related to her.

**Excerpt 18**

170	ahm, and then, I just, it took me weeks and weeks and weeks to pull up the courage
171	and I kept saying to him ‘it’s not working, I don’t wanna be with you’
172	and every time I done that it started a fight
173	and, then he threatened that he would take ( <i>baby’s name</i> ) from me
174	ahm, and then, in the end, we ahm,
175	I think we just had,
176	I think I just had enough and, we had an argument and he drove off in the night,
177	and I packed,
178	I didn’t have a lot of stuff cause over the time he made me get rid of most of my stuff
179	he-he used to say ‘you don’t need this’
180	he would say, ahm,
181	he would say ‘you don’t need that, you don’t need that, we got it’
182	cause it was his house and all his stuff, so, it didn’t take me long
183	and then,
184	and then I managed to pack my stuff with my son and ( <i>baby’s name</i> )
185	and I took it to the neighbours
186	ahm, and that’s when I left
187	so,
188	that’s basically the general,
189	you know, what happened

She tried to reason with him that the relationship was not working and that she wanted to leave (line 171), but he threatened to take the baby from her if she did leave him (line 173) (for clarification, after the abortion she got pregnant again and had a baby girl to whom she is referring here). She said that she ‘**just had enough**’ (line 176). In line 175 she was about to say that ‘**we**’ just had enough, but then she changed to ‘**I**’, suggesting that it was her assessment of the situation. It was her initiative to pack (line 177) her things, which were not many because he had made her get rid of most of them (line 178), and leave (line 186).

In sum, after starting to recognise and name what she was experiencing, R8 began a process of change. She wanted to understand better what was happening – by googling

it; she took steps to try to fix the situation – by going to counselling; tried to reason with him – by telling him that it was not working and that she no longer wanted to be with him. It failed and, despite her partner’s threats, she left and, this time, she did not go back. It appears that the process of understanding what she was experiencing increased her confidence and, consequently, decreased her perception of dependency. Hence, we can say that she entered the relationship with a set of expectations of what was acceptable behaviour. However, constant breach of those expectations created an unfamiliar situation which made her reach out for new references and alternatives to explain it. Eventually, it led her to identify her experience as abusive, giving her a different perspective and new possibilities of action. In the next sections, I discuss how the recognition of the violence and abuse was a slow process.

### 5.7. *‘I still had to read it over and over again, because I wasn’t sure’*

#### *Excerpt 19*

190	I was googling it for about 3 or 4 weeks
191	because I still wasn’t sure
192	you know, I still had to read it over and over again
193	because I wasn’t sure
194	because I still felt like,
195	what is it, but, you know
196	I still questioned it

R8 started to search about abuse and abusive relationships, but it took a long time for her to associate what she was reading with what she was experiencing, and eventually accept it. Despite all signs, R8 was not convinced. Her continuous effort to comprehend is expressed in this passage by temporal markers and time expressions, as in line 190, ‘**I was googling it for 3 or 4 weeks**’, in line 192 ‘**...over and over again**’, and in the use of the adverb ‘**still**’,

#### *Example 3*

191		because	I <b>still</b>	wasn’t sure	
192	you know,		I <b>still</b>		had to read it over and over again
193		because	I	wasn’t sure	
194		because	I <b>still</b>		felt like,
196			I <b>still</b>		questioned it

These repetitions suggest a slow and continuous process of understanding, and it reflects the difficulty in recognising the evidence of abuse that was being presented to her. She continued her narrative:

*Excerpt 20*

196	I still questioned it
197	I did when I first came here,
198	I thought, you know,
199	‘should I really be here?’, you know,
200	‘is it’, you know, I don’t know, ‘I do’, ahm,
201	what happened, justify me being in, in here and stuff
202	and then, the more and more that I’ve done the freedom programme,
203	the different sessions, I just think,
204	‘oh yeah’,
205	you know,
206	‘I do, I do’

After leaving her partner and going to the shelter, she was not convinced whether what she had experienced was abuse. In line 202, ‘**the more and more**’ indicates again that the process of understanding her experience was gradual and, to a great extent, linked to external sources: before the shelter, it was google, and in the shelter, it was the Freedom Programme. As a result, she had access to a broader community to identify herself with and, therefore, a broader referential set of identity repertoires. As Blommaert (2005, p. 208) notes, ‘the range of identities ... depends on the range of available semiotic resources out of which recognisable identities can be constructed’. R8 did not attribute to herself the identity of abused as she did not recognise the abuse. This identity was ascribed to her by others and she hesitantly recognised herself as belonging to that group (of victims of abuse). Blommaert (2005, p. 205) points out that ‘regardless of whether one wants to belong to particular groups or not, one is often *grouped* by others in processes of, often institutionalised, social categorisation called *othering*’ (emphasis in original). Thus, eventually, she was able to identify herself as a victim of abuse and justify her being in the shelter – ‘**oh yeah**’ (line 204), ‘**I do, I do**’ (line 206), perhaps meaning ‘I do fit in here’ or ‘I do belong here’. It reflects the complexity of identity work, where ascribed identity or othering, is one aspect of identity.

**5.8. ‘I just feel like myself again but ... a bit different’**

Towards the end of the interview, I asked R8 how she felt now that she was able to look back on her experience.

### Excerpt 21

207	part of me feels like ‘what an idiot, you are such an idiot’
208	like I didn’t leave,
209	like when I left the first time
210	if I would’ve left the first time,
211	like, the last two years, I could’ve moved on with my life, you know, instead of
212	but then I wouldn’t have ( <i>baby’s name</i> ) and, so, then, you know
213	but, ahm,
214	since leaving I look back,
215	I feel like, I just feel like a weight’s been lifted up from my shoulders
216	I feel like be myself again, and, you know,
217	I can have friends, I can, ahm, back into my mum, you know, ahm
218	and my brother, seem we are all close together,
219	I kno-know, I don’t know,
220	I just feel a bit stupid that I didn’t see what was happening or anything, but, ahm
	...
221	ahm, but I just felt, I just feel like myself,
222	myself again but,
223	dif- a bit different, you know, like, ahm,
224	I don’t- I don’t- I don’t wanna go back to be my-,
225	I don’t wanna be me old self,
226	cause obviously me old self let somebody like that in, you know,

#### a) *How she perceived herself*

R8 explains that by looking back, she feels somehow ambivalent about the relationship. On the one hand, she feels like ‘**an idiot**’ (line 207) because she did not leave sooner (line 209). Had she left him the first time, her life would have moved on (lines 210 and 211). On the other hand, if that had been the case, she would not have had her baby daughter (line 212). ‘**So**’ (line 212), she concludes that her baby daughter made it worthwhile staying in the relationship. Since she left, she feels ‘**like**’ herself again (line 216) and closer to the people who were meaningful to her, with whom she lost contact while in the relationship (lines 217 and 218). She can look back to her experience and reflect about it, and now that she can understand what happened to her she ‘**just feel a bit stupid**’ (line 220) because she could not understand that before. Thus, at the same time that she felt like herself again (lines 216 and 221), she also feels different (223) because now she possesses knowledge and an understanding that before she did not. It recalls the Bakhtinian notion of the unfinalised self: the idea that there is always the possibility of change, of outgrowing external definitions of the self (Bakhtin 1984). To one’s histories of yesterday, new ones are added today, making oneself the same but different. R8 in the ‘now’ is aware of who she was in the yesterday, although back then she was not, and she knows that she does not want to be that old self again (225), ‘**cause obviously me old**



**self let somebody like that in'** (line 226). Through experiences across time and space, there is a process of becoming and possibilities that allow agency.

*b) Agency based on personal histories*

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated how R8, although at times unaware, has been subjected to abuse and violence. The fact that for most of the relationship, she did not know that she was a victim of violence and abuse does not make her less of a victim. However, I also suggest that neither does it make her less of an agent. As Polletta (2006) argued, victimisation and agency are not poles of a dichotomy (i.e. either she is a victim or an agent) but in a given situation, a person can be both. According to Bakhtin's (1981) literary observations, agency is tightly related to chronotope, meaning that for each situation, specific identities, behaviours and actions are made relevant. In this regard, Blommaert and De Fina (2017) say that when people fit these timespace configurations, 'they respond to existing frames of recognisable identities' (p. 3). Hence, when entering a new situation, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, people bring along social and personal expectations; they bring along their personal histories. R8, for example, had two experiences of an intimate relationship. Although the relationship with her first partner, with whom she had two children, did not work, it was not abusive. So, she had a reference of relationships being somehow challenging at times, but it was not one of abuse. She knew about relationships but not about abusive ones, and her actions and reactions in her second relationship were informed by her personal histories. Once she acquired new references, she moved on with her life.

*c) The expert*

*Excerpt 22*

227	when I've done the freedom programme
228	they were telling me that, you can go on courses
229	to learn how to teach it
	...
230	and, I'd love to do that, I'd love to
231	because, I think if more women knew about it,
232	and like, you know, if more women read the book as well and knew,
233	you know, and got the little details about things that go on,
234	I just think,
235	you know, if I had that book,
236	if I had that book when I was with him,
237	I'd be like, this is, like, you know,
238	This is like,

239	I'd be gobsmacked,
240	I'd be thinking, you know, I'd have done something sooner or,
241	you know, I don't know,
242	I just think, I just think it's brilliant,
243	it's just really helped me anyway, you know,

When talking about her plans for the future, R8 said that she would like to go back to the college to become a support worker to work with families. In the excerpt above, she is saying that she also would **'love'** to become a Freedom Programme instructor (lines 227 to 230). She believes that if more women **'got the little details about things that go on'** (lines 231 and 233), they would be able to act sooner because that is what she would have done if she had known such things when she was with her partner (lines 234 to 240). Thus, there was a phase in R8's life when she had no experiential reference to recognise 'the little details of things that go on' in an abusive relationship, putting herself, despite unaware, in the position of the victim. She became aware of the signs of abuse through other women's experience, and by contrasting her own experience with that of others, slowly she came to recognise it as abuse. As a result, it put her in the position of an expert, giving her the confidence to want to teach this to others.

## **5.9. Conclusion**

This chapter shows a case of domestic violence in which the violence, abuse and control are not explicit. I argue that, although R8 was unable to recognise the relationship as abusive, she described her partner's behaviour and events as breaching expectations. To interpret her experience, I drew on linguistics, sociology, literary and domestic violence literature. Her perception of the situation as a breach of expectations was indexed linguistically through repetitions, evaluative statements, verb indicating frequency, time phrases, hedges, modals, negations, conjunctions and other linguistic forms. Supported by the notion of coercion and control, I explained R8's description of the unfamiliarity of the events as coercive control.

To try to understand her situation, R8 reached out to learn from the experience of others through using search engines and the Freedom Programme, demonstrating in her story that there was a learning process in her experience through which she acquired a better understanding of her experience and also of herself. R8 draws on the time-space relationship and represented herself in the there-and-then as someone who did not know what was happening, and in the here-and-now as a learned person, who can teach others.

The notion of chronotopic identities helped me to situate her experience in relation to time and space. From this point of view, she acted and reacted in response to the situation at hand by the knowledge and understanding that she had at her disposal there and then. In this way, her agency was made evident, despite the abuse.

As an analytical tool, the Bakhtinian notion of motifs inspired me to explore how the kitchen and the toilet had their social and historical functions altered in a moment when violence erupted, offering a more nuanced understanding of the experience. I focused on the unexpectedness of the event, the immediacy of the moment that compelled R8 to leave the house and walk down the road to escape. It fleshes out the awkwardness that domestic violence causes and the inversion of the (historical and social) functions and meanings attributed to the home/house and the road (to this effect), as the home becomes unfamiliar and the road a space of refuge. As in the previous chapter, the relationship between personal possessions and identity is also present in R8's story. The analysis shows the destruction/disposal of personal possessions as a form of control and an attack on her identity.

Overall, the analysis has demonstrated some of the complexity of the issue of domestic violence and abuse. In everyday life, when it comes to stories of people experiencing it, one of the common questions that we hear is: 'why doesn't she just leave?'. I believe that this question is problematic on many levels. It is not a genuine question, that one asks to try to understand why, but it seems to reflect more the expectations of the questioner and her/his lack of understanding of the complexities involved in the situation. Considering the Bakhtinian proposition that utterances are not neutral but they always respond to another (social utterance) in greater or lesser degree, we can understand that, when R8 said that she felt 'a bit stupid' because she did not see what was happening, she was responding to that question of 'why', a question which implicitly suggests that staying is rather stupid. So, although R8 explained very well in her narrative why she had 'not' just left, she still could not help but feel stupid. I hope, however, that the analysis presented in this chapter has given a more nuanced answer to the question and shown that there is more to domestic violence than our own expectations and that we can learn of it through the experience of others, just as R8 did.

Last time that I heard from R8, she and her family were well and happy in their new house. She had a part-time job and was able to go ahead with her plans.

## **Chapter 6. Levels of power and anticipation to others' responses**

### ***6.1. Introduction***

R20, 43 years-old, was born in Africa and came to the UK in 2003. She was joined by her husband, from the same country, two years later, in 2005. She had two children – a boy (10) and a girl (3), both living with her in the shelter. I interviewed her twice: the first interview (52 minutes long) was two weeks after her arrival at the shelter, and the second (30 minutes) was three months later, just before she moved out. In the first interview, R20 told me her story since before her marriage until when she came to the shelter, and in the second she reflected about what had changed in her life and herself, and about her plans for the future.

R20 understood that she was experiencing violence and abuse. Still, it took her ten years to leave her husband, and she only left him because one of her friends reported him to the police. As in the previous chapters, assumptions and expectations also informed R20's perceptions and actions. However, I explore in this chapter how different sources of power influenced her, some of them pulling her down (i.e. causing her to stay in the relationship), and others pushing her up (i.e. towards changing her situation); and how her actions were oriented and/or constrained in anticipation of others' responses to her actions. I approach power discursively, aiming to understand how it is indexed in the narrative of experience and to this end, I refer extensively to the works of Tannen and Goffman.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in Tannen's oeuvre on interpersonal relationships (Tannen 1996, 2003, 2007b, 2008), establishes her interest in the dynamics of power and solidarity. She develops a multidimensional model (Figure 1, Chapter 2) in which hierarchy (power) and connection (solidarity) are represented as two intersecting axes: vertically, the axis of hierarchy ↔ equality, and horizontally, the axis of closeness ↔ distance (Tannen 1996, 2001, 2003). Tannen's grid of intersection inspired me to reflect about and explain how R20 framed her narrative and represented dialogues (of either her speech or that of the others). For example, she often presented what she said (reported

speech or constructed dialogue) in the intersection of equality/closeness, while what her husband (or her family) said in the intersection of hierarchy/distance. As discussed before, considering the hidden aspect of violence and abuse (i.e. most of the time it occurs in private, away from other people's eyes), it is challenging to capture naturally occurring interaction that would instantiate violence/abuse, as in public, an impression of 'normality' is usually maintained. So, while being aware that constructed dialogue in R20's narrative is a (biased) representation (i.e. it is her perception), I would argue that it is one way of accessing communication in those particular circumstances. Tannen (2007a, 2008) writes that constructed dialogue, details and repetitions are meaning-making strategies which create involvement and activate people's imagination by producing the scenes in a story, resulting in shared meanings. With this in mind, in this chapter, I pay particular attention to these three elements: constructed dialogue, details and repetitions, and on the meanings that emerge from their use.

While varying in degree in different cultures, family relationships are usually hierarchically organised (i.e. different power levels between mother/father/children, brothers/sisters, and husband/wife). At the same time, the family is also a symbol of connection and, although hierarchy is inherently present in family relationships, it is the discourse of connection that seems to be foregrounded in society, and intimate relationships are established on this premise. In other words, when two people enter an intimate relationship, they do it expecting connection and closeness (not power and distance).

In R20's introduction to her story, for instance, in section 6.2., we find the discourse of connection; closeness is foregrounded, as she describes a relationship of mutual love, and the hierarchical aspect of the relationship is kept in the background. When her husband joined her in the UK, she noticed that he was different from how he used to be when they were living in Africa, and a scene of contradiction is created. While her actions were within the expectations of a relationship of love, her husband's actions were not. Still, in a frame of closeness/equality, when he was physically violent for the first time, she tried to justify his behaviour. Goffman's (1990) dramaturgical framework is useful here to explain the roles of loyalty and moral obligations, causing R20 to overlook and excuse her husband's inappropriate behaviour. However, in section 6.3., when unintentionally, she found out that her husband had married another woman with whom he had children, a framing shift starts to be signalled, changing the narrative dynamic. Although the

discovery changed R20's feelings towards her husband, in section 6.4., she found herself 'stuck' in that situation because of institutional commitments and role attachment (Goffman 2013), fearing both her family's and society's reaction if she left her husband. From this point onwards, other sources of conflicting and competing forces began to emerge in her narrative.

From section 6.5., R20's narrative's frame is no longer of closeness and equality, but hierarchy and distance. Without love, R20's perception of violence changed. Instead of excusing violence, she exposes it, giving several examples of when her husband's reaction was disproportionate. In the same section, I discuss the importance of narrative details in understanding her abusive experience. As violence escalated, in section 6.6., she started to fear him more and tried to avoid challenging situations. She realised that her life was at risk when she began to ask him to leave. The literature on domestic violence helps me to explore another aspect of power and solidarity such as, for instance, Hanmer's (2000) work that discusses husband's status and power in society and Klein's (2012) on the influence of informal third parties such as friends, to whom R20 often confided her experience.

In section 6.7., after the intervention of one of R20's friends, she left her husband and went to the shelter. In there, she felt safe from him, but she still feared being judged by society. In this section, Goffman's (1967) work on 'face' is helpful to explain the constraints and struggles involved in impression management and consistency. In section 6.8., after spending three months in the shelter, the coverage in the media of a tragic incident involving another woman from R20's community in the UK helped her to change her perception about society's opinion.

Finally, in section 6.9., I conclude the chapter by summarising events, reviewing linguistic strategies used to describe them and some theoretical points that emerged from the analysis.

## **6.2. *'We loved each other so much'***

### ***Excerpt 1***

1	ok,
2	I met my ex-partner in ( <i>name of the country</i> ), in 1995
3	that's when we first met
4	<b>and</b> , yeah,
5	we loved each other so much <b>and</b> ,
6	<b>then</b> in 2003 he is the one who actually bought my ticket to come here
7	<b>and</b> I came here, and he was supposed to come and join me later
8	<b>so</b> , when I came here it took me about 3 years to process his visa for him to come and join me
	...
9	in the way he loved me
10	ah, what happen is that like, we were still boyfriend and girlfriend when I came
11	is like, he wanted us to get married before I came
12	<b>and</b> I insisted,
13	when I initially came I just thought it would be for a short period of time
14	<b>so</b> I insisted that when I come back then we get married
15	<b>so</b> , when I came here we were boyfriend and girlfriend
16	<b>then, because</b> it took us two years,
17	<b>then</b> he said can he do it in my absence, in a customary marriage, in our custom
18	like, he goes with his family to my family and,
19	it's like, they pay some money and they do something
	...
20	to show that I am now his wife
21	I agreed
22	<b>and</b> my family asked me
23	they knew him, and they knew that we loved each other
	...
24	in 2005 he came to join me, he was now my husband <b>because</b> we married,
25	a customary marriage

At the beginning of her narrative, R20 provides some contextual background, locating the relationship with her husband temporally and spatially, they met in Africa ten years before they got married. In lines 18 to 23, she gives some details of the (customary) marriage ritual, which involved the couple (although distant, she agreed) and families from both sides. With this ritual, they gained new statuses entering, therefore, into new social positions – ‘... **I am now his wife**’ (line 20) and ‘...**he was now my husband**’ (line 24). Events described in the excerpt are connected by the temporal marker ‘then’, by the connector ‘and’ – suggesting agreement between prior and upcoming events –, and by the markers ‘so’ and ‘because’ – implying that there was a (fact-based) relation of cause and result between them (Schiffrin 1987). It suggests that at the beginning, things happened according to R20’s individual and cultural expectations. She emphasises that her relationship with her husband was based on mutual love:

**Example 1**

5		we loved each other	so much
9	in the way	he loved me	
23	they knew him and they knew that	we loved each other	

Recalling Tannen (2007a, 2008), repetition is one of the meaning-making strategies in interaction, which, alongside (constructed) dialogue and details, helps to produce the scenes of a story. The image provided by dialogue and details and the rhythm of repetition create involvement and activate people’s imagination, which is where (shared) meaning is made (Tannen 2007a). R20 narrates that they loved each other, they married according to their custom, their families were in agreement and actively took part on the ritual – ‘**they pay some money, and they do something, to show that I am now his wife**’ (lines 19 and 20). Through the details offered at the outset of her story combined with the repetition ‘**we loved each other**’, she sketches the scene of a love-based and institutionally/culturally sanctioned relationship. It suggests that R20 and her husband were emotionally and culturally close despite being physically distant for a while. He was supportive (i.e. he was the one who bought her tickets to come to the UK), and they had common plans for the future (i.e. get married). Although in the beginning, R20’s story foregrounded the dimensions of closeness and equality of the relationship and backgrounded hierarchy and distance, in the next excerpt, this frame starts to be challenged.

*Excerpt 2*

26	<b>so</b> , when he came, honestly the first week I could see that something is <b>not</b> right
27	he had changed, he was <b>not</b> the man I had, like
28	we loved each other, like
29	the 2 years that I was here I was like,
30	the money I wasted buying cards, I would call every day, it was like,
31	we loved each other so much
	...
32	(talking) over the phone, every day,
33	I’d know what he was doing and he’d know what was I doing
34	<b>so</b> ,
35	<b>but</b> when he came I could tell that something was <b>not</b> right but I could <b>not</b> figure it out
36	then, I was like, you know, trying to think what could it be
37	‘is it that, because I’ve been here first’,
38	I see that there were differences
39	I couldn’t figure it out but I could tell there is something that is <b>not</b> right
40	and, when he came I bought clothes for him,
41	I took a contract phone for him, it is like,
42	I prepared for his coming
43	<b>so</b> , I remember, like,
44	he was cold,
45	when he came, is like, my bank card had everything I’ve saved,
46	‘here you are, anytime, that’s the pin, we are one’
47	and, my phone I would just leave it there
48	<b>but</b> what I found is that his phone, it’s like,
49	he would <b>not</b> just leave it, like, the way I would do, you know
50	<b>so</b> , I was wondering, it’s like,



Details and repetitions in this excerpt create a scene of contradiction. When he joined her in the UK, she noticed that **‘he was changed’**, that he was not the same man that she loved, and that loved her, not matching, therefore, the frame (of closeness/equality) against which she was evaluating their relationship at the beginning. The contrast is signalled by the conjunction **‘but’**, the negation **‘not’**, and repetitions.

**Example 2**

26	... I could see that something was <b>not</b> right	
28	<u>we loved each other</u>	
31	<u>we loved each other</u> so much	
35	... I could tell that something was <b>not</b> right	<b>but</b> I could <b>not</b> figure it out
39	... I could tell there is something that is <b>not</b> right	I couldn't figure it out

The statement **‘we loved each other’** that in the previous excerpt supported the scene of a love-based relationship, here highlights contrast and contradiction (i.e. if they loved each other, why was he different?). In most of excerpt 2, R20 demonstrates through examples that her behaviour reflected love. While they were apart, she called him every day, and they would know what each other was doing (lines 30 to 33). When he came, she prepared for his arrival, buying him clothes and taking out a phone contract for him (lines 40 to 43); she also gave him her bank card with access to all that she had saved from her work (lines 45 to 47). She constructs a dialogue to represent her words to him – **‘here you are, anytime, that’s the pin, we are one’** (line 46); reflecting closeness, trust and equality.

However, she noticed that **‘something was not right’** (lines 26, 35 and 39), that it was not as she expected but she **‘could not figure it out’** (lines 35 and 39). In line 37 there is an evaluative statement representing her thoughts **‘is it that, because I’ve been here first’**, possibly speculating that her husband might have resented the fact that she came to the UK first (leaving him behind), which perhaps could explain his behaviour. However, at the beginning of the narrative, she indicated that he supported her coming to the UK. Another evaluation **‘he was cold’** (line 44), contradicts her previous perception – **‘the way he loved me’** (line 9). According to Goffman (1990), when entering in contact with others, a person brings into interaction information that s/he already possesses about

those s/he is interacting with, and it helps the person to define the situation and to know what to expect from others and what they will expect from her/him. People interact to express themselves and also to impress others, and they impress when they attend to the expectations. Goffman wrote that individuals use two different signs of activity to express themselves: the expression that is given, and the one that is given off (Goffman 1990, p. 14). In other words, in order to impress, what one gives and gives off should be aligned (unless it was intended otherwise). In R20's story, she describes a gap between what her husband used to give (i.e. loving her) and what he was giving off (i.e. being cold), contradicting, therefore, her expectations. Unexpectedness is also indexed in the next example:

**Example 3**

47	and,	my phone	I would	just leave it	there
48	<b>but</b>	what I found is that	his phone,	it's like,	
49			he would	<b>not</b>	just leave it,
			like,		
	the way		I would		do

She makes the difference between her and her husband evident here by using contrastive words – ‘**and/but**’, ‘**my/his**’, ‘**I/he**’, the negation ‘**not**’, as well as repetition and parallelism. The hedging ‘**just**’ – ‘**I would just leave it there**’, suggests that ‘leaving the phone there’ was an uncalculated action, while ‘**not just**’ – ‘**he would not just leave it**’, suggests a calculated one, creating a scene of suspicion which made her wonder (line 50). Instead of closeness, he was showing distance. A few months after he had joined her, she got pregnant.

**Excerpt 3**

51	then,
52	I got pregnant,
53	it's like he came in september, january I was pregnant
54	I remember there was a day,
55	the first time I could tell that, you know,
56	I can't remember what it was,
57	I was pregnant, then,
58	he asked me to do something,
59	he was asking me to carry something heavy from downstairs
60	I'm like, you know, like,
61	'I can't, I am now pregnant'
62	he slapped me ( <i>lowering her voice, almost whispering</i> )
63	and I was shocked, like,
64	'he, slapped, me'

65	that was the beginning, ( <i>regular voice again</i> )
66	and I was so shocked ( <i>she smiles</i> )
	...
67	so, he slapped me and I am like,
68	'why'
69	then that was it,
70	I just brushed it off,
71	I said, 'ok, maybe he was angry',
72	but, it's like,
73	I could see the changes and the changes

In this excerpt, she describes the event when she was physically assaulted when pregnant. The exercise of power is made evident in her narrative for the first time. The central action in this excerpt is her husband slapping her (line 62) and, apart from some temporal, spatial and situational orientation at the beginning, the rest of the narration is a sequence of evaluations demonstrating her feelings, thoughts and attitudes towards the central action. There are two unfinished evaluative statements in this passage – ‘**the first time I could tell that, you know**’ (line 55) and ‘**that was the beginning**’ (line 65). The first seems to connect this excerpt with the previous one when she noticed that something was not right. It could be completed by ‘...*something was surely not right*’ (i.e. ‘**the first time I could tell that ... something was surely not right**’), indicating that it was no longer just a feeling or a suspicion that her husband was different but a fact. The second, relating the event being narrated in this passage to the ones to come, could be completed by ‘... *of the abuse*’ (i.e. ‘**that was the beginning ... of the abuse**’). Evaluations are also indicated in the two sets of repetitions in this excerpt, one that describes what he did and the other how she felt:

#### **Example 4**

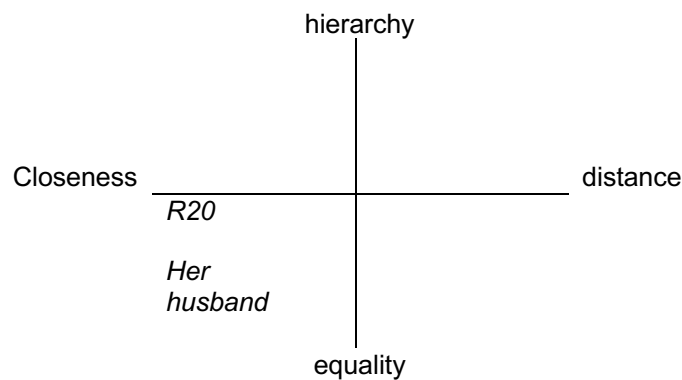
62	he slapped me		
63		and I was	shocked, like,
64	'he slapped me'		
66		and I was	so shocked
67	so, he slapped me		

To these sets of repetitions indicating cause (i.e. slapping her) and effect (i.e. being shocked), she added different pitches of voice (i.e. lower and regular), helping to create a scene of shock and surprise. In this excerpt, we find four instances of R20’s constructed dialogues (which is also a form of evaluation). The first in line 61 – ‘**I can’t, I am now pregnant**’ – represent her reasonable response to the circumstances (contrasting to her husband’s unreasonable reaction of slapping her). Lines 64, 68 and 71 are instances of what Tannen (2007a) calls inner speech, or thoughts reported as dialogue. In line 64, ‘**he**

**slapped me**', seems to reflect R20's state of shock and surprise, as if it was necessary to translate his action into words to be able to make sense of the situation. In lines 68 and 71, **'why'** and **'ok, maybe he was angry'**, indicate the process of trying to understand and also to explain what happened. Goffman (1990) suggests in his dramaturgical approach that, in order to protect the role that people are performing, they are loyal to the moral obligation inherent in those roles, they exercise prudence and self-control, and overlook, excuse or conceal inappropriate or disruptive behaviour from other people of the same team/group; they are people with 'presence of mind'. In this sense, R20 excused her husband's violence, for the sake of saving the 'team's performance' and based on past evidence (i.e. he loved her), inferring that there should be a reason for that, or otherwise, he would not react in that manner.

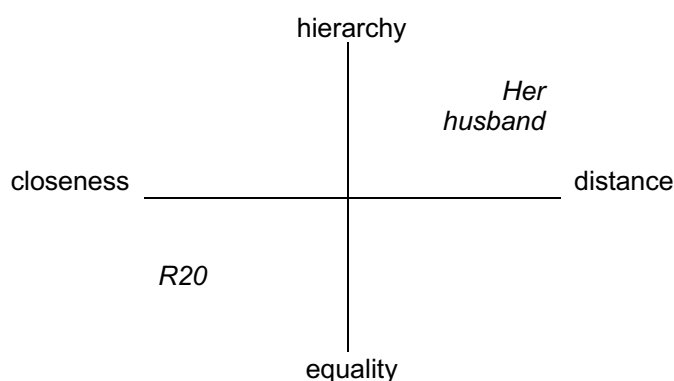
In sum, at the onset of R20's narrative, the relationship with her husband is framed as one based on love, closeness and equality, and she evaluates her and her husband's actions guided by this perception. Inspired on Tannen's (Tannen 1996, 2001, 2003) multidimensional model (Figure 1, Chapter 2), this could be represented as follow:

**Figure 2. Frame of love, closeness and equality**



As events developed, she finds that instead of closeness, her husband demonstrates distance and eventually power. She still tries to explain her relationship within that frame, hence, excusing his actions.

*Figure 3. Frame of distance*



In the following section, however, as events take an unexpected turn, the framing of closeness and equality gives way to one of power. In the new framing, as the hierarchy is foregrounded and becomes an issue, R20 faces some moral dilemmas.

### *6.3. 'I didn't like loving him, anymore'*

#### *Excerpt 4*

74	then in 2005, 6, 7,
75	2008 he kept on getting <b>parcels</b> from his family back home
76	and I would just put <b>them</b> ( <i>she knocks on the table</i> ) if he was not there to open <b>them</b>
77	so, one day I just said, 'let me just open <b>it</b> '
	...
78	he would say ' <b>they</b> are things from my family'
79	I didn't even, I mean, I would just respect that,
80	if he wants me to know he would show me,
81	and he wouldn't show me what <b>it</b> was, but
	...
82	one day I just said, 'you know what, let me just open <b>it</b> '
83	he was at work,
84	I open <b>it</b> ,
85	it was not a big <b>parcel</b> ,
86	<b>it</b> was just
87	a small <b>one</b>
88	I open the <b>parcel</b> , guess what

R20 gives temporal, spatial and situational orientation at the beginning, and she also introduces the central element of the event, a **parcel**, which appears 12 times in this passage in the singular, plural or through a referent (all in bold in excerpt 4 above). Her husband started to receive parcels, saying that they were from his family (line75). If he were not at home, she would just put them on the table (line 76), but one day she considered opening it. She represents her thought as constructed dialogue (inner speech):

#### *Example 5*

77	so, <u>one day I just said,</u>	<b>‘let me just open it’</b>
82	<u>one day I just said,</u> ‘you know what,	<b>let me just open it’</b>

Here, ‘**one day**’ and ‘**just**’, seems to suggest that it was not something that she would usually do (or think). Between lines 77 and 82, she explains that, as he was saying that those parcels were from his family (line 78), she ‘**would just respect that**’ (line 79), indicating her consideration for his privacy. But he would not show her the content, although he could if he wanted to – ‘**if he wants me to know he would show me, and he wouldn’t show me what it was**’ (lines 80 and 81). She expected that in the same way that it was respectful of her not to open things addressed to him, it would be respectful of him **to want** to show her what he receives. The fact that between the repetitions she explains his (negative) attitude may indicate the moral dilemma that she encountered: opening it vs not opening it. Ochs and Capps (2001) explain that in the narrative of personal experience, events are evaluated against ethical values of right and wrong, and moral dilemmas occur when it is not clear which course of actions one should take. As he was not behaving as expected, giving the impression that he had something to hide, she felt that she was also allowed to break the moral rules that she had for herself. So, she decided to open it: it ‘**was not a big parcel, it was just a small one**’ (lines 85 and 86). The meaning of mentioning that it was **not a big** but **just a small one**, might be threefold. It may minimise her action of breaking the rule (i.e. as it was a small one); it may indicate that she did not expect it to be something important or significant; it may be a hint to her surprise when she opened the ‘**small**’ parcel deemed unimportant and saw something that changed her life. Revolving the story around the parcel – giving details of when it started coming, from whom, the size and what she would do with it, her and his attitudes towards it – creates a scene of suspense that culminates in her opening it – ‘**I open the parcel, guess what**’ (line 88):

*Excerpt 5*

89	it was his photos on,
90	he was getting married,
91	a white wedding,
92	so it was on his wedding,
93	and on the other photos, the same woman with 2 children,
94	they were on holiday,
95	expensive holiday back home, I’m like,
	...
96	so, when I saw it I was crying,
97	I didn’t know what to do
98	when he came I confronted him,

99	he didn't want to talk about it
100	I'm like, 'let's talk about this'
101	he didn't want to talk about it,
102	he's like, 'you are my wife and I am with you here, what is that to do with us'
103	and I'm like,
104	'I need to know where I stand'

In the small parcel she found photos of her husband getting married to another woman, and of them with two children on holiday in Africa (lines 89 to 95). It was '**a white wedding**' (line 91), a traditional wedding in a church, indicating that it was official, and '**they were on holiday, expensive holiday back home**' (lines 94 and 95), suggesting that the relationship was serious and that he was investing in it personally and financially. She confronted him (line 98), but he dismissed it, saying that it did not affect their marriage (lines 99 to 102). Before this discovery, despite his unexpected behaviour, R20 was able to recognise their positions (i.e. husband and wife) in the relationship and society, and she knew how to act/react, but now, she did not know what to do (line 97). The set of behaviours, expectations and assumptions linked to those positions suddenly became untenable, and she was without reference – '**I need to know where I stand**' (line 104). She saw this event as a turning point in her marriage, as she explains below:

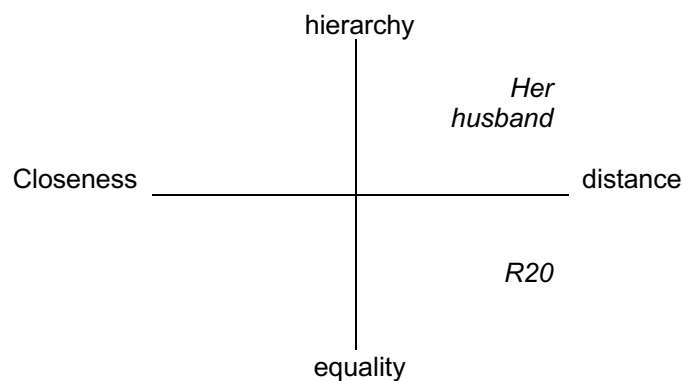
#### *Excerpt 6*

105	so, from that day,
106	because I was hurt,
107	it changed our marriage completely,
108	from that day in 2008,
109	one, I didn't trust him anymore
110	and even, if I am to be honest,
111	my love for him, I think that that day it ended
112	it is like, I just felt like,
113	he has betrayed me,
114	I didn't like loving him, anymore

A framing shift is indicated here, and the repeated temporal orientation '**so, from that day**' (line 105), '**from that day in 2008**' (line 108), locates the 'exact' point in time when the marriage completely changed (line 107). As he betrayed her (line 113), she did not trust nor (like to) love him (lines 109, 111 and 114). As previously suggested, R20 perceived her and her husband to be at the same level, sharing the same culture, values and feelings, despite occupying different social positions (i.e. husband and wife). Although closeness and solidarity are usually the socially foregrounded dimensions of intimate relationships, the aspects of power and hierarchy are simultaneously present (even if backgrounded). In R20's case, for instance, the ritual of customary marriage symbolised a commitment not only between the couple but with the families (and broader

society). Through that ritual, they acquired new social statuses and roles of husband and wife. These are commitment and statuses/roles regulated by social obligations that tend to determine behaviours and constraint actions. While closeness is aligned with equality and solidarity, distance is aligned with hierarchy and power, and as ‘from that day in 2008’, the aspect of ‘distance’ is foregrounded, as will be the aspects of hierarchy and power.

**Figure 4. Frame of hierarchy**



#### **6.4. ‘...but the thing is that I was stuck’**

**Excerpt 7**

115	but the thing is that I was stuck,
116	I didn't know what to do, it's like
	...
117	I was stuck, you know, it's like,
118	because of my culture
119	I remember when I was coming here,
120	my big brother saying,
121	because he was so good to my family, he was,
122	before I come here honestly,
123	he was good
124	he would,
125	we used to live in different places,
126	I wasn't staying with my parents,
127	my mum would just call me and say, 'oh, he came here',
128	he would buy things for them, shopping,
129	he was so good to my family
130	so, I remember he was taking me away to the airport,
131	the day I came,
132	he said, 'when you go there we don't want to hear that you have another man', you know
133	'we know this one', you know, 'that's the man we know'
134	'we don't want to hear anything'
135	so, I was like,
136	what is my family going to say
137	if I tell them that I don't love him
138	another thing, is like,
139	I now have a child



140	being a single mother,
141	I didn't want to be a single mother
142	it's like, I didn't want that title at all
143	so, I just said, 'ok, let me see',

Although she was hurt and she did not trust him nor love him anymore, she said that she **'was stuck'** (lines 115 and 117) **because of her culture** (line 118) and she **'did not know what to do'** (lines 116 and 97 in Excerpt 5). She explains that her husband has always made a good impression on her family in Africa:

**Example 6**

121	because	he was so good	to my family
123		he was good	
129		he was so good	to my family

Based on what her family knew of him, she anticipated that they would not understand if she told them that she did not love him anymore (lines 136 and 137). At that moment, her immediate concern was that her family could change the way that they perceived her (not him); she worried about her reputation with her family (not his). She remembered what her big brother (line 120) told her when he was taking her to the airport:

**Example 7**

132	'when you go there <b>we</b> don't want to hear that you have another man', you know
133	' <b>we</b> know this one', you know, 'that's the man <b>we</b> know'
134	' <b>we</b> don't want to hear anything'

R20 gives her **'big'** brother a voice (through constructed dialogue), and he speaks in the name of the family, as indexed by the pronoun **'we'** – **'we don't want to hear...'** (lines 132 and 134), **'we know this one'**, **'that's the man we know'** (line 133). His words seem to be constructed as a warning or command (rather than advice) – **'...we don't want to hear that ...'** – words that should be obeyed and not contested. We can say that her perception of the events was being affected by something that had been told in the past by someone who was at that moment (physically) distant but who, in the family institution was believed to have some degree of authority or institutional power. Goffman (1990) argued that cultural values 'will determine in detail how the participants are to feel about many matters and at the same time establish a framework of appearances that must be maintained, whether or not there is feeling behind the appearances' (Goffman 1990, p. 234). So, where moral standards ought to be maintained, decisions are often taken to

favour the (institutional) unit, and it can become a source of struggle to individuals who may no longer agree with the rules or who want to ‘exit the role performance’, which appears to be the case of R20. She worried about her family’s reaction and also about the position that she occupied in society, as we will see below:

**Example 8**

138	another thing, is like,
139	I now have a child
140	being a single mother,
141	I didn’t want to be a single-mother
142	it’s like, I didn’t want that tittle at all

In the enactment of a role, an individual may become attached to the self-identification that emerges from it (Goffman 2013). Here R20 is saying that she ‘**didn’t want to be a single-mother**’ (line 141), she ‘**didn’t like this title at all**’ (line 142). Wife and a married woman were status and roles and also part of R20’s identity, of how she defined herself as an individual and as a member of a community or a culture. When a person enters a role, s/he commits to its rules and structural arrangements. Goffman (2013) explains that ‘an individual becomes committed to something when, because of the fixed and interdependent character of many institutional arrangements, his doing or being this something irrevocably condition other important possibilities in his life, forcing him to take courses of action, causing other persons to build up their activity on the basis of his continuing in his current undertakings, and rendering him vulnerable to unanticipated consequences of these undertakings’ (Goffman 2013, p. 88-89). In this sense (and as suggested elsewhere in this chapter), being a wife was a commitment to society, and R20 seems to understand this. She was aware that her actions would have consequences in the community of which she was part. She has shown that her husband’s behaviour was incompatible with the roles that he was supposed to perform. When an unexpected action disrupts a performance, it impacts social reality on three different levels of abstraction: interaction, society and personality (Goffman 1990). In R20’s description of the situation, in excerpt 6, we find an instance of the consequences of the disruption at the level of interaction, as R20’s positioning as a wife became untenable, and she did not know how to act. In this section, we have seen in her concern about keeping her individual and institutional reputations an example of the impact of the disruption at the level of society. In terms of personality, also in this section, there is her fear of having her self-image discredited.

If finding out about her husband represented some loss of affective resources, it seems that R20 started to ponder about other losses that her response to the events could incur. Ending the marriage, for example, could potentially weaken her relationship with her family (and culture), and give her an undesirable new identity (of single-mother). In that particular time and space (there and then) she was trying to position herself in relation to things that were located in different scales of meaning, to which different values were attributed. In other words, R20's perception of the situation and the potential effect of her reaction to it was being affected by different but interlaced levels of power and personal histories: her vis-à-vis her husband, her family and culture; her husband's vis-à-vis her family; her family's vis-à-vis herself and her husband. Moreover, taking it all into consideration, she was trying to define a coherent course of action, **'so, I just said, 'ok, let me see'** (line 143). R20's perceptions and responses to events were based on values and assumptions which, as part of her practices and dispositions, did not need to be questioned. However, when her assumptions were challenged by her husband's change of attitude and betrayal, those practices, behaviours, beliefs and feelings that were before justified and not questioned also started to be tested.

## 6.5. *'the way he beat me'*

### *Excerpt 8*

144	I could tell that he didn't love me
145	it's like, what you do ended in anger problems,
146	something like that
147	I remember there was one day,
148	we were eating,
149	he was still eating,
150	then I finished and I was, like,
151	at the other side of the room
152	he got angry and he just took a plate,
153	and threw it where I was
154	thank god the plate missed me,
155	can you imagine
156	it went to,
157	there was a hole, a big hole in the wall
158	so I was wondering,
159	if he didn't miss me with that plate
160	something could have happened
161	so, I could see, it's like
162	he could get angry with silly things

R20 emphasises in this passage, her husband's anger, which is no longer mentioned as an excuse for his violent behaviour (as suggested in excerpt 3, line 71) but as a problem. Her husband had anger issues, getting angry for any reason – **'what you do ended in**

**anger problems**' (line 145), and she relates it to the fact that he did not love her: '**I could tell that he didn't love me**' (line 144). So, now that she no longer believed that her relationship was based on love, her perception of violence became negative. In anger, he would react violently as when he threw a plate in her direction (line 153), which, missing her, made '**a hole, a big hole in the wall**' (line 157), and she wondered what would have happened if it had not missed her. She said that '**he could get angry with silly things**' (line 162), and his anger resulted in disproportionate action. In this excerpt as well in the following ones, there is a richness of details describing the context, and I will talk about it below. Meanwhile, I will present some other examples of his violent reaction.

### *Excerpt 9*

163	I remember one day,
164	the car I bought for him,
165	when he came I gave him, like, everything,
166	I was the one giving him the money to buy the car
167	so, we had gone to town,
168	so, I can't remember where we've gone
169	so, as we were coming back,
170	it was summertime,
171	I suffer from hay fever, so I was like, <i>(not clear)</i>
172	I said, 'can we pass through the chemist, I need to buy something for my hay fever'
173	he said, 'no, you have to walk there and then walk home'
174	I said like, 'why can't you just drive there, buy and then go home'
175	he insisted that 'no, just go'
176	so,
177	then he said I should take my son with me
178	and I am like, walking, with
179	so I just- I just got out of the car and I left my son in the car and went,
180	I bought the medicine and I went home
181	when I went home, he was angry with me
182	and the way he beat me that day
183	because of that
184	and I am like

Before narrating the event, she explains that the car that he had (as well as everything else) was bought with her money (from line 164 to 166), showing perhaps her indignation with the situation that she was about to narrate. He was driving the car that she had paid for, and he did not want to attend to her request of making a stop at the chemist. Instead, he demanded she walked – '**you have to walk there and then walk home**', (line 173) – and to take the child with her – '**I should take my son with me**' (line 177). R20 was trying to find ways to resist his attacks, as we will see below:

### *Excerpt 10*

185	then, there's another day,
-----	----------------------------

186	I said, you know what,
187	I just said to myself, 'if he fights me at this time I will fight him back'
	...
188	so I remember that day,
189	I can't remember what it was,
190	he attacked me and when I tried to fight back
191	oh my god, the way he beat me
192	then I gave up

On one of the occasions in which he attacked her she tried to hit back (line 190) but, as a result he beat her more – '**oh my god, the way he beat me**' (line 191), so, she abandoned the idea – '**I gave up**' (line 192). This event reinforced her awareness that trying to challenge him could lead to adverse consequences. She talked about it to a friend, who advised her to call the police instead.

### *Excerpt 11*

193	so, I remember telling a friend about it,
194	and my friend was like, 'you are not in ( <i>country's name</i> ), you are in England',
195	'you shouldn't do that, there is a lot of law up here,
196	'next time just call the police, next time he attacks you, call the police'

Although R20 did not mention it, we can assume that her friend was familiar with the reality of domestic abuse in R20's country as well as in the UK. Her friend saying that she was not in her country but England (line 194 and 195), suggests that while trying to solve the problem by herself could be a solution in her country, it was not in England where there were other ways of reacting to domestic violence – '**there is a lot of law up here**' (line 195). It can also be inferred that they expected him to beat her again: '**next time just call the police, next time he attacks you, call the police**', (line 196); they knew that there would be a '**next time**', and when that happened she followed her friend's advice.

### *Excerpt 12*

197	so, this day, I can't remember what,
198	ok, a friend in Canada called me,
199	our bedroom was upstairs and the lounge was downstairs
200	so, I picked up the phone,
201	then
203	he was going upstairs and he said I was making noise
204	I am like, 'you are going upstairs', and
205	it's like, he was just looking for things
206	so, he went upstairs and I was on the phone,
207	I spoke to my friend,
	...
208	so, when I finished speaking on the phone,
209	I went to bed, and
210	when I was there he said, 'I told you were making noise and you insisted talking on the phone'
211	I am like, 'so you don't want me to speak on the phone or what'
212	'I told you were making noise'
213	I said, 'but you were upstairs and I was downstairs
214	'tell me one thing that you heard that we were talking about'
215	'oh, you are challenging me'
216	he got up, went to the bathroom and took a bucket of water and poured on the bed where I was
217	poured on me and on the bed
218	straight away I remembered what my friend said and I just called 999
219	then, when he heard me calling the police, he started going outside
220	I told the police that he started to go towards his car,
221	I told the police 'oh he is going to his car'
222	they said, 'give us, give us the number of the car'
223	so, he heard me telling the plate and he knew that he wasn't going anywhere,
224	and he came back
225	so, when he came back, the police came
226	and
227	when they came,
228	I just knew that if I continue with anything
229	obviously, the police they are going to do nothing
230	I'll be in trouble with this man
231	so, when they came I just changed my statement
232	then I was, 'oh sorry, I overreacted, don't worry, it was my fault'
233	and the police said 'ok, that's fine', they went
234	and then, because of that he stopped but it was more of emotional abuse
235	'oh my god' ( <i>she whispers</i> )
236	that man abused me ( <i>normal voice</i> )

One day, R20 talked to a friend on the phone, despite her husband's objection: he said that she was making too much noise (line 210). She tried to reason with him (lines 211, 213 and 214), but he understood it as defiance – **'oh, you are challenging me'** (line 215), reacting violently against her because of that (lines 216 and 217). She followed her friend's advice and called the police (line 218), but when they came, she changed her statement. In lines 228 and 230 – **'I just knew that if I continue with anything', 'I'll be in trouble with this man'**. She knew from her previous experience that 'challenging' him could be harmful to her. In line 229 – **'obviously, the police they are going to do nothing'** – the adverb **'obviously'** reflects her perception, perhaps based on what she knew about the police from her country of origin, that the police would neither take action against him nor protect her. Although she followed her friend's advice, her previous

experience of challenging him and her initial perception (of the police) prevailed, and she changed her statement (line 231), which she understood to be the best option in that circumstance to ensure her protection.

In the excerpts above, R20 gave details of the violent events that she experienced. Details, as a form of involvement strategy, are communication, Tannen (2007a) argues; they are not just the decoration of the cake but the ingredients that make it. She writes, 'it is in large part through the creation of a shared world of images that ideas are communicated and understanding is achieved' (Tannen 2007a, p. 134); it is the details that make experiences real. In excerpt 8, 9 and 12, R20 explains the settings: the dining room; in the car after a family day out during the summer; they were at home at night (she was downstairs, and he was upstairs), and she talked with a friend on the phone. She describes home and everyday activities that most of the people can relate to and find familiar. However, it is within this familiarity that the unexpected occurs, as discussed in the previous chapter. One of the difficulties in understanding domestic abuse is that it happens suddenly and in the realm of the familiar. Suddenly the dining-room and the bedroom become a battlefield, and hay fever or talking on the phone with a friend the prelude of a (violent) attack. Another difficulty is that, as conflicts are inevitable in intimate relationships (Cosser 1956), it is difficult to identify when the red line is crossed, when conflict becomes abuse. Through details, R20 is contrasting the familiar and the unfamiliar, and through this contrast, she is making abuse evident. Through repetition and parallelisms, and temporal phrases she is showing that violent scenes were frequent – **'I remember there was one day'** (line 147), **'I remember one day'** (line 163), **'there's another day'** (line 185), **'I remember that day'** (line 188), **'this day, I can't remember what'** (line 197), and by recalling the events, she is making her story more believable. Through constructed dialogue, she is presenting herself as someone who can reason and her husband as someone who is unreasonable and who resorts to violence, as in lines 172 to 175, and 210 to 215. Thus, it is the detail that makes the experience real, as Tannen (2007a) states.

## **6.6. *'I was scared'***

R20 started to perceive her husband's behaviour as increasingly threatening, especially after she started telling him that she wanted to end the relationship.

### Excerpt 13

237 when I started to tell him that it was not working, 'I don't love you anymore'  
238 I kept on,  
239 when he was checking his phone, I would see messages to his wife,  
240 you know, sex, what is it called, sexting, things like that  
241 so, I could see that he was using me  
242 he would arouse talking to this woman then he would come to me for sex  
243 then I said to myself, 'that's it, no more sex with him'  
...  
244 then he would come to me for sex  
245 it's like, so, I just said I have to stop  
246 so, the problem started now and he would attack me for that  
247 it was when the physical started again  
248 he would attack me and attack me because I would refuse to have sex with him  
249 he would say 'because you are my wife'  
250 I say, 'no, it's not working, I don't love you anymore'  
251 so, just before I came here I told him that you have to go and he told me,  
252 I am going on the 20th of september, I got a house, I am going  
253 I said, 'that's fine' and I was looking forward to that  
254 and I believed him, I just, he is going  
255 but he just started attacking me a lot  
...  
256 physically  
257 the day we came here, the following day  
258 what happened is, he woke up in the morning, this is what he used to do, around 4,  
259 then he, it was like, I was fast asleep, and he would wake up, and,  
260 he would be trying to touch me, and to take off my pants  
261 because I would sleep with pants on because I didn't want to have sex with him  
262 so, he said, 'is it a no',  
263 I recorded everything,  
264 'is it a no',  
265 because I was scared of him  
266 it was like, especially at night time I would think, I am vulnerable, he can do anything  
267 I forgot to say, there was a time when he strangled me  
268 so, I was scared that he could do anything  
...  
269 so, this time, each time, is like, I was so scared  
270 especially night time, if he would attack me night time  
271 because I didn't know what he could do  
272 on this particular day he kept on asking me, 'is it a no'  
273 I didn't want to say no in case he would attack me or strangle me  
274 I kept saying 'what do you think'  
275 he said, 'I don't have to think, you have to tell me'  
276 'are you saying no, you don't want to have sex with me'  
277 I said 'no, what do you think'  
278 I kept on, like, not  
279 dodging to say no  
...  
280 so, then, ah  
281 he kept quiet for a while, later on he just woke up, again  
282 and I was like, I didn't know what to do, so I was recording everything because  
283 I didn't know what would be the next move,  
284 I was like, just in case he kills me, at least the police will have  
285 so, he just took off the duvet and took my leg and pushed this part  
286 he was holding it towards me  
287 up today I am still limping, it still hurts  
288 he pushed it harder and harder, I was screaming, it was hurting  
289 even  
290 it was, I was after that, I was, it was so painful



291	he kept on and,
292	he said, 'I want to break your leg, you want to go, isn't it',
293	'so if you look for another boyfriend you won't be able to have sex with him'
294	so, he kept on pushing it and pushing it and pushing it
295	so, he later, he left me
296	I was crying the whole night because I was in so much pain
297	it was, can you imagine, it was almost a month, night time it is so painful

The central theme in this passage is sex, and the details create a scene of conflict and eventual violence. R20 did not want to have sex with her husband because she no longer loved him, and she felt that he was using her. Her husband was demanding sex because he thought it was his right as a husband and her obligation as a wife (line 249). Because of her refusal, the physical violence started again (line 246 and 256) with frequent attacks (lines 246, 248 and 255).

Her husband's demand highlights the hierarchical difference between them. He thought that he was entitled to make such demand because of his position and that she should comply because of hers. In Watts' (1991) definition of power, he stated, 'an individual A possesses power if s/he has the freedom of action to achieve goals s/he has set her/himself, regardless of whether or not this involves the potential to impose A's will on others to carry out actions that are in A's interests' (Watts 1991, p. 60). This definition seems to apply to the kind of power that R20's husband possessed. He had a degree of power over her, which did not emerge from that (local) situation but was there all along attached to his position. The constructed dialogues in this passage represent how the conflict built up and ended with him resorting to violence (which is an ultimate way of exercising power).

**Example 9**

249	he would say	'because you are my wife'
250	I say,	'no, it's not working, I don't love you anymore'
262	so, he said,	'is it a no',
264		'is it a no'
272	... he kept on asking me,	'is it a no'
274	I kept saying	'what do you think'
275	he said,	'I don't have to think, you have to tell me'
276		'are you saying no, you don't want to have sex with me'
277	I said,	'no, what do you think'
292	he said,	'I want to break your leg, you want to go, isn't it',
293		'so if you look for another boyfriend you won't be able to have sex with him'

He makes a demand based on his and her role, and she refuses because the role performance no longer conforms to their reality. Their interaction turns confrontational as he understands her words as a challenge. Aware of the dangers of challenging him, she uses her 'linguistic expertise' (Baxter 2014) to minimise the effects of her words, but eventually, he resorted to violence. In Tannen's (1990) studies on gender and language, she argues that one of the causes of frustration in conversation is that men and women tend to index meaning differently. She noticed that while men are inclined to contest, women are inclined to avoid conflict. It seems that the characteristics of contesting and avoiding conflict are present throughout R20's representation by constructed dialogues. He was asking, '**is it a no**' (line 262, 264 and 272), '**are you saying no, you don't want to have sex with me**' (line 276) and understanding it as a threat, she was scrutinising her words and considering carefully what to say to avoid the consequences, '**I didn't want to say no in case he would attack me or strangle me**' (line 273), she was '**dodging to say no**' (line 279). She was adjusting her communicative behaviour in anticipation of how her husband would take it.

Although intimate relationships are inherently hierarchical, and the imbalance of power between men and women in society is a historical fact, not all men are abusive or violent. However, when authority and control are (perceived as) challenged, it is mostly the man who resorts to the use of violence (Dobash and Dobash 1977). Conflicts in R20's relationship were not solved amicably as her husband was one of the violent ones. So, in the occasion exemplified here (as in others), when the conflict over different goals arose, she struggled between keeping her will (e.g. not having sex) without challenging his. She understood that her position in that situation was delicate. It was night time; she was alone (and vulnerable), she knew from her previous experience that he was capable of doing anything and she understood that he was threatening her, so, she '**was scared**' that something could happen to her. She repeats this evaluative statement nine times from excerpt 13 onwards, suggesting that she was in a particularly frightening moment of her life:

### *Example 10*

265	because	I was	scared	of him
268	so,	I was	scared	that he could do anything
269	so, this time, each time, is like,	I was	so scared	
323	so,	I was	scared	that ...
327		I was	scared	of that
346	so,	I was	so scared,	I was crying
355	... because	I was	scared	

From lines 280 and 297, in excerpt 13, she describes the violent attack after which she left him and went to the shelter. After being quiet for a while he attacked her by pushing one of her legs towards her chest ‘**harder and harder**’ (line 288), and ‘**he kept on**’ (line 291), and ‘**he kept on pushing it and pushing it and pushing it**’ (line 294). The repetition suggests a painful and long struggle as he ‘**kept on**’ continuously ‘**pushing it and pushing it and pushing it**’. The constructed dialogue represents his intention, ‘**I want to break your leg, you want to go, isn’t it, so if you look for another boyfriend you won’t be able to have sex with him**’ (lines 292 and 293). At the final stage of their relationship, R20 was openly asking him to leave, saying that it was not working, she did not love him anymore and refusing to have sex with him, and it was threatening his position. Hanmer (2000) claims that the status of the husband (as well as father and son) carries significant power in society and among other things giving up a relationship in which he is the head is equal to losing social advantages, leading some men to violence. It is one of the reasons why, separation time – before, during and immediately after separation, is a perilous moment in an abusive relationship. It increases the risk of severe or fatal injury considerably, and a vast number of domestic homicides happen in retaliation for a wife or lover leaving (or trying to leave) their partners (Stark 2007). R20 talks more about her fears in another part of the interview:

#### ***Excerpt 14***

298	I was, I was thinking that when I finish uni
299	because I found a job in london
300	I was thinking that, if he doesn’t want to move, I’ll just lose my council house and leave it,
301	take my kids and go to london
302	that was my plan, because
303	I had planned to get rid of him
304	but knowing him I was scared
305	because, in our community in ( <i>name of the country</i> ), it’s like,
306	I don’t know in the past in the UK
307	nearly every year we read in the newspapers men killing the wives

308	every year
	...
309	every year in there, yeah
310	so, it was like, people are talking, even in the social media,
311	one thing I realised with our men, is like,
312	I told him to go, his ego is like, a woman should not tell you to go,
313	a woman,
314	it is, he should say I don't love you and not the other way
315	so, for me to tell him that I didn't love him and
316	because of the ego,
317	that's why he was saying 'I'll break your leg before I go, so that',
318	it is like, 'if I can't have you, I have to do something'
319	you know, they have that mentality I'm sure
320	I do know
321	I am ( <i>her nationality</i> ) I mean, I do know
322	so, I was scared that even if I make that move to go to London with my kids
323	if we meet,
324	if I am successful, then one day he meets me,
325	he can do anything to harm me
326	I was scared of that

It seems that R20 was actively trying to find a solution to her ordeal. First, she was getting a professional qualification through which her financial independence would be ensured, and then she found a job. However, R20 knew that her husband was violent, and she also knew that in her community, husbands killing their wives was a reality (lines 304 to 309). R20 realised that men from her community could not be told to go, reiterating Hanmer's (2000) observation in her studies. It is the man who should say that he no longer loves the woman and that the marriage is finished, not the other way around (lines 391 to 394). So, because she was breaching cultural expectations and in this way affecting his ego (line 312 and 316), he attacked her and tried to break her leg (lines 311 and 317), injuring her permanently. She said '**our**' community (line 305) and '**our**' men (line 311), and by using the pronoun '**our**' she positions herself as an insider, someone who knows and understand the subject well. It is reinforced in lines 319 to 321, '**you know, they have that mentality I'm sure**', '**I do know**', '**I am (*her nationality*) I mean, I do know**'. So, from her personal experience with him and her knowledge of men's mentality in her community, she feared being killed.

### ***6.7. 'I always wanted it but I didn't know how to do it'***

After the event, when he tried to break her leg, she confided in a friend what had happened, only this time her friend went to the police and made a statement against R20's husband.

#### ***Excerpt 15***

327	so,
328	that was it that night,
329	and the following day I told my friend and then she said, 'you know what, enough is enough'
330	she called the police
331	then the police
332	you know what, I didn't want to involve the police, the reason being,
333	I knew the police would just come, take him, then release him after a few days
334	who is in danger?
335	it's me
336	so, I just said 'you know what'
337	and, the police later called me, it was around 4 and said,
338	'we have him in court'
339	'can you come to the police station'
340	I cried, I was like, 'oh my god',
341	'these people, they don't know'
342	'he will kill me',
343	this man will be so much angry, he will go to the police,
344	what he is going to do when he is coming back, this man is going to kill me
345	so, I was so scared, I was crying
346	I was like, 'why, why'
347	I was regretting telling someone about it
348	I was like, 'why did I do it, why'
349	so, they said you should come here before 6:30,
350	if you don't come, we will come looking for you
351	I went there, so, when I went there, they said, 'can you give us a report',
352	and I said, 'I don't want'
353	they said why,
354	I said, because I was scared
355	then they said, 'what you don't know, that if you give us a report or not, because you are not
356	the one who reported, we will arrest him'
357	and I started crying,
358	I was like, you don't know what you are putting myself into
359	then I said, 'what I know, you are going to arrest him,
360	maybe tomorrow you will release him,
361	what about me, what is going to happen to me'
362	the police said, 'don't worry, we will protect you, do you promise to give us a report'
363	and I said, 'as long as I am safe, I don't mind,
364	as long as I am safe'
365	that's when she called social services, and started looking for where I can be put,
366	that they can go and arrest him and look into it
367	that's how I ended up here

R20 mentioned having shared her experience with friends a few times in the interview. She did in excerpt 11 after trying to fight back, and her friend advised her to call the police instead. R20 did as suggested but regretted later and changed her statement with the police. There was another time when R20's husband strangled her (excerpt not included in this chapter), and a friend encouraged her to leave and to call the police, but she refused. Klein (2012) comments that sometimes individuals share their experience of abuse with informal third parties (e.g. friends, family members) without wanting further support, although disclosure of abuse to informal third parties is frequently the first step in help-seeking. Sometimes the person disclosing abuse to a friend (or any other informal third party) is not yet prepared to take further action. R20's friends' response has always

been positive: supporting her, condemning her husband’s attitude and offering her advice. But, if hierarchy and the different levels of power previously discussed (i.e. husband, family, culture) is considered, R20 might have perceived herself and her friends as at the same hierarchical level. In other words, she did not view them to be in a position in which they could effectively support her against her husband, family and society (sources of power which exercised more influence in R20’s decisions). So, in the excerpt above, it seems that R20 was trying to share her experience with her friend for sharing’s sake only. But her friend unexpectedly called the police, ‘**you know what, enough is enough**’ (line 329), and R20’s husband was arrested. Although sceptical about the police response, R20 eventually accepted to give a report (lines 363 and 364). The excerpt below is from another part of the interview, in which she described her experience at the police station in more detail.

***Excerpt 16***

368	I always wanted it but I didn’t know how to do it
369	I didn’t know how to do it
370	I remember when I was in the police station, I rang two of my friends
371	the one I saw when I was strangled and another one I’ve been just telling everything
372	the one in,
373	I was like, ‘oh, someone reported him and I am in the police station, bla, bla, bla,
374	and I am refusing to give a report’
375	because the policewoman kept on leaving me on my own,
376	should come and give me pressure, and leave me to think,
377	and she would come, and say ‘call whoever you want, I’m coming back’
378	so she was, like, pressurising me to give the statement
379	and, you know what she said, ‘why are you refusing, it is right time he pays for his sins, you
380	suffered a lot of pain, you did, you know what, let him pay for his sins’
381	and my immediate family, my brothers and sisters
382	they, I don’t know since when they wanted me to get rid of him
383	they are happy and,
384	that day they were like,
385	‘we don’t want to hear that you are fighting for him, to come out the police station,
386	let him go and rot in jail, they said
387	and, they were saying ‘we wish that when it’s finished that they will deport him back to his
388	country, so he can come and join his wife’
389	that’s my immediate family, but, you know,
390	my extended family, they wouldn’t understand, isn’t it

In this passage, R20 gives examples of how informal (e.g. family and friends), and formal (e.g. the police) third parties (or networks) influenced her final decision to give a statement. The response of her friends, as discussed before, has always been positive and, as noticed in lines 381 to 388, her immediate family (brothers and sisters) at this stage were also supporting her and condemning his behaviour. The police responded firmly and positively giving R20 confidence. But she was still worried about her extended

family's reaction (line 390). Although she has not mentioned any actual event when she has been criticised or reprimanded by any member of her extended family, there seem to be an implicit understanding about the authority of the extended family to protect and impose tradition. While in the shelter, she said that she felt physically and emotionally safe but that society was still a barrier to be overcome.

*Excerpt 17*

391	how am I'm going to face the society when they realise that now I am a single woman
392	because,
393	it's my fault
394	I used to paint a picture that I was happily married
395	if you would come to our house, you would think that this a perfect couple,
396	and everybody would get that we are a perfect couple
397	would go out work hard, and go on holidays together, would live, like,
398	a normal happy life
399	people would think that we were living a normal happy life
400	yet they didn't know what was happening
401	so, I was thinking that, you know,
402	the society obviously is going to judge me thinking that,
403	'look, she went to uni, now, because she is a nurse, as soon as she finished,
404	she left her husband' and,
405	because they don't know

She feared losing face, '**how am I going to face society when they realise that now I am a single woman**' (line 391). She thought it was her fault because she '**used to paint a picture**' that they were '**happily married**' (lines 393 and 394). They were living in a way that people would think that they were '**a perfect couple**' (line 396); people would think that they lived '**a normal happy life**' (lines 398 and 399). The picture that she painted was based on her preconception of what would be a perfect couple, happily married and living a happy life which included working hard and going on holidays together (line 397). Being to a great extent mass-mediated, as in Agha's (2007) argument discussed in Chapter 2, this preconception or stereotype, which is shared and cherished in society, is recycled and recontextualised in the course of R20's life in various participatory framework and in various semiotic practices. Although people did not know the reality of what she was living (line 400), R20 was sure that society '**obviously**' was going to judge her (line 402) and think of her as an opportunist who left her husband as soon as she got a qualification. She '**instantiates**' (rather than represents) what society (as a whole) will say using what Tannen called '**choral dialogue**' (Tannen 2007a, p. 114).

Goffman (1967) explains that once a person takes on a face for her/himself, s/he is expected to live up to it, performing any actions required to maintain that face at any cost.

He says that ‘by entering a situation in which he is given a face to maintain, a person takes on the responsibility of standing guard over the flow of events as they pass before him. He must ensure that a particular *expressive order* is sustained – an order that regulates the flow of events, large or small, so that anything that appears to be expressed by them will be consistent with face’ (Goffman 1967, p. 9). In society, there is the need (moral obligation) to maintain the set of meanings which are interactionally or institutionally expected. It has been demonstrated throughout R20’s narrative that her commitment in the marriage was not only with her husband but also with her immediate and extended families and with the whole of society. Tradition and social expectations of couples’ roles were leading her to give a particular impression, creating a distinction between what was shown in public, the imposed world of social rules and roles, and in private, the real world of real intimate individuals. Goffman explains that a social face is not personal property but a loan from society which can be withdrawn at any moment if the person behaves in a way that depreciates it. He said that ‘approved attributes and their relation with face make of every man his own jailer; this is a fundamental social constraint even though each man may like his cell’ (Goffman 1967, p. 10). R20 was not happy nor comfortable in her cell, though. She was struggling to come to terms with society, and after she had spent three months in the shelter, I re-interviewed her to see if something had changed and this is seen in the next section.

### ***6.8. ‘the death of that woman, is like, made things change a lot’***

#### ***Excerpt 18***

406	you know, one thing that’s happened, is, like,
407	was it, some few weeks ago,
408	someone I know, one from our community, was killed by her husband
409	and, is like, our, is like, the media from my country,
410	is like, the journalists highlighted it,
411	and when they counted, here in the UK only, 10 women were murdered by their partners
412	from last year to this year, just
	...
413	so, because of that, people were talking about it, and, is like,
414	the way people are talking about it and,
415	it- it made people realise that, ‘yes, it’s better for you to be a single person rather than staying
416	with someone who will end up killing you’
	...
417	<i>(people are talking about)</i> in social media, in whatsapp
418	and I am on groups
419	and I was <i>(face expression of positive surprise)</i> , because
420	before people would just like, when, you leave your husband,
421	and people would be like, you know, the way they’d treat you
423	but, the way people were supportive, because,



424	the journalists, it's like, they made an awareness,
425	they were in radios and, everything
426	it is like, the journalists were here, is like,
427	we have our own, like, radios and online ( <i>not clear</i> )
428	so, people were just, like, talking about it a lot
429	so, it's like, it's make a big difference, it's like,
430	even now when I come from here, it's like,
431	when I move out,
432	I won't feel ashamed to say I left my husband
433	because people kept on saying,
434	'ladies, please, it's better for you to go out alive than stay',
435	and people were condemning churches,
436	because this lady was going to church,
437	and people were aware that she was,
438	you know, she was having problems with her husband,
439	but, you know, the church kept on saying 'stay, stay, stay, keep on trying to make it work'
440	so people were condemning that, 'don't do that, when someone come to you and say I'm
441	leaving, they know better, they are not telling you everything',
442	so they know, is like, the relationship better,
443	'try and support them to leave rather than say stay', you know, so, yeah, it- it- that,
444	the death of that woman is like, made things change a lot,
445	and people were saying, about 10 people have been killed ( <i>not clear</i> ) domestic violence,
446	since last year, can you imagine, during the period of 1 year
447	in this country, just from my community, so it's an alarming number

R20 no longer fears society's judgement after the media coverage of a case of homicide. A woman from her community in the UK who had a history of domestic violence was killed by her husband and the media/social media's response in her country as well as in the UK had been of awareness and support to women who were experiencing the same. Before this incident, people would ignore the circumstances of violence and abuse and, focusing on cultural norms only (i.e. a woman should not leave her husband), they would not treat women who ended the relationship well. People in the (social) media were also criticising the church for the omission, for ignoring that woman's case as if the preservation of institutional customs was more important than the preservation of the woman's life. R20 understood that by openly talking about that woman's incident, the media had changed people's perception of domestic violence and the victims. Through 'choral dialogue' (Tannen 2007a), she generalises people's voicing:

**Example 11**

415	it- it made people realise that 'yes, it's better for you to be a single person rather than staying
416	with someone who will end up killing you'
	...
433	because people kept on saying,
434	'ladies, please, it's better for you to go out alive than stay'

She said that '**people realised**' that a violent relationship can be dangerous, where '**people**' seem to represent the community in general (journalists, audience, those

interacting virtually in online groups). It is people's statements directed to all women in the same situation of that woman who was killed, in which the negative connotation attached to the status of '**single person**' is weakened. The constructed dialogues reflect the change that occurred in her community's (the society she was concerned with) perception to one of support and empathy towards the victims. People's and media reaction surprised R20 and gave her confidence to face society, '**when I move out, I won't feel ashamed to say I left my husband**' (lines 431 and 432). She talks more about it:

**Excerpt 18**

448	so, people were talking about it a lot, and, they are still talking because
449	you know
450	so, it helped me a lot and, I know if-
451	when people know that, I've left my partner now,
452	they won't be shocked because of that, you know
453	yeah, is like,
454	I'm not gonna, like,
455	be telling people,
456	but when they realise that I'm a lone woman, or it's like,
457	it's something I won't,
458	be ashamed of, anymore
	...
459	it is not like I'm gonna say, 'oh, you know I'm no longer together'
460	because I've always been,
461	that's me, my life I just keep it to my self
462	so, when they know it, yes, I'm happy to say 'yes, we are no longer together'
463	'why',
464	'yes, I was in an abusive relationship, he was abusive', yeah,
465	I'm happy to say that and, yeah
466	and to hear-, I'm happy to help even other woman as well
467	it is like, if someone comes to me, you know,
468	if I know that they're, is like,
469	they're in a relationship, they're trying to make it work and is not working, is like
470	I think, yeah, I can confiden-
471	I've- I have the confidence of, like, helping them
472	as well

After observing the media's coverage and people's reaction, she knew that people would not be shocked by the fact that she is now a '**lone woman**', which is something that she was ashamed of before. She expects encounters with people questioning her about it, and she constructs an 'anticipated' dialogue, or perhaps a double-voiced constructed dialogue, anticipating people's thoughts and likely encounters she might have,

**Example 12**

462	'yes, we are no longer together'
463	'why'
464	'yes, I was in an abusive relationship, he was abusive'

She confidently and assertively ('yes') talks about her reality. So much so that she feels happy 'to help even other woman as well' (line 466) who may be experiencing the same; she has 'the confidence of, like, helping them as well' (lines 471 and 472).

Although R20's friends, family and the police were eventually able to convince her to leave her husband, they were not able to make her change her perception about the society. After she left her husband, she was still concerned about her image in the community and feeling ashamed of her situation (as a single woman). A real change of perception came about through the media and the influence it had on people. Gunther and Storey (2003) wrote in their study about media campaigns that when a person perceives that a message affected others, she reacts to this perception. In other words, when individuals believe that other people have been influenced by a particular message (through media), they will change their behaviour towards those they believe have been influenced. The authors called this phenomenon the *influence of presumed influence*. If we consider this idea here, we can say that the media accessed by R20's community sent a firm message that domestic violence endangers the lives of women. It challenged cultural and institutional practices which tended to perpetuate the problem by overlooking its gravity and/or by blaming the victims. R20 believed that this message affected her community, causing a change of perception; it influenced R20 to change her attitude towards those people. At a social level, she stopped being ashamed of her condition because she no longer feared the judgement of people as she believed that they favourably changed their way of perceiving women in cases of violence. While the voice of her friends and immediate family represented individual voices, media/social media in that campaign represented the voice of (her) 'people', the people that matter to her here in the UK and back home, a collective voice imbued with legitimate power to promote (social) change. The public voices against domestic abuse, the criticism towards societal norms and the church, make a case in her favour. It helped a shift from a negative perception of herself as being someone who was breaking social rules and the institution of marriage and family, to a positive view of being an example of strength and courage, someone who was making the right decisions and who was able to help others in the same circumstances to do the same. On a personal level, elsewhere in R20's narrative, she mentioned the effect of violence and abuse in the way she perceived herself, as in the next section.

### ***6.9. 'and I told myself that I want to empower myself'***

### *Excerpt 19*

473	you know I used to be a very, very confident person
474	it's like, I was, I was very,
475	even myself I know I was very confident
476	but, if you are to ask me now
477	it knocked down my confidence so much
478	right now it changed a little bit
479	when I started going to uni
480	I can see myself like,
481	picking up myself a little bit
482	but I am not, nowhere near where I was
483	but I can see a change in myself
484	but, yeah it affected me so much the emotional abuse
485	oh my god
486	he would just say, I'm telling you,
487	negative things
489	I never done anything right to him
490	nothing was right

She used to be '**very confident**' but the emotional abuse destroyed her confidence. He would put her down saying negative things (lines 486 and 487) and criticising her. This is another instance of a typical abusive and controlling behaviour, which affects the person's volition and will power and creates a sense of intimidation. She regains some confidence after starting at the university, but she was '**nowhere near where**' she used to be (line 482). In another part of the interview, she mentioned that when she was going to the university her husband tried to sabotage her work and performance on several occasions by damaging computers, laptops and printers, by not providing childcare or by not allowing her to sleep on the night preceding any important appointment at the university. As she was missing important deadlines, and it was affecting her grades, she emailed her course leaders at the university, but her pleading was ignored.

### *Excerpt 20*

491	and I even mentioned to say, you know why I- I started this nursing, and I even say it
492	I said 'I was, I- I am in a domestic violence relationship
493	and I told myself that I want to empower myself
494	that's why I am doing this nursing, that's why,
495	and, for you to do this,
496	I've been told for the last, I don't know how many years, I can't do anything, I'll never do anything
497	and you are helping this man, for me to feel like that'
498	I even said this
499	but they still kept my mark, they still didn't do anything, they still didn't say anything about it

She describes here what she said in her email to the university (lines 492 and 497). She admits she is someone who has been subjected to domestic violence, '**I am in a domestic violence relationship**' (line 492), but also as one who takes decisions, '**I told myself that I want to empower myself, that's why I am doing nursing**' (lines 493 and 494),

and does not accept the position that her husband put her in (line 496). Although officially recognising herself as a victim, as she was acting to change her situation, she constructs herself in the narrative as morally superior to her husband and to the people at the university, who, she suggests, were condoning her husband's abuse by ignoring her request.

### ***6.10. Conclusion***

R20 realised early in her marriage that it was a violent relationship and not based on love as she had assumed at the beginning. However, she found herself 'stuck' in a cultural and moral dilemma. On the one hand, she believed that by becoming a single-mother (or lone woman), she would lose the respect of society. On the other hand, she knew that there was a history in her community of husbands killing their wives. She understood that by breaking the marriage and leaving her husband, she would lose a favoured position in her society (that of wife, of a married woman) and the respect of her family and community. Yet, by staying with her husband, she was at risk of losing her life. Her local perception of the situation was informed by histories located in different timespaces, which, synchronised within the there-and-then, were affecting her actions.

Following Tannen (2007a, 2008), I paid particular attention to details, repetition and constructed dialogues in R20's story. These strategies helped me to identify the scenes that were being created and the meanings emerging through it. Tannen's (1996, 2001, 2003) framework of power (hierarchy-distance) and solidarity (closeness-equality) helped to determine how the story was being framed. R20's perception of violence changed as her relationship shifted from the frame of solidarity to the one of power: violence turned into something negative when the framing of closeness was no longer viable. In the framing of power, Goffman (1967, 1990, 2013) helped me to explain how structural arrangements and impression management became an issue and maintaining a 'face' turned into a form of entrapment.

We have seen in this chapter that what happened in the there-and-then of R20's experience was much informed by things located outside the moment, at different levels of histories. R20's decisions and actions were affected by social and institutional commitments and obligations that one ought to preserve; by attachment to roles and the moral responsibility of maintaining face; by the social imbalance, which overlooks

male's violence and punishes the female's reaction. But we have also seen, the power of formal and informal third parties (i.e. police, shelter and friends), and media/social media in changing situations and perceptions. R20 was actively trying to solve her problem despite the limitations and intimidations that she encountered, and the right response from friends, police, the shelter and the media was invaluable in promoting change.

The last time I heard from R20, she was working as a nurse in a hospital and living with her two children.

# Chapter 7. Final words: findings and implications

## *7.1. Introduction*

This research aimed to investigate the narrative of women temporarily living in a shelter for females fleeing domestic violence and abuse. It explored how three women constructed their identities and perceived violence, and how broader narratives are interwoven and represented in their stories. In this chapter, in section 7.2, I summarise and discuss my findings by answering the research questions: 1) How do the women construct their identities and perceive violence and abuse in their narratives; 2) What roles do broader cultural discourses play in those women's perceptions and identity constructions. I drew on domestic violence, sociolinguistics, sociology, and literary theories to uncover controlling and abusive tactics, and how assumptions and expectations about relationships, cultural stereotypes, and social roles influenced the women in different ways, sometimes causing them to leave the violent and abusive relationship, sometimes staying despite it, and sometimes failing to recognise it as violence and abuse. In section 7.3, I discuss how the research contributes to knowledge as well as final considerations.

## *7.2. Findings and answering the research questions*

### *7.2.1. Identity construction and perception of violence and abuse in the narratives*

#### *a) Identity construction*

The women narrated different identities of themselves, such as woman, wife, mother, sister, daughter, friend. They described scenes where they were trying to protect themselves and their children and taking decisions of what to do and sometimes what to say, therefore, selecting and performing/enacting identities that were made relevant in the situation. Although at different stages and in different ways they talked about themselves as victims, they mostly represented themselves in the there-and-then of the experience, as thinking, acting and reacting individuals in response to the circumstances at hand. Through constructed dialogue (reported speech), for instance, they showed how they tried

to calm their partners down and tried to reason with them. They often took a positive moral stance for themselves by contrasting their and their partners' actions.

They also described the damaging effect of violence, abuse and control to their sense of self. R20's husband's constant violence, abuse and denigration caused her to lose her self-esteem and confidence. The social identity of a married woman was ambivalent in her story, sometimes being referred to as a source of social prestige, and other times as personal constraint, which became one of her dilemmas. R10, who had a preferred style (e.g. the way she dressed), recognised her way of being as the central issue in the relationship. Her partner did not like it and wanted her to conform to his choices. Initially, she felt compelled to comply with his demands by changing her way of dressing and styling, and it made her (mentally and physically) ill. Similarly, R8 had her sense of identity slowly taken away from her, by her partner destroying and getting rid of her personal and meaningful belongings, and through denigration and humiliation.

The women's meaningful material and symbolic possessions such as objects, persons and even feelings (e.g. pride, self-confidence), spoken about in their stories, served as a strong indexical of identity representations, and gave them a sense of history, continuity, belonging and control over their own lives. The possessions were a reminder of who they were and how they were perceived to be by others. Belk (1988) refers to meaningful possessions as extended selves because of the significance they have to the individual. Therefore, the loss of any of these possessions equates to a partial loss of self. Because of the control, the possibility of being oneself was reduced. Ochs and Capps explain self as, 'an unfolding reflective awareness of being-in-the-world, including a sense of one's past and future' (Ochs and Capps 1996, p. 21). In this sense, if the identity construction in the present is obstructed and the identity they had before entering the relationship is systematically severed through the destruction and disposal of meaningful possessions, through degradation, humiliation, threat and other forms of violation of the self, the ownership of the identity is imperilled or lost, and they may not be able to project themselves in the future.

At the time of the interviews, as they were looking at their experience from the outside, their narratives reveal a noticeable learning and self-growing process. Apart from the reflection on their own experience, they have learned from other people's experiences (e.g. through social media, google, interaction) and in the shelter, especially by attending



the Freedom Programme. Even after going to the shelter, it was not clear to R8 if she had enough characteristics to be included in the group category of abused woman. Blommaert (2005) explains that an identity has to be recognised by others to be established (in a process called *othering*). R8 was categorised and grouped as a victim of abuse by the staff in the shelter during the initial referral, for instance, when signs of abuse are scrutinised and in that interactional process, an identity of ‘victim’ is foregrounded. Through this process, R8 was given access to that particular context (i.e. the shelter) where possessing such identity is an institutional demand. In this case, ‘victim of abuse’ appears as a ‘retrospective evaluative, ascribed identity’ (Blommaert 2005, p. 206) bestowed on her after the abuse occurred. She needed time to adjust and include herself in that group category and in the context.

After the abusive experience and the time that they spent in the refuge, R8 and R20 felt that they were knowledgeable and confident enough to teach others. They converted their experience into knowledge, and it allowed them to construct the identity of an expert, capable of protecting themselves in the future from an abusive relationship, and of advising others experiencing the same abuse as they had done. In one sense, by coming to terms with the identity of victim R8 and R20 had their experience legitimised. The identity of a victim of abuse filled the gap between what they were before the abusive experience and what they became after.

#### ***b) Perception of violence and abuse***

Instances of physical violence were mentioned in all three analysis chapters, but not as a reason for leaving their partners (or not returning) nor the primary source of their distress. While physical violence is more easily recognisable and socially transgressive, control and other forms of emotional and mental abuse appear in the women’s stories as more damaging to their sense of self and autonomy. Coercive control, although not always explicitly identified by them, was consistently indexed in their stories through the use of repetitions, discursive markers, and other linguistic constructions. Through evaluative statements, the women explained how control and abuse were affecting them negatively in their physical and mental health.

They described their partners’ behaviour in comparison to assumptions and expectations they had about people and situations, about intimate and family relationships, and cultural

practices, instantiating the role of expectations in the understanding of the reality, discussed in Chapter 2. In this way, coercive controlling features were described as either breaching or fulfilling individual, social, and cultural expectations.

### ***7.2.2. Roles of broader discourses in the women's perceptions and identity construction***

Cultural practices and beliefs appeared in all three analyses, either explicitly or implicitly influencing the women's perceptions and identities in different ways. R10 rejected some of the Traveller's cultural practices and perceived her partner's controlling behaviour as culturally informed, but she had no problems in identifying herself as a Traveller girl. At the same time, she enjoyed a personal (dressing) style that her partner associated with 'black girls'. She was aware of cultural differences, rejecting some and embracing others, with her choices following different logics in different segments of life (Blommaert and Varis 2015). Tradition is embedded in R20's narrative in the form of cultural and social practices, rules and roles, normalised as part of her reality. She acknowledges cultural and social practices and, although they are neither overtly rejected nor accepted, she felt somehow compelled to adhere to them, lest she would lose the valued social statuses and the support of the community. The cultural discourse of marriages based on love appeared in her story side-by-side with the cultural and social practice of husbands killing their wives, and she got married because of the first and feared to leave because of the second. Although subtly, R8 also alludes to social and cultural discourses regarding relationships as, for instance, going along with the partner and not saying anything, taking decisions without the family's interference. The women constructed their identities reflexively, acting and reacting to the circumstances. Yet, I argue, their action/reaction to the moment, as well as their perception of the moment, was largely informed by social and cultural values.

The discourses of victimhood available in society influenced the three women's action differently. R10 had access to different cultural practices and discourses. She recognised the abuse and left the relationship at the early stages. R20 recognised her experience as abusive, but the discourse available in her community was one of victim-blaming, so she did not want to leave, fearing social judgement. Her perception changed when a new discourse in favour of the victim started to circulate in her community. R8 did not recognise her experience as abusive immediately, and when she left, she felt 'stupid' for

not realising the abuse, and this feeling seems to be in response to a broader social discourse of victim-blaming.

Intimate relationships based on love, happiness, and sexual attraction and satisfaction are standard features in mass media representations, which, on the one hand, reflect social practices and, on the other hand, orient perceptions of reality and create expectations of actions and behaviours. Despite the different cultural background, the three women analysed started their relationships looking for companionship and affection, and their expectations reflected this ideal. In the same way that there is a social and cultural ideal of how an intimate relationship should be (e.g. love, romance, companionship), there is an ideal of how those experiencing violence should respond to it (e.g. (not) leaving the abusive/violent relationship). However, these ideals are based on an objective view of intimate relationship and response to violence, while perceptions are subjective. The peculiarity of the circumstances is not taken into consideration, and it can result in the victim blaming herself for not reacting as expected as R8 did. It can also result in secondary victimisation as in R20's case.

### ***7.3. Implications and contribution to knowledge***

#### ***a) Bakhtin, Goffman and Tannen***

From the beginning of the analytical process, different layers of contexts emerged in the women's narratives, such as those in the storied plot, in the there-and-then of the story (e.g. places and people that were part of their personal histories, places where things happened, people involved) and also those related to the moment of the telling, in the here-and-now of the interview (e.g. in their flat in the shelter, their interaction with me, the researcher). These different relationships between time, space and people are neatly interwoven in the women's narratives, and at times some aspects are foregrounded, at times others. To respond more comprehensively to the demands of the women's narratives and focus on what they were making relevant (and when), I adopted an eclectic and inductive approach.

In the Bakhtinian literary work and posterior scholarly interpretations and applications, I found scope to explore those different contextual aspects and relationships, building on the understanding that identity work is organised in and with reference to specific timespace configurations (Bakhtin, 1981; Blommaert 2005; Blommaert and De Fina

2017), and that a contextual analysis can address the complexity and diversity of women's experience of domestic violence and abuse (Dutton 1996).

The concept of the chronotope (and chronotopic relations) is at the heart of this thesis, and it is used in different ways. It allowed me to explore the macro and micro aspects of the narratives, sometimes as an epistemological orientation and sometimes as an analytical tool, without breaking the sequence of events proposed by the narrator. As an analytical and sensitising tool, it allowed me to explore how people as characters who are brought into the women's narratives afford the construction of particular identities by the way the women position themselves vis-à-vis those characters; it allowed me to reflect on how the social and historical functions of places are altered in the event of violence. For instance, the idea of chronotopic motifs allowed me to pause (or freeze) a particular moment of the women's experience and observe what was different in that precise timespace and the meanings that were being created in that particular context. R8's description of her running to the front door and walking down the road analysed against the literary motifs of the threshold and the road and the meanings usually associated to them (e.g. a point of decision making, of leaving what is familiar to the unfamiliar, embarking on an adventure), has demonstrated the suddenness of the events and unexpectedness as she runs because the familiar has become unfamiliar, and the road has become safer. In that context of violence and abuse, places in the home such as the kitchen and the toilet also had their social and historical functions subverted and became places of chasing and hiding as in R8's story, and the privacy of the bedroom lost its intimate connotation and became threatening and scary in R20's story. It illustrates that one of the aspects of the chronotope (the relationship between time and space) of violence and abuse is the suddenness and unexpectedness. That is, a word, an intonation, a slap that comes suddenly and can alter or affect the expectations for the situation.

Characters are also chronotopic as they represent people who are part of the narrators' histories in one way or another. Brought into the narrated world, characters serve as resources through which the women construct their own identities by positioning themselves in relation to them (the characters). Apart from characters, constructed dialogues (words uttered in a different time and space and brought as narrated voices into the story) were also important analytical focus, as they supported the characters' representation, the women's argument and identity construction and invited the audience (myself) to perceive the scenes being described in the way they did.

The notion of the chronotope used as an epistemological orientation allowed me to explore context as the relationship between time, space and personhood from different angles as, for instance, the relationship between context and actions/behaviour, context and identities, identities and actions/behaviour and between actions/behaviour and multi-layers of contexts. It allowed me to reflect on how the narrator's understanding influenced the course of action she ought to take at a given circumstance and how it was being influenced and affected by different levels of context.

The context in which one acts is always highly specific (Blommaert 2005, 2018b) and allows the construction of specific identities and the performance of specific roles. Goffman's extensive scholarship on people's tendency to perform roles (or not, although the idea of the role is still there) in accordance to the situation allowed me to focus on the women's description and perception of social roles and on the performance or not of those roles by them and the narrated characters. Goffman explains that people perform social roles to give a good impression of themselves and preserve face, and they do so by attending to (social) expectations. Tannen's oeuvre offers the tools to investigate how such expectations are linguistically represented. Through the exploration of linguistic strategies (e.g. repetitions, constructed dialogue, scenes) and discursive markers, violence and abuse is indexed as a breach of expectations in the women's stories, as something that does not belong. Repetitions and words such as 'and', 'but', 'even', 'still', 'just' (among others), which are usually considered stopwords and eliminated in statistical models of text analysis (e.g. text mining, topic modelling, R) appeared in the analyses as essential for the meaning-making and for evincing abusive and controlling patterns, and expectations.

Tannen and Bakhtin are together of the understanding that to respond to expectations, one must recognise a situation or context, and such recognisability depends on past experience (lived, seen or read/heard about). To recognise and understand new situations (e.g. violence, abuse and control in the intimate relationship), the women used their personal experiences but also the experience of others, and they added the new knowledge to their repertoire, becoming through this process someone else. It brings me to Bakhtin's (1984) notion of *unfinalisability*: the idea that a person is never entirely known and predictable but can always become someone (or something) else. This concept inspired me to look at the process of becoming as narrated by the three women and the tensions that emerged in the process. It helped me to reflect (emically) on their struggle

to understand their own situation and to navigate between different identities, some of them self-identified and others externally imposed. From the outside, they fitted the criteria of victims of domestic violence in the refuge, for instance, as well as from a definitional or legal perspective (and the narrative of their experience demonstrated that they were). At the same time, their stories show how throughout their experience they were struggling to decide the best course of action, the best way of acting and reacting given the circumstances; trying to understand the minutiae of their situation as well as themselves in the situation. In the case of the three women whose stories I analysed in this study, within the process, they understood that they had been victims of abuse, they added this knowledge to their repertoire, and they outgrew it emerging as experts. They explored their possibilities and acted and reacted to their circumstances to the best of their abilities, with their fragilities, injuries, but also their strengths.

*b) Coercive control and victimhood discourse*

The research contributes to coercive control studies by demonstrating the effect of control on the women's identity construction and how the sense of self is related to meaningful material and symbolic possessions. The analysis showed the destruction/disposal of those possessions as a pattern of control and the effect it had on the women's sense of self and belonging. As physical violence, which is usually the most easily recognisable form of domestic violence, might not happen to a significant number of women experiencing domestic violence, those women may not find a reference to evaluate their circumstances, and it can cause them to doubt or downgrade their experience. In this sense, this study offers a reference to those women, as it portrays cases of mental abuse and control as they subtly but regularly happened.

In general, victims of domestic violence tell their stories repeatedly in several different contexts, to different audiences, and for various reasons, and these stories are retold, transformed, and contextualised for specific purposes and audiences (Blommaert 2005; Polletta 2009; Trinch 2003; Van Dijk 2009). Although there are cases in which it is undoubtedly necessary to portray them as victims (as in the legal system, for instance), this label may also become a social constraint. It is claimed that by focusing only on this identity, social stereotypes and preconceived images of victims might be reinforced, their life experience overlooked, and their authentic voices neglected (Trinch 2003; Van Dijk 2009). The analytical approach proposed here, apart from helping practitioners (e.g.

support and social workers, counsellors, and others) to identify patterns of control in the women's stories, can equally support legal professionals, advocates, activists and those that for one reason or another may need to retell people's stories in court, campaigns, media, etc., to challenge social discourses of victimhood, and preserve the individual's voice. I am arguing here that, through the narratives, the process and effect of victimisation can be demonstrated by contrasting the various identities, of who the individual was before the victimisation, who she is striving to be and who she is/was under the influence of the perpetrator. The women's narratives strongly suggest that the abuse (that turned them into victims) was precisely because the fact that they were impeded from being and performing their identities. Violence and abuse in the form of coercive control appear in the analysis as an attack on the women's identity and a hindrance to their identity construction, corroborating earlier studies.

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## Appendix 1. *Participant leaflet*

**Title of the proposed study: A Study of the Narrative-in-Interaction of the Residents of a Shelter for Women Fleeing from Domestic Violence (Provisional)**

**Proposed by:** Rosicler Saloan Reinboldt (Rosie), email: [REDACTED]

**Supervised by:** Professor Angela Creese, email: [REDACTED]

**Research funded by** ESRC – Economic and Social Research Council

### **Description of the proposed study**

This research is part of a PhD in Sociolinguistics that I am currently undertaking at the University of Birmingham, School of Education. My study aims to learn more about domestic violence and abuse, and the way women fleeing from abuse understand and perceive it. To be able to do that, I intend to interview adult residents living in this shelter as well as some support workers.

I must emphasise that, although this is an independent and personal study with no link to or interference from the management of the shelter, my research has always been supported by the administration and all those who work in the shelter, for which I am very grateful. The management will be given a list with the name of all those residents participating in the research.

### **Invitation to participate**

I would like to invite you to take part on this research, on a **VOLUNTARY** basis, by telling me your stories and allowing me to be present during some of your scheduled activities such as key working sessions or Freedom Program. It is entirely your decision whether you engage in this research project. If you do consent, you will be invited to sign the attached consent form. **You must note that you may WITHDRAW your consent to participate at any time you please until 30/04/2017.**

The research will be conducted in the form of a face-to-face interview, taking on average an hour each, and through observation, during some of the works that you do with your key worker. The interviews and the activity being observed will be audio-recorded. It will be conducted at the shelter (in the participants' flat, in the lounge/quiet room, staff office). If you agree to participate, the researcher will read your risk assessment to understand better your situation before any interview or observation. The time will be arranged at the participants' convenience. All recorded material will be transcribed and **anonymised**.

**Your anonymity is assured throughout the research. Pseudonyms will be used to protect confidentiality and data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.**

### **Results of the study**

I intend to give feedback from the research through practitioner or academic conferences and meetings and potentially prepare training sessions and workshops to present some findings that could benefit support workers in this shelter and others as well as other agencies (police, social workers, counsellors).

### **For further information**

You can contact me at any time for any additional information or clarification in person in the shelter or my email is [REDACTED].

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

## Appendix 2. *Consent Form*

**Title of the proposed study: A Study of the Narrative-in-Interaction of the Residents of a Shelter for Women Fleeing from Domestic Violence (Provisional)**

### **Statements of understanding/consent**

- I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information leaflet for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is **voluntary** and that I am **free to withdraw** at any time until 30/04/2017, without giving any reason.
- I understand that no real names will be used and there will be no breach of confidentiality.
- Based on the above, I agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant..... Date.....  
Signature.....

Name of researcher..... Date.....  
Signature.....

(A copy of the signed and dated consent form and the participant information leaflet should be given to the participant and retained by the researcher to be kept securely on file)

### **Appendix 3.     *Recruitment Letter - Simplified***

Birmingham, \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_.

Hello,

My name is Rosie, and I am a postgraduate student at the University of Birmingham. I am conducting research in this shelter, aiming to understand better the reality of domestic violence, and I am inviting you to participate by sharing your story with me.

Participation in this research is voluntary, and it includes interviews and also observation. If you are willing to participate, I will read your risk assessment to understand better your situation before any interview or observation. If you agree to participate, I will interview you asking about your experiences of domestic violence, and I will also observe some of the key working sessions between you and your support worker. The duration of the interviews will be of more or less 1 hour, and they will take place at the shelter. The length of the observations will vary, depending on you and your support worker's arrangements. Interviews and observations will be audio recorded. If you participate, the interview will be scheduled at your convenience.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any details of the research, you can talk to me in person when I am at the shelter or via email at [REDACTED].

Best regards,

Rosie Reinboldt

ESRC funded Doctoral Researcher  
University of Birmingham

# Appendix 4. Pictures of the analytical process

## a) Annotated transcript

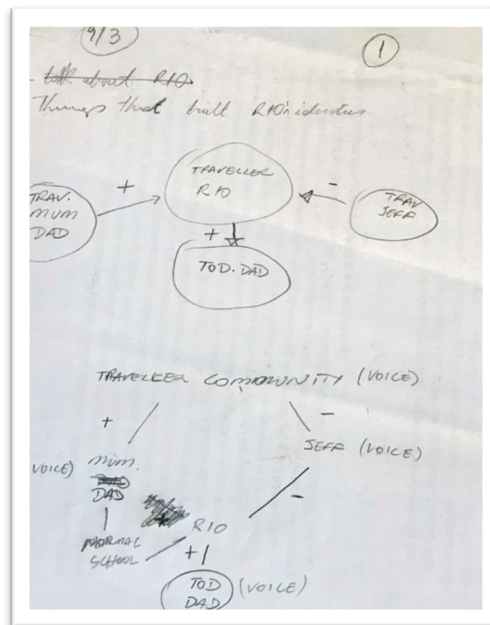
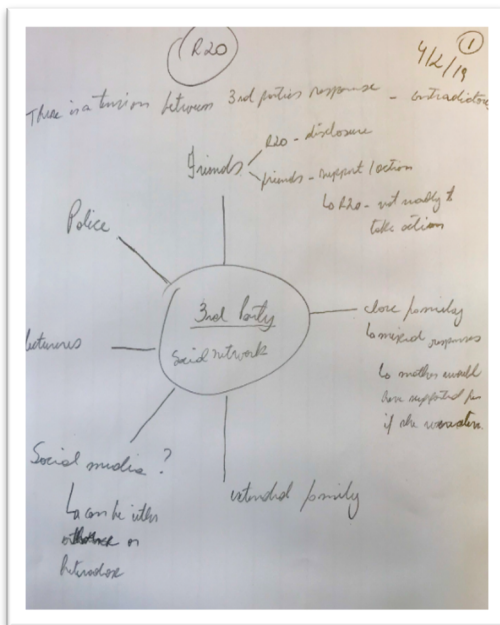
RS Interview

1 RS Yeah, ahm, well, I stayed with my partner for about 3 years  
 2 There was a couple of, ahm, a couple of little incidents  
 3 When you meet someone and you are getting on you don't really, you know, you don't say  
 4 anything, you just let it go over your head.  
 5 Ahm, we moved on quite quickly *to independent cleaners*  
 6 and it was him wanting to move in.  
 7 Re Ahm  
 8 Re Ahm  
 9 RS Ahm, so we did.  
 10 Ahm, and then I started working in a pub. *independent agency*  
 11 That's what I was kind of doing *agency*  
 12 Ahm, he started drinking more, he kept coming into de pub *agency*  
 13 Ahm  
 14 Re Sorry, he started working.  
 15 Re He started drinking.  
 16 Re Or you?  
 17 Re He, he was, not me  
 18 Re Ok.  
 19 Re Ok.  
 20 RS He used to come into my work at the time  
 21 Ahm, he'd have the kids, he had 3 children as well, and he'd leave the kids in at the  
 22 house, come to the pub where I was working, ahm, and I left the job *house but not out of my*  
 23 because he thought I was having an affair with an old man in the pub  
 24 And then ever since *things kind of were downhill then*  
 25 he was drinking more, he had the drink, *agency*  
 26 even though he hadn't had the drink  
 27 Ahm, I had him  
 28 And then I went back, ahm.  
 29  
 1 Ahm, I think a bit, a major incident happened, years ago  
 2 Ahm, I got pregnant and, after about two weeks, he turned around and said he didn't want the  
 3 baby and we had a massive argument and he abandoned me, *and probably cleaners*  
 4 ahm, in the kitchen, *agency*  
 5 I phoned the police.  
 6 Ahm.  
 7 Re It was with your first baby  
 8 RS Ahm, no, no  
 9 Ahm, my older 2 children are not with my partner. I got 2 teenagers  
 10 Re Ok, ok  
 11 Re So it was  
 12 RS It was the little one yeah.  
 13 Ahm, ah, I didn't, ahm (she laughs)  
 14 and I didn't have the baby, I had an abortion  
 15 And then, ahm, I was going to him, he got me to drop the charges cause he didn't want  
 16 to go to prison, he didn't wanna lose his house,  
 17 and not see his children.  
 18 So I left him, ahm,  
 19 and then eventually I moved back in, ahm,  
 20 and that was just, it was just *agency*  
 21 something kind of thing  
 22 Ahm, yeah, it was just horrible, he threatened to kick me out of the house and I had nowhere  
 23 else to go, he threw my stuff out, ahm, everything like that  
 24  
 25

RS011

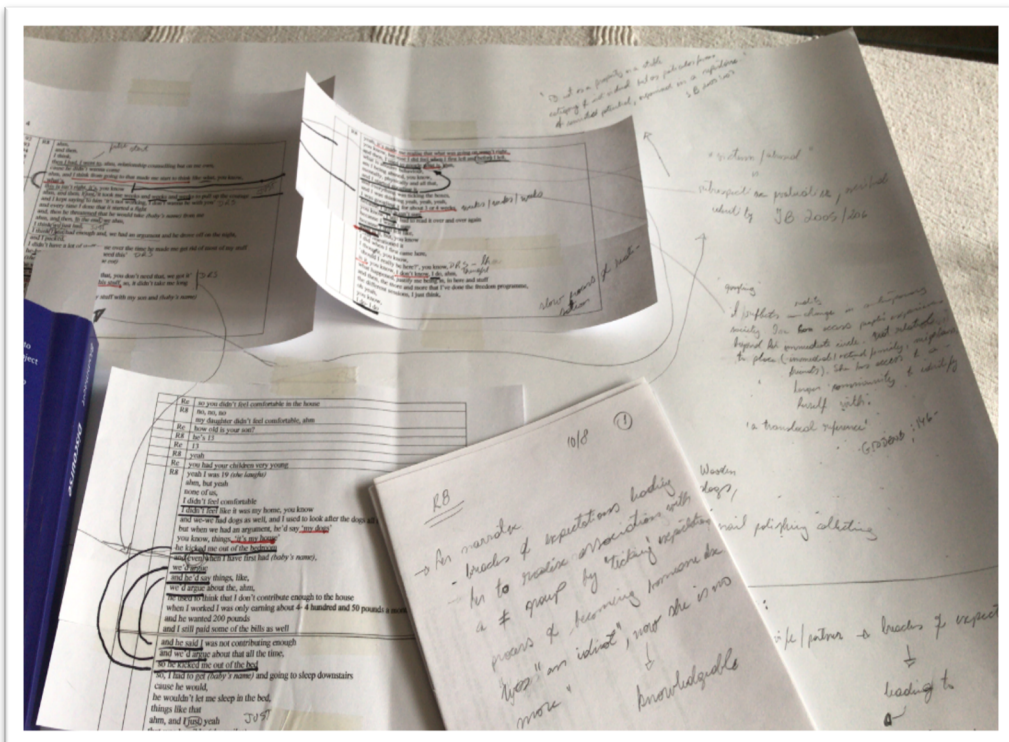
1 Re It's recording  
 2 Would you mind telling me first your age? How old are you?  
 3 Re I'm 43  
 4 Re 43  
 5 Re Yes  
 6 Re And  
 7 Are you British?  
 8 Re No, I'm not  
 9 I'm from an ethnicity  
 10 Re Ok  
 11 How long you've been living here?  
 12 Re Since 2003  
 13 Re Ok  
 14 That's good  
 15 Re Yes  
 16 Yeah, what I would like to ask you  
 17 If you would like to share with me, ahm, your experience  
 18 If you can start, ahm, from the beginning, when you actually got married and, ahm,  
 19 ok, ahm,  
 20 I met my ex-partner in one of the canteens, in 1995  
 21 that's when we first met  
 22 and, yeah, we moved into a house  
 23 ahm, then we got together in the same way, I bought my ticket to come here *agency?*  
 24 ahm, and I came here and he was supposed to come and join me later  
 25 so, when I came here it took me about 2 years to process his Visa for him to come and join me  
 26 so, you came first  
 27 Re Yes, 2003 and then he later came in 2005  
 28 Re Ok  
 29 in the way he loved me  
 30 ah, what happened like, we were still boyfriend and girlfriend when I came  
 31 ahm, in like, he wanted to be get married before I came  
 32 and I wanted, when I finally came I just thought it would be for a short period of time  
 33 so, when I came here we were boyfriend and girlfriend  
 34 then, because it took 2 years, then he said he do it in my absence, in a customary  
 35 marriage, in our culture  
 36 ahm, like, he goes with his family to my family and, it's like, they pay some money and they  
 37 do something  
 38 Re Like a dowry  
 39 Re yes, to show that I am now his wife  
 40 I agreed  
 41 and my family asked me  
 42 they knew him and they knew that we loved each other  
 43 Re It was a religious marriage  
 44 Re yes, ahm, so, it wasn't, it was a customary  
 45 Re ok, I understand  
 46 Re yes, so, it was done in 2004 although I wasn't there  
 47 Re ok  
 48 so you were living here and he was living there  
 49 Re he was living in one of the canteens, you  
 50 in 2005 he came to join me, he was now my husband because we married, ahm, a customary  
 51 marriage  
 52 so, when he came, before the first week I could see that something is not right

## b) Analytical notes





c) Mapping themes and events





## Appendix 5. Interview Transcript/R10

### R10's story

(Re = Researcher; R10 = Participant; R24 = R10's friend who enters the flat during the interview to talk to R10)

Re	it's recording
R10	uhum
Re	ahm, if you could please tell me you are here because of your partner
R10	yeah, ahm, not his dad, ( <i>referring to her son, w was present</i> ) the one that I am pregnant with, ahm I got pregnant and he wanted me to get rid of it ahm, no, I don't wanna, my baby ( <i>she laughs</i> )
Re	ok it was, ahm, this was the firs-, ahm, your first, ahm, abusive relation
R10	yeah, first and last ( <i>she laughs</i> )
Re	ok yes, hopefully
R10	yeah
Re	would you like to tell me how- how did you, when did you meet him
R10	<b>I met him</b>
Re	<b>and how it was</b>
R10	<b>I met him before I got with him, I- I met him about, about, a year bef-, a year before I got with him he was alright, not like, not that I've seen him often but when I did see him, because he is a traveller, when I did see him, he always seemed to be alright and then, when I got in a relationship with him that month, month, about, a month or two down the line he's just his actions changed and then when I told him I was pregnant, he didn't, he didn't want me to have the baby, he told me to go and get an abortion and then, just telling me not to wear makeup and, not to dress funny and 'don't do your hair like that' d'you know, just trying to control me</b>
Re	ok
R10	<b>but I realised that straight away</b>

	I just didn't wanna, go, cause, I was a little bit paranoid at first but, <i>(toddler dropped the toilet seat's lid in the bathroom making a loud noise)</i>
Re	<i>(laughs)</i>
R10	I'll get there <i>(laughs)</i> <i>(she goes to the bathroom and takes her son)</i> get out come on, come on
Re	obviously, you just go where you are not supposed to, ahm <i>(speaking to the toddler)</i>
R10	always try yeah, and then when I got that he wanted me to get an abortion so, at that time I was thinking, 'you know what', but of co- I did, I knew in my heart <i>(not clear)</i> I didn't want it but he made me book the appointment and I went to the appointment and, the woman couldn't like, ahm, there wasn't a doctor there to put me to sleep and then when I come out, that's when he was, he was a bit angry and he was like, 'oh, you're lying, you're lying'
Re	what, ahm, you mean that you went to the place
R10	yes, it's actu-
Re	and you gave up, you gave up then when you were there
R10	ahm
Re	or you had the abortion
R10	no, I didn't go through with it what, ahm, ahm <b>at the time I probably, would've because I was a bit, under stress and everything, I was a bit depressed</b> but, no, the woman wasn't there to put me to sleep, <b>and then I realised that</b>
Re	oh, ok
R10	<b>it was</b>
Re	I understood now
R10	<b>my mum probably, cause my mum passed away, she probably made the doctors didn't come in or something, I don't know I just sensed it as a god's gift, like, 'don't get rid of it' 'it's not your choi-, like, your,' 100% isn't my choice, it's more his choice than it was mine</b> and then when I said, that I wasn't keeping it instead, no, that I was keeping it he then, got a bit angry at the situation and then about, 2 weeks later, well, I had to book another appointment about 2 weeks later, I didn't go through, I just went to my sister and end up in prayer

Re	how long you were in the pregnancy
R10	ahm, I was about, ahm, when I went to the scan I was 12 weeks, so, I was about, yeah, 3 months gone
Re	ok
R10	but he didn't believe it was his and all of this because I was still talking to his dad ( <i>toddler's dad, pointing to the toddler</i> ) but not, it was just for the sake of ( <i>toddler's name</i> ) and then, he just thought, 'oh it isn't mine da-da-da' and, I don't know, <b>I don't know if it's funny because I am not married and I'm a travelling girl myself, I'm not married and, I'm not, I got an asian kid and it's not really part of our culture it did, he was embarrassed to bring me around among the travellers, and things like that,</b> but I did have his child so, I think it was more down for all of his purposes that he didn't want me to keep it but that was out the window ( <i>laughs</i> )
Re	<b>and then, when you were, in with his father (<i>toddler's father</i>)</b>
R10	<b>yeah</b>
Re	<b>he was a traveller as well</b>
R10	<b>no, he is asian his- his dad is an asian man and no, his dad is fine, his dad is great with him cannot ask for a better one</b>
Re	<b>he- he was not violent with you</b>
R10	<b>no, no, never never violent, never raised his hand, never raised his voice he never when (<i>toddler's name</i>) was born, all of the new-born appointments, he'd come with me, and he's got, he's even come to the birth of this one, (<i>pointing to the pregnancy bump</i>) to be my birth buddy for this one so, he is supportive, he is, not a bad man at all</b>
Re	<b>that's good</b>
R10	<b>yeah, I wish I've stayed with him (<i>laughs</i>)</b>
Re	<b>so, so you had a good experience</b>
R10	<b>yeah, yeah, that's why I knew</b>
Re	but it didn't work
R10	ahm, it wasn't the fact that it didn't work, it was just, ahm,

	<p>you know for our own,  our own, ahm,  purposes  like, we just go separate ways, so  it was like,  do you know when you know a relationship is not gonna last  and you keep thinking what is the point on wasting time,  when he can still see my son,  can still talk to me fine,</p>
Re	<i>(laughs)</i>
R10	<p>yeah, we are both fine,  we still talk now,  he just texted me this morning asking how <i>(toddler's name)</i> was, and  is,  cause I told that he bumped his head  it's just, 'ok, he is fine' and  do you know what I mean,  <b>he's a good supportive actual dad, he pays for him</b>  I don't have to go through cs  he buys him new trends,  every- every friday when he gets paid,  he takes <i>(toddler's name)</i> now on the saturday  because he hasn't got work  he takes <i>(toddler's name)</i> now on saturday,  <b>he is fine with <i>(toddler's name)</i></b>  <b>he is fine with this one as well <i>(pointing to her bump)</i></b></p>
Re	it's good, isn't is
R10	<p>yeah, it's good  even his mum, like,  his, his nan <i>(pointing to the toddler)</i>  is only gonna got me pin buttons,  because I'm having a girl now,  she's gonna got me pin buttons and everything like that  even though, now,  it's not his dad's baby  you know what I mean  that- that family is quite supportive towards me</p>
Re	that's good
R10	I'd like to get a house beside them but I'm not allowed back in <i>(city's name)</i> <i>(laughs)</i>
Re	<p>ok  and did you- did you, ahm,  could you tell me a little bit,  how was your experience, ahm,  how wa-</p>
R10	with <i>jeff</i>
Re	yes
R10	<p><b>it was hor-, he was horrible</b>  <b>at first it was,</b>  <b>'don't dress that way'</b>  ahm, but he</p>
Re	<p>even- even at the beginning of the  how- how did you  where did you  where did you</p>
R10	<p>the first week of the relationship was fine,  we'd go out all the time</p>
Re	where have you met him

R10	<p><b>I met him through my friend, cause he knew my friend so, my travelling friend he knew her and, when I was meeting up with her she was obviously, he'd come along like, all of us just go out, like, to bowling and stuff like that every sunday and that's how I got to see him a few times,</b></p> <p>then, I passed my number onto him, like he asked my number and I give it him most talking through texts and then I met him a few times and then, we just (<i>not clear</i>) to get in together, and then, first couple of weeks was fine and then he just tried to get his boots in the door too much, like, I'm not- I'm not one (<i>not clear</i>) sheep that one can tell what to do do you know what I mean, I like to take my time, I don't want him to come to the house, like, first is fine, we go out every weekend and he just started trying to</p>
Re	you were living on your own
R10	<p>yeah just me and (<i>toddler's name</i>) <b>and then, he tried, just put his, like he tried to put his rules down like, 'don't dress like that', 'don't wear like this' (<i>pointing to the curly ponytail that she was wearing</i>), 'don't wear them' wear, you know, just constantly</b></p>
Re	yeah
R10	<p><b>mental abuse after men-, now, I call it mental because I went a bit, a bit depressed after it</b> (<i>another resident comes in</i>)</p>
R24	are you doing your thing now
R10	yeah
R24	right, let me know when you are finished
R10	are we going shopping?
R24	yeah
R10	right, then go and get dressed it won't take me long anyway
R24	alright
R10	alright then
R24	see you in a bit
R10	<p><b>and yeah, and then, he tries telling me like, don't wear my hairpieces, ahm, 'you are not a black girl', and like, stuff like that, and I was like,</b></p>

	<p>it's not because I'm black or anything,  it's because I wanna wear it  for my own,  to make me feel better,  do you know,  I like looking good and,  and then it's just got to the point,  like, he told me to stop wearing my hairpieces,  so I just had my hair down and straight it,  then my makeup took over,  'don't put that much makeup on',  and I was like,  ok  he never said nothing wrong to (<i>toddler's name</i>) or,  anything in front of him, like  he wasn't,  I wouldn't let him do the father role</p>
Re	uhum
R10	<p>cause he has his own dad that is perfect for him  so, ahm,  yeah, it was just like,  don't wear that clothe, don't dress like that, don't wear that colour of shoes and,  everything he wanted to mould me,  to how he wanted me,  but he was older than me, he was 26,  so, I think that</p>
Re	how old are you?
R10	<p>I'm only 22,  just gone  <b>and I think he was trying</b>  <b>because most travelling girls, they get,</b>  <b>when they marry, they</b>  <b>he asks how they want them, kind of thing, like</b>  <b>it's hard to explain</b>  <b>they,</b>  <b>cause they are married</b>  <b>she has to abide by his rules</b>  <b>and he thought that he could do that to me</b>  <b>and no, things don't happen like that</b>  so  <b>I went a bit depressed for the first stage</b>  <b>I went down to 6 and a half stones,</b>  <b>lost all my weight,</b>  <b>lost,</b>  <b>looked ill all the time</b>  and then ever, all of my friends were telling me, ahm,  when I did get the chance to see them  because he wouldn't, ahm,  he'd start arguing, 'you are not going out with them',  'you are not seeing her' and,  do you know what I mean</p>
Re	he was working
R10	<p><b>he did do like, block pavement and stuff like that,</b>  <b>not,</b>  <b>just normal what traveller boys do,</b>  <b>just block paving and, star-making, and stuff like that</b>  he didn't drink, he didn't s-,</p>

	he smokes cigarettes but he didn't drink and didn't smoke any drugs that I knew of ahm, so, I don't know why he was so obsessive he was an ugly man I have to say it myself, so I don't know
Re	he was he wasn't
R10	he was ug-, like, was not very looking boy but, ahm
Re	what attracted you
R10	I never went
Re	to him
R10	I never cause the first time, it was, I think it was a show that he was putting on but the first time I met him he was fine, like ahm, he made me laugh and we giggled together and there was if it'd stayed to how it was at the first stages, then it would have been a fine relationship but just tried to get me under the locking key, too quick, too, do you know what I mean, and I wasn't, ahm, then he didn't want me to keep the baby, because I was excited telling him I was pregnant, I said 'oh we're having a baby', that's when, it all just turned down
Re	how long after, ahm, during the relationship that you got pregnant
R10	quite quick, to be fare probably about probably about 4, 5 weeks, when I found out I was pregnant, so
Re	ok it was very, very
R10	quick
Re	at the beginning
R10	yes so, I didn't sleep with him until I got in a relationship with him ahm, and when I got in a relationship, I slept with him, and that's how I ended up getting caught pregnant and then, ahm, he said he didn't want it (not clear)
Re	you didn't-, you didn't have a wedding party
R10	no,
Re	or anything
R10	no, no cause I didn't get married to him
Re	you just agreed to- to live together
R10	get together

	not live together, I didn't want, I don't like people, I like my own space
Re	oh, he was not living with you
R10	but that's what he said as well 'you having boys around the house', and I'm having his dad around and this and that, and I was, oh well I'm not but I take him to his nan's when he wants to go, he goes to the temple, do you know what I mean, like my, the temple that ( <i>toddler's name</i> ) used to go was only around the corner so, I dropped him to his nan at the temple on a, friday or a saturday, ( <i>not clear</i> )
Re	he is sikh
R10	yeah, yeah, he is sikh, ahm he was always at his nan's so, agreed weekends was at his nan's and stuff but that was my time to go out with the girls and stuff like that, but, like, he'd never let me, like, 'no, you are not going out with your friends' 'you are not speaking with them, you are not seeing them', ahm, 'not until I know that you got rid of the baby' and ahm, all kinds of, like, it was just mental and then, ahm
Re	he never, he never hit you he never ahm, was, ahm physically abus-
R10	ahm, once he grabbed me once he grabbed me from the back of my neck cause we were at mcdonalds and my friend ( <i>friend's name</i> ) from school, ahm, my black one, he walked in and he was like, 'oh you alright ( <i>her name</i> )' 'how are you doing', and, I gave him a hug, he is my friend from, do you know what I mean, you are allowed male friends and ahm, he didn't like the fact of it cause his sister was there, <b>when he turned on me, 'f*** off, you made a show of me'</b> <b>'hugging up your black man when you're standing beside me',</b> like ahm, like, trying like, his sister must have looked at a funny way at him, like, why is she saying hello to him for and then, that's when he's- he's walking when he like, <b>he grabbed me from the back of my neck,</b> <b>he was like, 'you are trying to make a show of me'</b> and my f-
Re	ahm, there, in public
R10	yeah, like, <b>because he's a traveller</b> <b>traveller girls aren't meant to associate with other males</b>



	<p><b>and, when he sees a black man, or an asian man, I don't know, they are kind of funny about the situation so, I was like, I am allowed friends, he was, 'yeah, ahm, don't, you can say hello to him when you are not with me' so, he expected me to walk around with my head down when I am with him</b> then even my old friends to say hello, it's just, I can't say hello to him I'm not allowed to say hello to none of them, and</p>
Re	<p>he doesn't-, he doesn't like the, ahm, his father as well (<i>pointing to the toddler</i>)</p>
R10	<p>oh, he didn't like his daddy, but it's because me and his dad got a good relationship of frien-, like, ahm, bringing (<i>toddler's name</i>) down and, stuff like that, like, he did, like, ahm, he didn't like the fact I'm still sleeping with him but before I got with jeff, when we were talking and that, I was still seeing his dad, do you know what I mean cause he is the old, I've been with his dad since I was 16, and jeff was my second relationship, I didn't have a relationship after that not due to anymore either, but yeah, his dad was the second relationship like, ahm, this one's dad (<i>pointing to her stomach</i>) was the second relationship I got into but I was seeing his dad (<i>pointing to the toddler</i>) bef-, but I told him, I was not lying to him, I told him the truth but, my telling the truth put him even more paranoid cause then he come to my house, like, a few times, like 4, 5 o'clock in the morning, 'who is here, where is he' 'where is who, my son is in the bedroom asleep, you just woke me up' do you know what I mean banging on the door just, coming at silly times think I had man in the house I'm not that kind of girl I don't wanna loads of men to be put up around my son, I don't wanna he seeing loads of faces, 'oh' do you know what I mean like, some girls are kind of ok with but I don't want to the only men that he needs in his life is his granddads, his uncles and his, dad, d'you know what I mean so, I was thinking, no, I won't have the next man in the house at what time in the morning when my son is in the same room as me</p>
Re	<p>do you have your family around you</p>
R10	<p>they live in (<i>city's name</i>), ahm, I used to go, that's what I mean, he stopped me from seeing my sisters he didn't even get to know my- my family we all went out one day, like all my sisters come down to (<i>city's name</i>) and stuff we all went out one day and then, ahm</p>

	all my sisters have black kids because we are in, ahm, travelling community family, like ahm, we all get look down on, for having black kids and not being married
Re	it's not well, it's not welcome to, to the
R10	no, no, to have, ahm, black kids and mix
Re	to mix the race
R10	to mix the race, ahm, to have black kids and not married oh, it's a sin
Re	it's not welcome
R10	it's a sin everybody talked about us, d'you know what I mean like, when, my first sister ( <i>sister's name</i> ) had her first, little boy, he was black, d'you know what I mean my sister ( <i>sister's name</i> ), had her first little girl, she- she was with a dreadlock man, d'you know what I mean, like, ahm, is not like, we don't see as sin, do you know what I mean <b>my mum had an arranged marriage, she was 16 she told us to live our lives, not to pass</b>
Re	arranged marriage a- arou-, ahm, around the
R10	she got an arranged marriage when she was 16
Re	around the traveller
R10	to a traveller man, yeah, she- she, ahm
Re	there is
R10	<b>I was travelling and stuff until I was 7 years old, and then, we moved into a council estate house cause my mum was not very well, and that's when we went to a normal school and seen, normal people, as not- not saying that travellers are not normal but,</b>
Re	different people
R10	different people like, ahm
Re	that live differently
R10	<b>we didn't see colour of skin and, you got to be married when you are 16 to 18, or you will not what, d'you know what I mean we didn't see none of that, my mum, like, my mum never brought us up like that because she's had that life and she knows that it isn't a good life, do you know what I mean</b>
Re	what about your father
R10	my- my dad ahm, my mum's still, well, was still with my dad, cause my mum passed away but ahm, my dad's been in prison most of his life, so we hardly see him he's, still in prison, d'you know what I mean so, I hardly see him but, ahm

	he is fine, like, he ( <i>not clear</i> ) to all of his grandkids, he don't mind
Re	he was a traveller as well
R10	yeah, he is a traveller as well, but, ahm, being with my mum, cause my mum, that's my mum second marriage, my daddy is, cause the first one was just, she was, it was terr- it was horrendous for her, she- she- she got, she got locked in the caravan, constantly, because the man was jealous of her, always saying, 'oh, you're going out, doing this doing that' but,
Re	( <i>not clear</i> )
R10	he kept her in the trailer, constantly, <b>like, things that my mum used to tell me, that,</b> <b>like, sat down and told us, 'don't let a man disrespect you'</b> <b>'you have your own lives', 'women are strong',</b> <b>like, she- she told us all</b> my mum's brought all 5 children of her children, like, mostly on her own, like, my oldest sister ain't got the same dad as the other of us have ahm, my mum's brought all of us up singly handed because my dad's been always in prison, but, she was always stayed, like, I never seen another man in my mum's life because she's always been with my dad, even though my dad's never there but she always lived ahm, her life how she liked to live because my dad wasn't the kind of man to, like, hit her, or te-, ahm, tell her she couldn't go out, or what to she couldn't wear and, you know what I mean
Re	he was- he was not in prison because of, ahm, abuse, ahm
R10	no, no, he was in prison over, ahm, silly things, like, ahm ( <i>not clear</i> ) he still a wild man,
Re	other things
R10	do you know what I mean if he goes out, probably tomorrow, he still goes back in the weekend he is used to prison life, like, ahm ahm, he's- he's just used to it, like he used to be in and out, like this time when he got out, not coming home to my mum, cause my mum passed away I think, ahm, he stayed out as long as he stayed out because he's constantly around the kids, and, ahm you know what I mean, he just, I don't know I don't think he likes to, ahm, he'll never get another woman, he already said that but, he likes it, comfort, like, even when he's out, cause he's always upstairs in the room reading a book, cause of his jus- used to that lifestyle <b>but my mum's always told us like,</b> <b>'don't ever see a man for his colour, or whatever'</b> cause my sister's, boyfriend, is black I've got an asian kid, ahm, I was with an asian boy

	ahm, my sisters, my other 2 sisters with black boys, and my brothers, are with normal wo-, normal white woman do you know what I mean, like ahm, but not
Re	they are no, ahm, they are not marrying and having a relationship
R10	<i>(not clear)</i>
Re	into the traveller community
R10	no, because where my sister walks, <b>my sister, like all our family lives in sites and stuff like that</b> so, when we do go down and visit them, like ahm, it's always, <b>like, when I first went out to the site with him</b> <b>it is like, 'oh he's a bit dark, isn't he'</b> <b>I thought 'but he is half-asian', I don't hide it</b> <b>d'you know,</b> <b>he's half-asian and I am not ashamed to say that,</b> <b>my son is beautiful,</b> <b>do you know what I mean</b> <b>like, 'he's half-asian, and why, what's your problem'</b> <b>and they'd always, 'oh no, it's not a problem'</b> <b>but you know</b> <b>when you got there it's a big conversation,</b> <b>'oh yeah, she's got',</b> <b>'a mum with an asian kid, she's got one',</b> <b>do you know what I mean</b> it's just, this is horrible people, to be fair so, I wouldn't want my son to be, grown, part of the travelling community, anyway I'd rather he being in a sikh, cause he got, I'm getting him into, ahm, punjabi classes and that, when he's old enough so, he knows part of his cultures but I'm not giving him too much into my because, what's mine, a lot of racism towards him because it's absolutely baseless, <b>we got caught up in an argument with, any of them,</b> <b>traveller family,</b> <b>because they like the chit-chat too much</b> <b>they'd always be, 'oh, the black man's wife'</b> <b>do you know what I mean</b> they are horrible so, when I got with jeff I should've realised this anyway but I never and then, I've realised that a bit too late, when I was pregnant and, he was just horrible I never again want a relationship with a traveller man do you know what I mean because one, he'd never accept this as a fact that, I'd always be, ahm, to them I'd be red- red- rotten,

	I'd be like, ahm, 'how many boys has she slept before you' and, do you know what I mean I would always get judged, on how, my past is been because I've been with an asian man do you unde-
Re	yeah so it-
R10	so, yeah, I should knew that before I got with him anyway
Re	so, do you- do you, when you see- when you look at yourself, do you think that can you see some of the, ahm, traveller culture on you obviously, you reject some of them, but can you see some of the traveller culture on you
R10	ahm
Re	what's wrong baby, what do you want, ahm ( <i>talking to the toddler</i> )
R10	I don't mind my aunti-, like
Re	( <i>talking to the toddler. not clear</i> )
R10	I don't mind my aunties and that, because they don't mind either like that, we got half black kids because, I'm not being funny but, ahm, my mums and my aunties, like, they all got arranged marriages because of my granddad and, he wrecked every one of their lives do you know what I mean, like, ahm, my nanny never much had, much to say I'd say, she doesn't wanna to get married and this and that, because my granddad did all for my mum and that <b>so my mum said 'I dint want you to live the life that I had to live for a few years'</b> because she was 16, while a good few years, because she was 16, and she got out of that relationship when she was 22 that was a lot of mental abuse to my mum <b>she even tells me, like, 'I don't want yous lot to go through it, because it's horrible'</b> like, she said that she used to get, he'd go to the pub, come back, and beat her for nothing, would be sitting in a chair the whole day, with the curtains shut because, he'd be doing what he was doing and coming back and blaming my mum do you know what I mean but this isn't my dad, this is my oldest sister's dad but even my sister ( <i>sister's name</i> ), like, ahm, she's got, mental issues often now herself, you know what she's in, she's ended up with ahm, biopolar when ahm, mixed like, she's got 3, 4 personalities she is not right in the head, she has to take loads of medication and my mum says, my mum ca-

	<p><i>(she laughs about what her son is doing)</i> he does all the time  he never get his fingers stuck, thank god  leave it  yeah,  ahm, he never, she never gest, ahm,  she never wanted us to live the life that she had  my sister <i>(sister's name)</i>,  she is not right in the head all of it,  watching it all, like, ahm, life, and,  like her dad's passed away as well now  and like, she didn't go to his funeral,  not because she didn't deserve it  he- he didn't take her well, he didn't,  do you know what I mean  while my dad, she calls him dad,  <b>my dad has got, like all my sisters and brothers now,  even including <i>(sister's name)</i>, the oldest one isn't his,  for a traveller man,  that's  do you know what I mean  taking someone who has already been married,  and got a kid  and she remarried my dad, like,  everyone kind, put their nose down a bit but,  my mum and my dad they didn't care,  that's why they didn't want us to live the lives that, my mum and dad had to live  so, we kind of got it lucky  that we could look,  any man that we wanted to, and did not had to marry at 16  so young, you're still a young girl</b></p>
Re	yeah
R10	at 16 years-old, you don't want to get married
Re	it's still- it's still a tradition, to marry very young
R10	very young, yeah
Re	in the community
R10	16
Re	16 is the age
R10	<p><b>16 all, to about, 16 to 21,  if you go over 21, 'why are you not married yet, there's something wrong with you',  do you know what I mean  that's how it is, and half of traveller girls are hidden,  like, half of them, like, all go out, and, not being married,  and, go doing what they are doing  and then come back and marry at 16, do you know, or 17, 18  and, my mum just didn't want us to live this life  so, she never looked down on ours that she had, half,  like, mixed-race grandkids,  she never, she never put any of us down  but jeff, jeff was just,  he never said anything bad about <i>(toddler's name)</i>  but he called me names, like, ahm,  'uhm, have you got married' cause, his dad is not  <b>his dad is not a bad looking boy</b>  ahm, he was like, 'oh, you went with him and da-da-da'  I was like, 'I was 16',  I was got with, his dad when I was 15,</b></p>

	I didn't sleep with him until I was 16 and, we const-, like, we have always been together, <b>he is good with (toddler's name), and his dad is good with me, talking, to me, and that as well this is my son's dad, with him (showing me a picture)</b>
Re	very nice
R10	yeah, he looks
Re	they look well together
R10	he loves (toddler's name), he loves (toddler's name)
Re	it's good it's very good
R10	I couldn't actually ask for a better, ahm
Re	it's a peace of mind for you, isn't it
R10	yeah, he actually is, that's exactly what he is but, jeff, when I left him, he hasn't got in contact with me, he hasn't, bothered at all with me he, ahm
Re	is it good or bad
R10	good
Re	yeah
R10	yeah, is good because I don't want, to be fair I don't want him to have nothing to do with the baby anyway because, I know that he's gonna always have something, and not that he wanted it anyway, do you know what I mean so why should we have any, any contact at all maybe in a few years, when she is old enough, I can tell her, 'this is what happened, your dad wanted me to get rid of you', when she is old enough to understand probably ba- 15, 16 years from now but, when she is old enough then i'll tell her but, ahm, for the time being, his dad is doing good do you know what I mean
Re	did- did- did you choose a name, already
R10	I haven't chosen the name yet his- his mum, his nan (toddler's nan), ahm she is picking names and stuff like that she wants to call her (not clear), you want a bottle (to the toddler) she wants to call her (not clear) or something, and like, with (toddler's name) name, she wanted me to call him with an asian name, I said no but obviously I put, ahm, (asian word) in his name so, she still got that bit (laughs) and he still got his dad's last name but I would never put, like, she asked me to, really asian names and I thought, 'I can't do that', and his dad, even his dad was, 'I'm not calling him that' (laughs)

	<i>(we talk to the toddler)</i> sorry, <i>(not clear)</i> , ahm,
Re	you- you s-, you told me that you- you, still, you went to the clinic
R10	yeah
Re	to do, the abortion but it really was not
R10	I didn't my heart, my soul, my head, everything in my whole body was telling me no, no, no so, when I
Re	when you look at that, do you think it was because of your feelings, you attached to the baby
R10	because
Re	of your feelings, you were attached to the baby, or it was more
R10	it's mine, I don't mind
Re	strong it was
R10	like, if he didn't want to be there because it was my child, do you know what I mean, like, he is mine, or she was mi- well, I didn't know if it was he or she but it's mine, <b>like why should I have to go and get rid of</b> <b>'because of your feelings',</b> <b>'are you gonna be looking after it',</b> <b>'no, you will not',</b> <b>'are you gonna be doing nights for it',</b> <b>'no, you're not',</b> <b>because travelling man don't do that anyway,</b> <b>'so what'</b> <b>'you just don't wanna a child with me because of the fact of what'</b> <b>do you understand,</b> <b>I didn't understand why he didn't want me to keep,</b> <b>because, it's not like he'd, he wouldn't, 've been there for her-,</b> <b>been there for her anyway, so</b> are you doing a pooh, <i>(to the toddler)</i> <b>so, I didn't wanna him to,</b> <b>I didn't have the fact,</b> <b>why I shouldn't have kept it,</b> <b>and all of this and that</b> <b>'what, for your feelings',</b> <b>'what about my feelings'</b> <b>cause I would be mentally bloody traumatise for how many years later,</b> <b>to get rid of my own child,</b> <b>I've never thought about getting an abortion,</b> <b>I never will,</b> <b>do you know what I mean</b> after this I'm going on like, protection, 100% not that I will be getting another man anyway, <i>(laughs)</i> but, ahm
Re	you are still young
R10	yeah
Re	certainly you will
R10	yeah but I wanted them to, I want,



	always wanted them to have brothers and sisters at close age anyway, so that they can grow up together, do you know what I, not- not big ages gap, like seven, nine years age, I wanted them to be
Re	so, you- you were not taking protection because you, you, you didn't mind to
R10	I didn't, I didn't want kids at the time but
Re	just happened
R10	if that even happens it happens <i>(her friend came into the flat)</i> are you ready <i>(to her friend)</i>
R24	sorry, we are going shopping
R10	we are going shopping
Re	it's ok thank you very much for sharing
R10	it's all right

## Appendix 6. Interview Transcript/R8

### R8's story

(Re = Researcher; R8 = Participant)

Re	yes, if you just could tell me first, before, ahm, your age
R8	34
Re	34. and how many kids do you have
R8	I've got 3 children all together
Re	3 children
R8	yeah, yeah
Re	that's lovely and do you, are you fro- are you british
R8	yeah, yeah
Re	are you english
R8	yeah, yeah
Re	ok it's just because I want to do also ahm, just the statistics
R8	the statistics, yeah, yeah
Re	ok so, I would like to talk to you about your experience
R8	yeah
Re	of domestic violence
R8	ahm
Re	a little bit about the past and about how it is now
R8	well
Re	and about how it is now
R8	<b>I stayed with my partner for about 3 years there was a couple of, ahm, a couple of little issues but when you meet someone and you are getting on you don't really, you know, you don't say anything, you just let it go over your head ahm, we moved in quite quickly, and that was him wanting to move in ahm, so we did</b>
Re	uhum
R8	<b>ahm, and then I started working in a pub that's when things kind went, downhill from there ahm, he started drinking more, he kept coming into the pub ahm</b>
Re	sorry, he started, to work
R8	he was drinking more
Re	or you
R8	he, he was, not me
Re	ok
R8	<b>he used to come into my work all the time ahm, he'd leave the kids, he had 3 children as well, and he'd leave the kids in the house,</b>

	<p>come to the pub where I was working, ahm, and I left the job because he thought I was having an affair with an old man in the pub <i>(she smiles)</i> and then, ever since then things kind of went downhill, ahm, he was always calling me names when he had a drink, even when he hadn't had a drink ahm, I left him and then I went back, ahm, and then ahm, I think a kin-, a major incident happened 2 years ago ahm, I got pregnant and, after about two weeks he turned around and said he didn't want the baby and we had a massive argument and he assaulted me, ahm, in the kitchen I phoned the police ahm,</p>
Re	it was with your first baby
R8	<p>ahm, no, no ahm, my older 2 children are not with my partner I got 2 teenagers</p>
Re	<p>ok, ok so it was</p>
R8	<p>it was the little one yeah, ahm, so, I didn't, ahm <i>(the baby wakes up and she laughs at some noises the baby is making)</i> I did end up not having the baby, I had an abortion and then, ahm, I was still talking to him, he got me to drop the charges cause he didn't want to go to prison, he didn't wanna lose his house, and not see his children so I felt bad, ahm, and then eventually I moved back in, ahm, and then it was just, it was just weekly arguments, he just started on me every week, to something kind of thing ahm, yeah, it was just horrible, he threatened to kick me out all the time, and I had nowhere else to go, he threw my stuff out, ahm, everything like that and then, ahm, my daughter moved out because of it, me older daughter, she moved to her dad's</p>
Re	how old is she
R8	<p>she is 15 in a couple of weeks ahm, she ended up, I mean, in between that time, I left him probably about 4 times all together, and gone back <i>(baby starts babbling, she laughs)</i> ahm, and my daughter- my daughter left ahm, we had a big argument he kept, he used to take my phone off me all the time ahm, go through my phone all the time, plug it into the computer and then he ended up breaking my phone I had to get another one or he had to get me another phone</p>

	<p>ahm, and then him and my daughter had a big argument cause he took the phone off me and she ended up leaving that night and went to her dad's  ahm,  and I stayed, ahm  and then I left a bit after  and then I went back,  ahm,  and then,  I think,  then I had, I went to, ahm, relationship counselling but on me own,  cause he didn't wanna come  ahm, and I think from going to that made me start to think like what, you know,  what's,  this is, isn't right, it's, you know  ahm, and then, I just, it took me weeks and weeks and weeks to pull up the courage  and I kept saying to him 'it's not working, I don't wanna be with you'  and every time I done that it started a fight  and, then he threatened that he would take <i>(baby's name)</i> from me  ahm, and then, in the end, we ahm,  I think we just had,  I think I just had enough and, we had an argument and he drove off on the night,  and I packed,  I didn't have a lot of stuff cause over the time he made me get rid of most of my stuff  he-he used to say 'you don't need this'  <i>(she picks up the baby from the cot)</i>  he would say, ahm,  he would say 'you don't need that, you don't need that, we got it'  cause it was his house and all his stuff, so, it didn't take me long  and then,  and then I managed to pack my stuff with my son and <i>(baby's name)</i>  and I took it to the neighbours  ahm, and that's when I left  so,  that's basically the general,  you know, what happened</p>
Re	and you told me that you-you-you left a few times
R8	yes
Re	and ended up going back
R8	<p>coming back,  cause I was in contact with him  and he would be messaging me all the time  ahm, you know, making me feel bad  then he'd get angry, then he wouldn't, you know  ahm, and then when I left one of the times, he did bring me the car to use, ahm, you  know,  when I look back it's because he wanted to keep me thinking I needed him, I think  ahm, ah, yeah, just because I kept in contact with him  and he is really manipulative,  and he is really good with words  and, I used to feel bad all the time  and think I should go back because, you know, he's, you know,  I don't know, because ahm,  or he used to make me think that he was, you know,  I didn't need anybody else, and I ended up in a bedsit, ahm, things like that  I fell out with my mum because of him  I didn't speak to my mum for 2 years, and, ahm,  my brothers, my one brother, we were really, really close  we used to live together,  and I hardly, probably saw him once in a year  and I used to see him every day</p>

	<p>and he used to say ‘oh you never no mind do you’,  he did not know my mum,  <b>I think it is because my mum she knew from the start that he wasn’t good  but obviously she couldn’t say nothing, cause I wouldn’t listen</b>  ahm, yeah,  <b>I-I didn’t see my friends anymore</b>  ahm, I didn’t have my friends in the house  because I just, just in case, like, you know,  <b>I’d be worried,</b>  <b>I don’t know why</b>  because, like, there’s nothing to hide or anything, but it was just,  <b>it was strange</b>  <b>I just felt like I couldn’t have my friends around,</b>  <b>that was very weird</b>  <b>and, he went on holiday once for 3 days and I had my friends around and it was really  good (she laughs)</b>  <b>it was like, we had dinner and all the kids came over, it was really good</b></p>
Re	so you didn’t feel comfortable in the house
R8	no, no, no my daughter didn’t feel comfortable, ahm
Re	how old is your son?
R8	he’s 13
Re	13
R8	yeah
Re	you had your children very young
R8	<p>yeah I was 19 (she laughs)  ahm, but yeah  none of us,  I didn’t feel comfortable  <b>‘I didn’t feel like it was my home, you know,  and we-we had dogs as well, and I used to look after the dogs all the time,  but when we had an argument, he’d say ‘my dogs’, you know, things,  ‘it’s my house’</b>  he kicked me out of the bedroom  and even when I have first had (baby’s name),  we’d argue  and he’d say things, like,  we’d argue about the, ahm,  he used to think that I don’t contribute enough to the house  when I worked I was only earning about 4- 4 hundred and 50 pounds a month,  and he wanted 200 pounds  and I still paid some of the bills as well  and he said I was not contributing enough  and we’d argue about that all the time,  so he kicked me out of the bed  so, I had to get (baby’s name) and going to sleep downstairs  cause he would,  he wouldn’t let me sleep in the bed,  things like that  ahm, and I just, yeah  that was horrible (she smiles)  <b>he always called me names as well,  and even in front of the kids,  he doing in front of the children,  all the time</b>  <b>like, if we dad- if we had an argument I’d send the kids upstairs,  and I’d try to keep him calm,  and I’d walk off, when I walk off he’d shout something, so,  and all the kids could hear,  like horrible stuff, like really horrible stuff</b></p>

	<p><b>and, yeah, he do-, just to try to make the kids think that I am what he says I am</b>  <i>(baby is playing and we laugh)</i>  you know, ahm,  yeah, so</p>
Re	do you have your daughter and son living with you now?
R8	<p>my son lives with me still,  he hasn't gone to his dad's,  but my daughter, she's,  I still see her, ahm, but she lives with her dad now  but my son is still here, yeah, so, he'll never leave  <i>(she laughs)</i>  still mummy's boy  <i>(we laugh)</i>  ahm, but he's, ahm  he's witnessed my ex-partner strangling me before,  he was coming downstairs and jumped on him  tried to protect me and stuff  and, you know, but he's-he's ok, he's alright, so</p>
Re	<p>and how-how do you feel now  ahm, when you look back, ahm what's  your thoughts, ahm, now</p>
R8	<p><b>part of me feels like 'what an idiot, you are such an idiot'</b>  <b>like I didn't leave,</b>  <b>like when I left the first time</b>  <b>if I would've left the first time,</b>  <b>like, the last two years, I could've moved on with my life, you know, instead of</b>  <b>but then I wouldn't have <i>(baby's name)</i> and, so, then, you know</b>  <b>but, ahm,</b>  <b>since leaving I look back,</b>  <b>I feel like, I just feel like a weight's been lifted up from my shoulders</b>  <b>I feel like be myself again, and, you know,</b>  <b>I can have friends, I can, ahm, back into my mum, you know, ahm</b>  <b>and my brother, seem we are all close together,</b>  <b>I kno-know, I don't know,</b>  <b>I just feel a bit stupid that I didn't see what was happening or anything, but, ahm</b></p>
Re	but was it visible?
R8	<p>ahm,  not-not from the eyesight, no, yeah</p>
Re	because when you are in the situation
R8	<p>yeah  <b>I mean the only visible was obviously when, you know,</b>  <b>he's been physically and anybody seen it,</b>  <b>but, I mean apart from split my head open,</b>  <b>and I left him at that time</b></p>
Re	wha-what happened?
R8	<p><b>that's when we're arguing and I was pregnant 2 years ago</b>  <b>and he said he didn't want the baby</b>  <b>two weeks after we'd found out, ahm,</b>  <b>and I was quite happy</b>  <b>ahm, and we-we just argued about,</b>  <b>I said 'how can you say this now, you wanted a baby and now I am pregnant, now you</b>  <b>don't want the baby'</b>  <b>ahm, and that's how we-we had an argument in the kitchen,</b>  <b>and then he just got really angry 'why would I want a baby with you'</b>  <b>and then he just started throwing things at me,</b>  <b>he was kicking me around the kitchen, you know,</b>  <b>just chasing me around the kitchen, and dragging me around,</b>  <b>kicking me all over,</b>  <b>ahm, he locked me in</b>  <b>and then I run into the toilet</b></p>

	<p><b>and then I phone the police while I was in the toilet, and I think he was in the kitchen, so I managed to run out to the front door and walk down the road</b> ahm, but still went back (<i>she smiles</i>)</p>
Re	it's difficult the situation
R8	<p>yeah, yeah it is when someone makes you feel like, it's like, it's like I felt I owed him something, when I didn't really, you know and when I look back, I mean- I mean, before that happen he strangled me, that my son's seen him strangling me before that happened, and I should had left then really but you don't-you don't-don't think, you know <b>ahm, but I just felt, I just feel like myself, myself again but, dif- a bit different, you know, like, ahm, I don't- I don't- I don't wanna go back to be my- I don't wanna be me old self, cause obviously me old self let somebody like that in, you know, I think the worse, I think the thing that hurts the most is my daughter leaving that hurt me the most and I still, it'll always, you know, it'll always hurt me, even though we- we get on fine and I see her, you know, she should be with me, you know, that's what hurts the most, ahm</b> and everything else, ah, you know, the kids seeing stuff, hearing stuff, you know, but that can- that can work through that, ahm yeah</p>
Re	it's good that you, you see yourself different
R8	yeah, yeah
Re	it is good
R8	<p>I feel like, you know, like, ahm what's gonna, I'm not gonna sit here and think about everything he has done and get upset about it, because it's happened now, you know, I need to leave it behind and, and, you know, move forward and things like that, and, you know, ahm, I've done the freedom programme here, it's amazing, it's the best thing I've ever done, it really is, amazing I think that's what made me, change a bit as well, learning that and, you know, I read- I read the book, literally every night I read the book, and (<i>baby sneezes</i>) bless you! ahm, and, I'm just thinking, like, you know, I'm so glad that I had the opportunity to come here and, and to go on the freedom programme cause it's opened up me eyes and,</p>

	I've read things that happened I didn't realise at the time that it's wrong, you know, ahm, so ahm, yeah, I don't- I don't know I just feel different, I just, but I feel better, different, you know a better person
Re	good different
R8	good different, yeah, definitely, yeah
Re	and then for-, how-how do you see your future?
R8	pardon?
Re	your future
R8	ahm just, what I wanted to do, you know, when I first met him, how I wanted it to go, you know, I want to go back to college, I wanna do support work, I wanted to do it for a couple of years now, ahm, and instead of me worrying about, you know, going back home and he's gonna be there, cause I used to look after I think she's done a pooh by the way ( <i>she talks about her baby</i> ) ( <i>she laughs</i> )
Re	did you? ( <i>talking to the baby</i> )
R8	and worrying about, you know, having to do things for him and his children, I mean, I used to pick up his children 2 to 3 times a week, ahm, you know, and sometimes I did, you know, I did, I wanted, you know, I'd not be able to go to college and things like that, and he used to say to me, ahm, you know 'you don't need to go to college, you don't need to work, you don't have to go back to work', ahm but I think to myself that I want to, cause if I didn't I'd have no independence
Re	so, lately you were not working
R8	ahm, I was on maternity leave
Re	ok
R8	ahm, I was due to go back beginning of october, and, so, but I don't think I would've, I wouldn't've be able to go back, I wanna go back to college, but I think he would've, looking back how it was I don't think I would've ended up going back to college I don't, if I would have stayed, I just would've done nothing and had no independence or anything, you know, ahm
Re	sometimes it is necessary a little bit of encouragement to do things
R8	yeah, yeah, well, I didn't get no encouragement, and, you know, but now, now, you know, I'm gonna, hopefully, you know, I found somewhere to live, and then I'm gonna go, definitely gonna go back to college
Re	you found already
R8	well, what, a house? ahm I am number 1 in a house
Re	oh, that's good
R8	yeah, and the bidding closes tonight, so, hopefully, I'll still be number 1 at midnight, so, fingers crossed, ahm
Re	did you-did you see the property already?
R8	no, I just seen it online



	I did drive passed it though, ahm, but I think I should receive a letter on thursday
Re	that's great
R8	letting me know all the details yeah, so, I'm really chuffed about that so, I'm just wanna get in, and, I want my son to has his own bedroom, to have his own little space, and to feel that he's safe, you know, safe on his own home, you know, not in somebody else's where he is not comfortable, and then, ahm, I'm definitely gonna, say about going back to college, probably january time or maybe april they might do some intakes, but definitely I'm going back I don't mind that I'm 34 and it's, might take me 3 to 4 years, but no
Re	that's ok
R8	that's nothing
Re	yeah
R8	yeah, ahm, so, that's my plan anyway ( <i>she laughs</i> )
Re	that's a good plan
R8	yeah
Re	yeah, that's a good plan so, you want to be a support worker
R8	yeah, cause I was a nursery nurse before
Re	ok
R8	and, I don't wanna work, like, directly with children anymore like feeding and changing nappies and things like that I do- ahm, I wanna work more with the families and, you know, supporting young mothers, and, or families that, you know, need an extra help with children and babies in all aspects, so, you know, ahm, I remember, ahm, when the midwives come around, and then you have someone from the children centre to tell you all the classes in your area, baby massage, and
Re	uhum
R8	and she told, and, when I took ( <i>baby's name</i> ) to a baby centred class, and ahm, it was like a centre that, I've, I wanna work in one of them as well where all the families come and, you know, do different things, you know, and you can get support there, so, that's my plan anyway ( <i>she laughs</i> )
Re	it's good, good plan. I like it.
R8	yeah, so, I just wanna do
Re	and do you know, do you think if your daughter will come to live with you again?
R8	I don't know, because she's moved school, ahm because she's moved to ( <i>city's name</i> ) now ahm, and she's moved school, ahm, I think she'll definitely come to stay with me at weekends, definitely ( <i>not clear</i> )
Re	that's a good start, isn't it

R8	yeah, because, ahm, she has her friends, ahm so, I'm moving near to where I was- come from but not too close, ahm, so I know that she'll learn, I know that she'll come to stay over because she has all her friends there and she misses ( <i>baby's name</i> ) as well, ahm, but I think with the school, with the school, I don't think I wanna move her out of school, because she is in year 10
Re	yeah
R8	so, to move her again, you know, I think it's like, you know, even though she is really clever, she is in all top sats, ahm, I just don't think it's, ahm, it will help her
Re	yeah
R8	moving back, so, she is happy enough living with her dad I get on fine with the dad as well, so, I think, you know, I don't mind if she just stays at weekends and, ahm, we don't know maybe when she lives school she might come back because the college is closer to where I am, so maybe, I don't know
Re	that's great
R8	yeah, ahm, but, yeah, ahm
Re	and you? ( <i>talking to the baby</i> ) you're gonna have your own room?
R8	yes
Re	will you? will you? it's a monkey, it's a monkey, isn't it? ...
R8	( <i>laughs</i> )
Re	thank you very much for sharing with me.
R8	ok, that's fine
Re	is there anything else that you would like to say?
R8	ahm, I don't know, ( <i>she laughs</i> ), ahm, I don't know, ahm, what else I wanna do as well, ahm, <b>when I've done the freedom programme they were telling me that, you can go on courses to learn how to teach it</b>
Re	yes
R8	<b>and, I'd love to do that, I'd love to because, I think if more women knew about it, and like, you know, if more women read the book as well and knew, you know, and got the little details about things that go on, I just think, you know, if I had that book, if I had that book when I was with him, I'd be like, this is, like, you know, this is like, I'd be gobsmacked, I'd be thinking, you know, I'd have done something sooner or, you know, I don't know, I just think, I just think it's brilliant, it's just really helped me anyway, you know,</b>
Re	it's empowering

R8	<p> yeah, it's made me realise that what was going on wasn't right,  you know, because I did feel when I first left and before I left,  and then, I used to google what is, ahm,  what is abusive behaviour,  am I being abused, you know,  mentally, physically and all that,  and I started googling it,  and everything was ticking the boxes,  and I was thinking yeah, yeah, yeah,  I was googling it for about 3 or 4 weeks  because I still wasn't sure  you know, I still had to read it over and over again  because I wasn't sure  because I still felt like,  what is it, but, you know  I still questioned it  I did when I first came here,  I thought, you know,  'should I really be here?', you know,  'is it', you know, I don't know, 'I do', ahm,  what happened, justify me being in, in here and stuff  and then, the more and more that I've done the freedom programme,  the different sessions, I just think,  'oh yeah',  you know,  'I do, I do' </p>
Re	definitely
R8	<p> yeah, so, ahm, you know,  I just, yeah,  I just think, it's just really help me  definitely, yeah </p>
Re	yeah, you should think about it, should go for that.
R8	yeah, I really would like to, I'd love to
Re	thank you very much
R8	it's ok
Re	should I stop?
R8	yeah, yeah

## Appendix 7. Interview Transcript/R20

### R20's story (Interview 1)

(Re = Researcher; R10 = Participant)

Re	it's recording ok would you mind telling me first your age? how old are you?
R20	I am 43
Re	43
R20	yes
Re	and are you british
R20	no, I'm not I'm ( <i>nationality</i> )
Re	ok ok how long you've been living here
R20	since 2003
Re	ok that's good
R20	yeah
Re	yeah, what I would like to ask you if you would like to share with me your experience if you can start, ahm, from the beginning, when you got married and,
R20	<b>ok, I met my ex-partner in (<i>name of the country</i>), in 1995 that's when we first met and, yeah, we loved each other so much and, then in 2003 he is the one who actually bought my ticket to come here and I came here, and he was supposed to come and join me later so, when I came here it took me about 3 years to process his visa for him to come and join me</b>
Re	so, you came first
R20	yes, 2003 and then he later came in 2005
Re	ok
R20	<b>you know, in the way he loved me ah, what happen is that like, we were still boyfriend and girlfriend when I came is like, he wanted us to get married before I came and I insisted, when I initially came I just thought it would be for a short period of time so I insisted that when I come back then we get married so, when I came here we were boyfriend and girlfriend then, because it took us two years, then he said can he do it in my absence, in a customary marriage, in our custom like, he goes with his family to my family and, it's like, they pay some money and they do something</b>
Re	like a dowry
R20	<b>yes, to show that I am now his wife I agreed and my family asked me they knew him, and they knew that we loved each other</b>
Re	it was a religious marriage
R20	yeah, ahm, no, it wasn't. it was a customary
Re	ok, I understand
R20	yeah, so, it was done in 2004 although I wasn't there.
Re	ok

	so, you were living here and he was living there
R20	<p>he was living in (<i>country's name</i>), yes  <b>in 2005 he came to join me, he was now my husband because we married, a customary marriage</b>  <b>so, when he came, honestly the first week I could see that something is not right he had changed, he was not the man I had, like</b>  <b>we loved each other, like</b>  <b>the 2 years that I was here I was like,</b>  <b>the money I wasted buying cards, I would call every day, it was like,</b>  <b>we loved each other so much</b></p>
Re	you were talking over the phone
R20	<p><b>over the phone, every day,</b>  <b>I'd know what he was doing and he'd know what was I doing</b>  <b>so,</b>  <b>but when he came I could tell that something was not right but I could not figure it out then, I was like, you know, trying to think what could it be</b>  <b>'is it that, because I've been here first',</b>  <b>I see that there were differences</b>  <b>I couldn't figure it out but I could tell there is something that is not right</b>  <b>and, when he came I bought clothes for him,</b>  <b>I took a contract phone for him, it is like,</b>  <b>I prepared for his coming</b>  <b>so, I remember, like,</b>  <b>he was cold,</b>  <b>when he came, is like, my bank card had everything I've saved,</b>  <b>'here you are, anytime, that's the pin, we are one'</b>  <b>and, my phone I would just leave it there</b>  <b>but what I found is that his phone, it's like,</b>  <b>he would not just leave it, like, the way I would do, you know</b>  <b>so, I was wondering, it's like,</b>  then, one day I picked up, he was having a bath, then someone called, I picked the phone and the woman back in (<i>country's name</i>)  when I said who is it, she was like, 'who are you'  and I like, 'yeah, you called my husband'  and she just cursed me and cut off the call  so, when I asked my husband about it,  he didn't want, he just, like, pretended as if he didn't know who it was, and, you know, he didn't want to talk about it  I just said, 'ok'  <b>then,</b>  <b>I got pregnant,</b>  <b>it's like he came in september, january I was pregnant</b>  <b>I remember there was a day,</b>  <b>the first time I could tell that, you know,</b>  <b>I can't remember what it was,</b>  <b>I was pregnant, then,</b>  <b>he asked me to do something,</b>  <b>he was asking me to carry something heavy from downstairs</b>  <b>I'm like, you know, like,</b>  <b>'I can't, I am now pregnant'</b>  <b>he slapped me (<i>lowering her voice, almost whispering</i>)</b>  <b>and I was shocked, like,</b>  <b>'he, slapped, me'</b>  <b>that was the beginning, (<i>regular voice again</i>)</b>  <b>and I was so shocked (<i>she smiles</i>)</b></p>
Re	and you were pregnant of your first child
R20	<p>yes  <b>so, he slapped me and I am like,</b>  <b>'why'</b>  <b>then that was it,</b></p>

	<p><b>I just brushed it off, I said, 'ok, maybe he was angry', but, it's like, I could see the changes and the changes then in 2005, 6, 7, 2008 he kept on getting parcels from his family back home and I would just put them (<i>she knocks on the table</i>) if he was not there to open them so, one day I just said, 'let me just open it'</b></p>
Re	what did he get?
R20	so like you get parcels
Re	ok
R20	from back home
Re	ok
R20	<p><b>and he would say 'they are things from my family' I didn't even, I mean, I would just respect that, if he wants me to know he would show me, and he wouldn't show me what it was, but</b></p>
Re	you didn't know what was that that he was getting
R20	<p>no so, one day I just said, 'you know what, let me just open it' he was at work, I open it, it was not a big parcel, it was just a small one I open the parcel, guess what it was his photos on, he was getting married, a white wedding, so it was on his wedding, and on the other photos, the same woman with 2 children, they were on holiday, expensive holiday back home, I'm like,</p>
Re	what do you call white wedding
R20	white wedding is like in church
Re	ok, like dressed up
R20	<p>yes, it is the church wedding so, I was so, I was crying, I didn't know what to do when he came I confronted him, he didn't want to talk about it I'm like, 'let's talk about this' he didn't want to talk about it, he's like, 'you are my wife and I am with here', what is that to do with us and I'm like, I need to know where I stand <b>so, from that day, because I was hurt, it changed our marriage completely, from that day in 2008, one, I didn't trust him anymore and even, if I am to be honest, my love for him, I think that that day it ended it is like, I just felt like, he has betrayed me, I didn't like loving him, anymore but the thing is that I was stuck, I didn't know what to do, it's like</b></p>
Re	you were what
R20	<p><b>I was stuck, you know, it's like, because of my culture I remember when I was coming here,</b></p>

**my big brother saying,**  
**because he was so good to my family, he was,**  
**before I come here honestly,**  
**he was good**  
**he would,**  
**we used to live in different places,**  
**I wasn't staying with my parents,**  
**my mum would just call me and say, 'oh, he came here',**  
**he would buy things for them, shopping,**  
**he was so good to my family**  
**so, I remember he was taking me away to the airport,**  
**the day I came,**  
**he said, 'when you go there we don't want to hear that you have another man', you**  
**know**  
**'we know this one', you know, 'that's the man we know'**  
**'we don't want to hear anything'**  
**so, I was like,**  
**what is my family going to say**  
**if I tell them that I don't love him**  
**another thing, is like,**  
**I now have a child**  
**being a single mother,**  
**I didn't want to be a single mother**  
**it's like, I didn't want that tittle at all**  
**so, I just said, 'ok, let me see',**  
 then, I remember one day,  
 because, he left it, can you imagine it,  
 in two years' time, he left the woman, and the woman had a baby,  
 and he left her pregnant  
 so, he said, 'oh, it was a mistake, the woman forced me to get married with her',  
 'so that she could look after my children', 'I didn't, I don't love her'  
 so, I kept on pressurising him to speak to this woman  
 because I wanted to know where I stand  
 and this woman said, 'oh',  
 when he called the woman,  
 the woman said, 'oh, you know it's like, he is your husband',  
 'I don't love him, I only have children with him'  
 but the funny thing is that he has a house there  
 and the woman is staying in that house  
 when I asked him about that,  
 he said, 'my children can't stay in the street, isn't it',  
 'I have a house, so, she is looking after my children, she is staying there'  
 and other thing is,  
 before I knew about this woman, before he came I was like working,  
 and I was saving my money,  
 and then I remember, I wanted, I looked for a house in there  
 and I found a house which was half built, in the window level  
 it was a good area, not a bad area  
 so, as I got an uncle who is a builder,  
 he goes to see the house and he was saying, 'it's good, I can finish building it'  
 so, when I told my husband, he said, 'it doesn't make sense, we are married'  
 he has a good house, he was a banker, before  
 when I came, before he joined me he bought a beautiful house in a good area  
 with the swimming pool, tennis court,  
 very good, it is a beautiful house  
 he said, 'oh, it doesn't make sense for you to buy a house, we have a house'  
 'why can't we do things to the, you know, to that house'  
 he said things like that  
 I said, 'like what'  
 he said, 'there is no ball hall, there is a lot thing that need to be done, making it'

	he said, 'do that, instead of buying a house', you know so, then he persuaded me to give him all the money that I saved
Re	you were working as a
R20	as a care assistant
Re	ok
R20	so, before he came I'll do live ins, you know, because I was living on my own, so I saved a lot of money so, he persuaded me to give him the money, and guess what obviously he sent it to the wife and before he joined me, I remember, he kept, like, giving me a lot of problems, like, calling me and paint the picture of, like, he is having a lot of problems, like financial problems, I would send him money all the time
Re	before he's come
R20	yes, I was here and he would just call me and say I have this problem and that he was just like, saying a lot of problems and I was sending money all the time, you know so, yeah so when I realised that this woman was there and, it was like, <b>I could tell that he didn't love me</b> <b>it's like, what you do ended in anger problems,</b> <b>something like that</b> <b>I remember there was one day,</b> <b>we were eating,</b> <b>he was still eating,</b> <b>then I finished and I was, like,</b> <b>at the other side of the room</b> <b>he got angry and he just took a plate,</b> <b>and threw it where I was</b> <b>thank god the plate missed me,</b> <b>can you imagine</b> <b>it went to,</b> <b>there was a hole, a big hole in the wall</b> <b>so I was wondering,</b> <b>if he didn't miss me with that plate</b> <b>something could have happened</b> <b>so, I could see, it's like</b> <b>he could get angry with silly things</b> <b>I remember one day,</b> <b>the car I bought for him,</b> <b>when he came I gave him, like, everything,</b> <b>I was the one giving him the money to buy the car</b> <b>so, we had gone to town,</b> <b>so, I can't remember where we've gone</b> <b>so, as we were coming back,</b> <b>it was summertime,</b> <b>I suffer from hay fever, so I was like, (not clear)</b> <b>I said, 'can we pass through the chemist, I need to buy something for my hay fever'</b> <b>he said, 'no, you have to walk there and then walk home'</b> <b>I said like, 'why can't you just drive there, buy and then go home'</b> <b>he insisted that 'no, just go'</b> <b>so,</b> <b>then he said I should take my son with me</b> <b>and I am like, walking, with</b> <b>so I just- I just got out of the car and I left my son in the car and went,</b> <b>I bought the medicine and I went home</b> <b>when I went home, he was angry with me</b> <b>and the way he beat me that day</b>



	<p>because of that and I am like then, there's another day, I said, you know what, I just said to myself, 'if he fights me at this time I will fight him back' I can't remember, instead of fighting me</p>
Re	your son was present when
R20	oh he was too baby then
Re	ok
R20	<p>yeah he can't, he can't remember, he was a baby so I remember that day, I can't remember what it was, he attacked me and when I tried to fight back oh my god, the way he beat me then I gave up so, I remember telling a friend about it, and my friend was like, 'you are not in (<i>country's name</i>), you are in england', 'you shouldn't do that, there is a lot of law up here, 'next time just call the police, next time he attacks you, call the police' so, this day, I can't remember what, ok, a friend in canada called me, our bedroom was upstairs and the lounge was downstairs so, I picked up the phone, then he was going upstairs and he said I was making noise I am like, 'you are going upstairs', and it's like, he was just looking for things so, he went upstairs and I was on the phone, I spoke to my friend, it's like, we grew up together, he knows that friend it wasn't like, I was talking to someone he doesn't know, he knew it was a friend we grew up together, she now is in canada so, when I finished speaking on the phone, I went to bed, and when I was there he said, 'I told you were making noise and you insisted talking on the phone' I am like, 'so you don't want me to speak on the phone or what' 'I told you were making noise' I said, 'but you were upstairs and I was downstairs 'tell me one thing that you heard that we were talking about' 'oh, you are challenging me' he got up, went to the bathroom and took a bucket of water and poured on the bed where I was poured on me and on the bed straight away I remembered what my friend said and I just called 999 then, when he heard me calling the police, he started going outside I told the police that he started to go towards his car, I told the police 'oh he is going to his car' they said, 'give us, give us the number of the car' so, he heard me telling the police and he knew that he wasn't going anywhere, and he came back so, when he came back, the police came and when they came, I just knew that if I continue with anything obviously, the police they are going to do nothing I'll be in trouble with this man so, when they came I just changed my statement</p>

	<p>then I was, 'oh sorry, I overreacted, don't worry, it was my fault'  and the police said 'ok, that's fine', they went  and then, because of that he stopped but it was more of emotional abuse  'oh my god' (<i>she whispers</i>)  that man abused me (<i>normal voice</i>)  more of,  you know I used to be a very, very confident person  it's like, I was, I was very,  even myself I know I was very confident  but, if you are to ask me now  it knocked down my confidence so much  right now it changed a little bit  when I started going to uni  I can see myself like,  picking up myself a little bit  but I am not, nowhere near where I was  but I can see a change in myself  but, yeah it affected me so much the emotional abuse  oh my god  he would just say, I'm telling you,  negative things  I never done anything right to him  nothing was right  so the physical abuse stopped  and then  it started again  how it started I don't even know  when I was going to uni, I remember</p>
Re	what were you studying?
R20	nursing I've just finished now, yeah
Re	you finished congratulations
R20	<p>thank you  I'm telling you, he tried hard for me to fail  it was hard for me to go to uni, I'm telling you  if I was in (<i>not clear</i>) I would just say, 'you know what, I give up'  you would, ok, the computer  I'd go, let's say, I got an assignment  go on the computer, the computer is not working  you know, I was doing my dissertation  just before doing my dissertation  because I know him, I, it's like, I knew that he could do anything  ahm, each time I would do an exam  just, because my uni was in another city,  not in my city  so, if had an exam I would make sure that I would go and pay in a hotel  sleep over in a hotel, so that on the exam day I would just come from there  because I didn't want to,  because I knew that he was capable of doing anything  maybe just leave me stuck with the kids,  he has done that before  so, he has done a lot of things to affect my study  and, when I was doing my dissertation, I bought a laptop, because I knew we had a desktop  I knew that anything can happen with this man  it was like, when it was new it just stopped working  I don't know what happened but I knew it was him  during my dissertation only, I bought 3 printers  you'd go, the printer is not working  new printers</p>

	<p>and, in my home, they are still there in their boxes  I', in the amazon, I saw it and bought  3 printers during the dissertation only  then, 2 laptops  in, you know, it would like just go  I wanted to do something, the laptop was not working  one time, ahm, I wanted to submit my assignment  I don't know what he did to my, I don't know,  it's like, he is good in computers and I'm not  so, I don't know what he did  I tried, it was like, I was working on it all along  just one hour before  then I said, 'you know, let me submit it now'  and I tried, and tried, and tried  I was, like, I was not going to, I couldn't go to the blackboard for me to be able to submit it  and I was trying, and, the time, there was no time for me to go to the library  I was trying and I did not know what to do, you know  and, until, the time was over and I could not submit  ahm, the piece of work  so, yeah, he tried his best to affect my studies  so, just before this happened, what did happen  in second year I just, when I was doing the second year I just told him, 'next year, when I  finish, I can't do changes now, because it's going to affect the kids'</p>
Re	how many kids you had then
R20	<p>2  so, I said 'it is going to affect the kids if we do any changes  but next year, as soon as I finish uni,  ahm, we have to sit down, and, review  and see if we still love each other  if we love each other, in what terms  so, if we don't, then, that's it'  so, in july I just said, I started to say to him' 'I don't things that this is working'  house was in my name, the tenancy was in my name, it was a council flat in my name  and, he had to go  not me  so, I said to him, 'I think you should go'  he would say, 'ok, I am going'  come at the end, he doesn't go  every month he would do that  I even message, I send him one day  I am tired of your abuse, can you just go  because, when I was going to the uni, I record it one night  the whole night I didn't sleep  he was attacking me, pinching me  and I told him a had an important meeting with my supervisor tomorrow, he didn't let me  sleep, the whole night  he was even repeating the time, 'it's 4 o'clock now'  because that happened,  <b>when I started to tell him that it was not working, 'I don't love you anymore'</b>  <b>I kept on,</b>  <b>when he was checking his phone, I would see messages to his wife,</b>  <b>you know, sex, what is it called, sexting, things like that</b>  <b>so, I could see that he was using me</b>  <b>he would arouse talking to this woman then he would come to me for sex</b>  <b>then I said to myself, 'that's it, no more sex with him'</b></p>
Re	so, he would have talks, ahm, sexual talks
R20	with the woman
Re	uhum
R20	<p><b>then he would come to me for sex</b>  <b>it's like, so, I just said I have to stop</b></p>

	<p>so, the problem started now and he would attack me for that  it was when the physical started again  he would attack me and attack me because I would refuse to have sex with him  he would say 'because you are my wife'  I say, 'no, it's not working, I don't love you anymore'  so, just before I came here I told him that you have to go and he told me,  I am going on the 20th of september, I got a house, I am going  I said, 'that's fine' and I was looking forward to that  and I believed him, I just, he is going  but he just started attacking me a lot</p>
Re	physically
R20	<p>physically  the day we came here, the following day  what happened is, he woke up in the morning, this is what he used to do, around 4,  then he, it was like, I was fast asleep, and he would wake up, and,  he would be trying to touch me, and to take off my pants  because I would sleep with pants on because I didn't want to have sex with him  so, he said, 'is it a no',  I recorded everything,  'is it a no',  because I was scared of him  it was like, especially at night time I would think, I am vulnerable, he can do anything  I forgot to say, there was a time when he strangled me  so, I was scared that he could do anything  oh, he strangled me because what, sorry I forgot to tell about that incident  what happened is, it was after, ahm, knowing about the woman,  so, I stopped having se, it was immediately after discovering about the woman,  so I just said no sex with me  so, it went on, I think it was about a month  he would demand sex, I would say no  one day he said I want to talk to your family, I want to talk to your aunty  because, into my culture, if you are married, it's like, you are supposed to satisfy your  husband, you know  I was like, no  you have a wife, it was like, no  so, he said, I want to speak to your aunty and refused to give him my aunt's number  then, I don't know, he checked my phone and he got my sister's number  so, he called, in that particular day, he called my sister,  and he put the phone in loud speaker  he said to my sister,  the thing is, all along I've been communicating with my family, they know everything, so,  my sister knew about the problem  so, he said I want your aunt's number and my sister asked him, 'why don't you have the  number, why do you want it today, and why can't your wife give you the number'  he said, 'ok, there is a problem, let me tell you,  your sister is refusing to have sex with me'  and she said, 'why, why, she can't just refuse  what's the reason'  because it was on loud speaker, then I said, 'can you please tell her that you have another  wife  that's the reason I, I don't want'  so, because he didn't want me to tell my family, he just cut the phone  he was so angry, he beat me  I could not open my eye,  he strangled me  it's like, I tried, it's like, if he, I think if he had kept on for maybe 5 more seconds I would  have died  I could breathe, he strangled me,  and kept on, I, I was chocking, until, was like  I couldn't breathe, and then he left me</p>

and my eye was so swollen, I couldn't open my eye  
 and when was strangling me, because he had long nails, he squeezed me, it's like *(she takes a deep breath)*  
 so, I called, I called my friend, from another city  
 she was visiting her mum, apparently she was in my city  
 she came to see me  
 she was like, you have to come with me now, I can't leave you, I can't leave you like this,  
 but, I kept on saying no  
 and, you know, it was like, I don't know  
 I was scared  
 one, I was scared of him  
 I didn't know what he was capable of doing  
 two, is like, ahm, the society that will judge me  
 is like, I didn't know how people were going to look at me, how they would,  
 'I've left my husband'  
 I don't know, I was so scared  
 she said you have to go and I refused  
 she said 'call in the police', I said 'no'  
 so, that was the end  
**so, this time, each time, is like, I was so scared**  
**especially night time, if he would attack me night time**  
**because I didn't know what he could do**  
**on this particular day he kept on asking me, 'is it a no'**  
**I didn't want to say no in case he would attack me or strangle me**  
**I kept saying 'what do you think'**  
**he said, 'I don't have to think, you have to tell me'**  
**'are you saying no, you don't want to have sex with me'**  
**I said 'no, what do you think'**  
**I kept on, like, not**  
**dodging to say no**  
 then he said, then he said, in that day is like,  
 I was so annoyed because the woman profile picture on whatsapp,  
 it was him, because it was soon after his birthday,  
 his birthday was on the 12<sup>th</sup> and it was on the 15<sup>th</sup>  
 so she had him as her, ahm, profile picture  
 so, I was so annoyed, you know,  
 that I've seen his phone the day before his birthday  
 he was, like, sleeping, he would sleep with his phone under his pillow  
 so one day he was sleeping, that day,  
 I just took it and read his messages and they, ah  
 they would say,  
 they loved each other  
 they were husband and wife  
 so, I was so annoyed that he asking sex from me and he never told me that he loves me,  
 he doesn't love me  
 even the way he treats me, he doesn't love me  
**so, then, ah**  
**he kept quiet for a while, later on he just woke up, again**  
**and I was like, I didn't know what to do, so I was recording everything because**  
**I didn't know what would be the next move,**  
**I was like, just in case he kills me, at least the police will have**  
**so, he just took off the duvet and took my leg and pushed this part**  
**he was holding it towards me**  
**up today I am still limping, it still hurts**  
**he pushed it harder and harder, I was screaming, it was hurting**  
**even**  
**it was, I was after that, I was, it was so painful**  
**he kept on and,**  
**he said, 'I want to break your leg, you want to go, isn't it'**  
**'so if you look for another boyfriend you won't be able to have sex with him'**

	<p>so, he kept on pushing it and pushing it and pushing it  so, he later, he left me  I was crying the whole night because I was in so much pain  it was, can you imagine, it was almost a month, night time it is so painful  so,  that was it that night,  and the following day I told my friend and then she said, 'you know what, enough is enough'  she called the police  then the police  you know what, I didn't want to involve the police  the reason being, I knew the police would just come, take him, then release him after a few days  who is in danger  it's me  so, I just said 'you know what'  and, the police later called me, it was around 4 and said,  'we have him in court'  'can you come to the police station'  I cried, I was like, 'oh my god',  'these people, they don't know'  'he will kill me',  this man will be so much angry, he will go to the police,  what he is going to do when he is coming back, this man is going to kill me  so, I was so scared, I was crying  I was like, 'why, why'  I was regretting telling someone about it  I was like, 'why did I do it, why'  so, they said you should come here before 6:30,  if you don't come, we will come looking for you  I went there, so, when I went there, they said, 'can you give us a report',  and I said, 'I don't want'  they said why,  I said, because I was scared  then they said, 'what you don't know, that if you give us a report or not, because you are not the one who reported, we will arrest him'  and I started crying,  I was like, you don't know what you are putting myself into  then I said, 'what I know, you are going to arrest him,  maybe tomorrow you will release him,  what about me, what is going to happen to me'  the police said, 'don't worry, we will protect you, do you promise to give us a report'  and I said, 'as long as I am safe, I don't mind,  as long as I am safe'  that's when she called social services, and started looking for where I can be put,  that they can go and arrest him and look into it  that's how I ended up here</p>
Re	ok
R20	<p>uhum,  and  honestly speaking, I feel, in ways up and down, up and down every day  I feel happy, there is one thing in me, I feel like, I feel happy  I can start a new life, with my children, a new career, and go on  no one else to torment me, or I will be scared that one day he will be angry and kill me  it's over  but my children, specially my son  my daughter, every day before she sleeps she used to cry, 'I want my dad'  she was very, very close to her dad</p>
Re	he was not violent with, ahm
R20	he loved his kids

	<p>if there is anything,  that's why, when the solicitor came to say, ahm, 'would you take a court order?', I refused  if there is anything, one thing I know, he will never harm his kids  he loves his kids to bits  one ahm, my daughter</p>
Re	they have never seen him, ahm, ahm
R20	<p>he was around 4 he would ask for sex and attack me, and  so, they would be in bed  that is the most difficult part, and with my son, I can see changes,  I can see he is a little bit rebellious  it's just like, he is telling me back and I can see a little anger in him  the day I brought these photos (<i>she had big photo posters of the kids in the flat</i>)  it was like, let's, we don't want it to look like a hostel,  we want it to look like our own home  when I was doing all this  then he said, 'oh, but one member of the family is missing, isn't it?'  'oh my god'  so, he doesn't get it and,  I don't know when he will accept it and get it  because to him, he is the perfect dad  then, there was a day I tried to explain it to him  I said, 'you know what, things happened'  'you don't need to know the things between mum and dad',  'and it doesn't make dad bad. he is a good dad'  'and it doesn't make you not to love your dad'  'he is your dad, you have to love him'  but I said, 'somethings happened between mum and dad',  'that makes mum and dad not to be able to stay together',  'but still, he is still your dad',  'and one thing I ask you, teach your sister to keep on loving her dad'  'the way you used to love him when you were living at home',  'the way you love him, he is still your dad'  that day he started crying, 'I want my dad, I miss him so much, I want my dad'  I didn't know what to do, I just left him on his own and went next door  later on I came he was still crying  and the sister later on crying, 'I want my dad'  so, it's like, they are the ones who are giving a hard time  and</p>
Re	how old are they now?
R20	<p>3 and 10  my daughter every day, is like,  because she thinks we are on holiday  we used to go on holidays together  so, she thinks it's ok, we are on holiday but dad is not here  so, she keeps saying, 'when dad is coming to pick us'  so, they think of dad in that way, coming in his car to pick up us and go home  so, she, nearly every day she will cry, 'I want dad'  and my son, and,  I can see him,  I don't know where to get help,  but I can see him, a little bit like,  I can see the anger and he being a little bit rebellious  and we talk about, like,  when we say something about family,  straight away, 'but my dad is not here'</p>
Re	do you have any, ahm, is there any orders in place?
R20	<p>no, I refused  because, honestly, I just want that  he is a good dad  I just want, I don't want to complicate him seeing his children</p>

Re	but is he seeing them?
R20	no, because there is nothing in place
Re	ok
R20	<p>so, I don't know what I can do  maybe if they see him once, they will feel better and is,  I don't know  but that's the most difficult part for me and,  the society,  <b>how am I'm going to face the society when they realise that now I am a single woman because,  it's my fault  I used to paint a picture that I was happily married  if you would come to our house, you would think that this a perfect couple,  and everybody would get that we are a perfect couple  would go out work hard, and go on holidays together, would live, like,  a normal happy life  people would think that we were living a normal happy life  yet they didn't know what was happening  so, I was thinking that, you know,  the society obviously is going to judge me thinking that,  'look, she went to uni, now, because she is a nurse, as soon as she finished,  she left her husband' and,  because they don't know  and, even back home, my sister was, you know, our family when they were told that, they sometimes give me hard time  she was, like, she was saying, 'so, you are leaving your husband to do what'  'what is going to happen?' and,  that's another thing, another challenge for me  but, if you ask that, do I love that man,  no  I don't love him and  I don't intend to mend things with him again  because there was a time he lied to me, it was in 2010  we broke up and,  and, I said that's enough  then later on he persuaded me, he promised me heaven  'oh, things are going to change'  we even went to buy wedding rings  he said, 'I'm going to divorce that woman, I don't love her',  'I've never loved her, you know how much I love you'  so, 'we are going to get married', bla, bla, bla  we went to town, we bought some rings,  'I'll talked to the pastor', and  'I'll sort the divorce, then we will get married and live a happy life'  and  in the process of doing that  'oh, I guess he is changing, isn't it? we are getting married, he will have to move back'  he moved in and,  he started again,  he started sending messages again to the wife  and, I realised that, this is not gonna change  so, even this time, whatever he is going to say,  I, pfff, I don't even wanna to listen to him, I won't believe it  he's done that before  he doesn't love, he has a wife</b></p>
Re	how do you feel now?
R20	<p>like I said, I have mixed feelings  I am happy, honestly, I feel happy but,  is something that I wanted but I couldn't do it</p>



	honestly, I wanted to get out of that but I didn't know how I was going to do that and I didn't know how to do it, and how it would work nicely without me being in danger and here is the solution, isn't it he doesn't know where I am, my life, move on with my life
Re	has he contacted you in any way
R20	no no because, ahm, part of his bail condition is that he never do contact me in any form so, I think he is scared of that ( <i>she smile</i> )
Re	ok
R20	uhum
Re	and what do you feel, what do you want to do in the future
R20	in the future
Re	do you have any plans
R20	when I get my house, start working as a nurse, looking after my kids, yeah, move on with my life if I get, another man, I'll, I'll leave it open, it's like, yeah, if I get, it's like, I'm not gonna drag myself and say, 'oh' I am not a failure, I, I'm try to tell myself that I am not a failure it was his fault, not my fault and I'll move on in my life I'll, from here, get a job, get my house with my children move with my life if I meet someone else, if I click, that's it if I don't, that's ok my life is going to move on
Re	that's a goof thought
R20	uhum
Re	when will be able to start working
R20	ahm, when I, get out from here it's like, when I move on
Re	so, you are ready now, you are graduated, you are ready now
R20	yeah I haven't registered though, with the ngs
Re	that's good congratulations
R20	thank you
Re	well done
R20	thank you so, I don't know I just want to have my confidence back and, my life back, on track, and, you know, yeah
Re	ahm, you told me that you fear, ahm, that the society will judge you
R20	uhum
Re	so, do you think that this, this fear is real or it is something that you have to get rid of it that's something from your head
R20	I think I just have to get rid of it I don't know how

	<p>I think I have to get rid of it because that's not the truth  I get telling myself that because now I have a degree a left my husband that's not the truth because they don't know how I suffered for this last more than 10 years you know, with this woman they don't know, no one,  I didn't tell even my friends that he had another woman and that he was trying to bring that woman here and they don't know the truth  I was living a lie in their eyes so,  it is better for me to live the real life than a lie and suffering but it is only that you,  I, I, you know, I'm just scared that I will be judged and people, you know, in these social networks people will be talking and</p>
Re	are you in the social media
R20	on facebook, yeah, and on this whatsapp, and, yeah
Re	people talk too much
R20	yeah, they do ( <i>we laugh</i> ) even if I come off, that's not the solution they can still talk about things
Re	yeah
R20	<p>so, yeah, that's, that's my fear that people judge me (<i>in low voice</i>) 'you know what, she left her husband' but, that's a minor thing,  the big thing, honestly, is like, this tape,  <b>I always wanted it but I didn't know how to do it</b>  <b>I didn't know how to do it</b>  <b>I remember when I was in the police station, I rang two of my friends</b>  <b>the one I saw when I was strangled and another one I've been just telling everything</b>  <b>the one in,</b>  <b>I was like, 'oh, someone reported him and I am in the police station, bla, bla, bla,</b>  <b>and I am refusing to give a report'</b>  <b>because the policewoman kept on leaving me on my own,</b>  <b>should come and give me pressure, and leave me to think,</b>  <b>and she would come, and say 'call whoever you want, I'm coming back'</b>  <b>so she was, like, pressurising me to give the statement</b>  <b>and, you know what she said, 'why are you refusing, it is right time he pays for his sins,</b>  <b>you suffered a lot of pain, you did, you know what, let him pay for his sins'</b>  <b>and my immediate family, my brothers and sisters</b>  <b>they, I don't know since when they wanted me to get rid of him</b>  <b>they are happy and,</b>  <b>that day they were like,</b>  <b>'we don't want to hear that you are fighting for him, to come out the police station,</b>  <b>let him go and rot in jail, they said</b>  <b>and, they were saying 'we wish that when it's finished that they will deport him back to</b>  <b>his country, so he can come and join his wife'</b>  <b>that's my immediate family, but, you know,</b>  <b>my extended family, they wouldn't understand, isn't it</b></p>
Re	but it is important, isn't it that your immediate family is on your side
R20	yeah yeah, I've got one sister and 4 brothers
Re	and they are all giving you support
R20	uhum
Re	good

R20	it is, yeah the things is that our parents are laid, so
Re	your parents are
R20	died
Re	ok
R20	so, because they died it is the uncles and au, it's like, I know if my mum was there she would have supported me 100% she wouldn't support someone who would try to kill her daughter at one point ahm, yeah but you know, the extended family, they don't understand because I was not telling them anything, isn't it
Re	yeah
R20	I was pretending as if I was happily married
Re	you feel safe now
R20	very safe, very, very safe
Re	that's good
R20	<b>I was, I was thinking that when I finish uni because I found a job in london I was thinking that, if he doesn't want to move, I'll just lose my council house and leave it, take my kids and go to london that was my plan, because I had planned to get rid of him but knowing him I was scared because, in our community in (<i>name of the country</i>), it's like, I don't know in the past in the UK nearly every year we read in the newspapers men killing the wives every year</b>
Re	in ( <i>name of the country</i> )
R20	in ( <i>name of the country</i> ), yeah if you google <b>every year in there, yeah so, it was like, people are talking, even in the social media, one thing I realised with our men, is like, I told him to go, his ego is like, a woman should not tell you to go, a woman, it is, he should say I don't love you and not the other way so, for me to tell him that I didn't love him and because of the ego, that's why he was saying 'I'll break your leg before I go, so that', it is like, 'if I can't have you, I have to do something' you know, they have that mentality I'm sure I do know I am (<i>her nationality</i>) I mean, I do know so, I was scared that even if I make that move to go to london with my kids if we meet, if I am successful, then one day he meets me, he can do anything to harm me I was scared of that</b>
Re	yeah, I understand
R20	uhum so, but now I feel safe because, you know what, the police went forward and it's not just my decision, it's like, he knows that the law is backing me up so he can't just do things, he knows the law is watching him it's not like before, he could do whatever he wanted

	so, I feel safe because of that
Re	that's good
R20	I feel safe it's only the children I don't know what to do I don't know what to do with them especially my son, I'm just praying maybe he'll start going to school and he'll learn things and maybe
Re	have discussed it with the support workers
R20	ahm, about my son, no
Re	you should discuss it with them
R20	yeah
Re	I'm sure they can help you
R20	ahm
Re	they possibly have some advice to give you even with the nursery manager
R20	oh, yes
Re	talk to them and then they can arrange maybe some counselling for him
R20	I think he needs it
Re	maybe he has something inside that he wants to make it
R20	out
Re	yes so, I think you should talk to the support workers who is your keyworker I think you should talk to her
R20	yeah my daughter she is young she'll just get used with it
Re	yeah but use this opportunity while you are here
R20	yeah it's true yeah, I'll speak to them, so that, yeah, because I can see it you know, even, I'm talking to him you know, when I was going through this I had him, he was my, he was my friend I had my son, it was like, I could get comfort in him I could talk, you know, it was like, I can see the change
Re	he might be confused because
R20	because of what is happening
Re	yeah
R20	I can't see to him, he is a good dad so, he doesn't understand
Re	no maybe it makes him even more confused ahm, but talk to your key worker and talk to maybe they can arrange some counselling for him maybe it will be good it's a good chance while you are here
R20	yeah, yeah let's hope because of his age because of what happened because some children, it can change him, affect him in a negative way
Re	yeah
R20	I can see him, like, being a little bit rebellious the way he is answering

	he never like that
Re	yes, I understand
R20	he will be like sort of angry, like yeah, I can see a little bit of anger
Re	yeah maybe he need some help to bring it out
R20	yeah
Re	thank you very much for sharing with me
R20	you are welcome
Re	is there anything else that you would like to say
R20	no, nothing, that's all
Re	thank you very much
R20	you are welcome
Re	I appreciate it