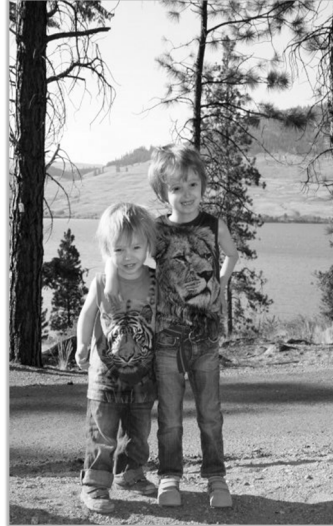


## Young(er) People and Male Violence Against Women



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## About me



[Male] violence against women is not the result of random, individual acts of misconduct, but rather is deeply rooted in structural relationships of inequality between women and men... violence constitutes a continuum across the lifespan of women, from birth to old age. It cuts across both the public and private spheres. (Ending Violence Against Women: from Words to Action, UN Secretary General's Report 2006)

## **Violence as preventable**

‘Violence is preventable. The more we gather knowledge about it, the better off we are to contribute to its minimization in society.’ (Stanko et al. 2003: 11)

‘Any work with young people about domestic violence must start at a very young age, in all primary schools, because, by the age of 13, attitudes that condone gender violence are already entrenched, particularly among boys.’ (Women’s Aid’s response to Safety and Justice)

## **Previous research with young people**

- 14 – 21 (Zero Tolerance, 1998);
- 15 – 18 (McCarry, 2003);
- 14 – 18 (Burman et al.,2005);
- 16 – 20 (Amnesty International 2006)

## **Looking at Young(er) People**

### **The Significance of Age**

- Younger people ignored or overlooked by previous research and absent from much theoretical literature on young people
- The younger the person, the more receptive they are to new ideas (Hendry, 1996)
- Still within a compulsory education system
- Male violence against women is not limited to certain age groups

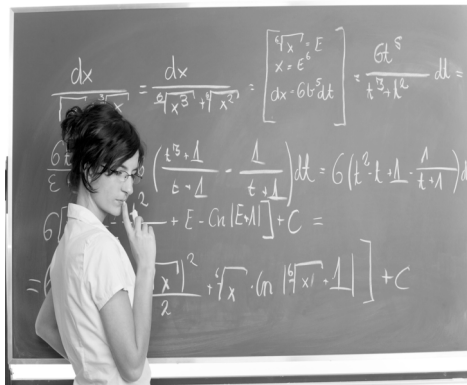
## Theoretical Context of Research

- My research is **feminist** in its conception, its philosophical underpinnings, its application, its use of methods and in its means of analysis.
- The young people are situated within the theoretical paradigm of **childhood**, where they are seen as active, social agents in their own lives.

## **Main aims of the research**

- The first was to confront and challenge the ‘everyday’ occurrence and acceptability of male violence (Stanko, 1985).
- The second aim was to challenge the perception that eleven and twelve year olds are too young to ‘know’ about violence or to offer opinions on it:
  1. by finding ways to talk to younger people about male violence and
  2. through confronting preconceptions of younger people’s existing knowledge, capabilities and understanding.

- The fieldwork took place in five primary schools in Glasgow over a period of six months (January – June 2005).
- Total of 89 eleven and twelve year olds



## The Methods

- Exploratory Questionnaires
- Discussion Group Sessions
- Vignettes



## **Main Findings**

- Adherence to a 'sequential' model of violence
- If it doesn't fit this framework, there are three main processes that young people use to understand violence:
  - They naturalise violence (as an prerequisite of abstract male identity)
  - They normalise violence (to the extent that they do not define it in their own experiences)
  - They justify most examples of male violence as an anticipated consequence of the (accepted) gender inequities endorsed within heterosexual relationships)

## **‘Sequential models’ of violence**

- How the young people *defined* real violence followed a prescribed linear model or a sequence
- It involved two or more men, fighting physically in a public space
- The violence would result in physical injury, intervention by authority and consequence
- This model was also replicated in schools involving boys in the yard, intervention by teachers or dinner ladies and chastisement and / or consequence

## **Applying this model to understanding male violence against women**

When discussing abstract examples young people were more likely to suggest :

- a women being abused contacts the police
- the woman is in no way at fault and has done nothing to exacerbate the actions of the abuser

## **Processes young people used to understand male violence against women**

- Naturalising
- Normalising
- Justifying

## **Naturalised expectations of men as violent**

Monica: Violence is like men, hitting and kicking

Elizabeth: Men start the violence cos they are bigger and stronger

Jack: Like me and my friend fight, but that's not violence. Violence is something bigger

Shilpa: Men punch but men can take it

Meera: If you were a boy, you'd be going around hitting and punching each other

Grace: Its not *natural* for girls to hit each other but ...its *natural* for boys to hit each other cos they are always fighting

Tommy: If you are a boy *you get to be tough*  
and if you are a girl you sit like this but you  
are gay if you do it

Jason: Yeah, if you have your hands clasped  
and your legs crossed you are gay

Tommy: Cos that's what girls do



Davey: One of the things I don't like about being a boy is like well men they get a reputation from a few people and you don't hear of many women doing it but you hear of a lot of men (...) after that, like people think that almost every single boy could be like that so that's how they get their name for it.

- Stewart: Me and my sister fight sometimes, right erm and because I'm bigger, she, like my dad expects me to be able to kinda take it and he says like, you're bigger, you should, it shouldn't affect you

## **Normalising violence**

- Young people are more able to define violence that has happened to 'others'
- This otherness also relates to adults in terms of the young people giving more validation to the actions and experiences of adults than their own
- The closer young people were to the individual and situations they identified as violent (in terms of age, gender, knowledge of) the less likely they were to identify actions and behaviour as violent

Tommy: Boys aren't girl beaters unless you really want to hit one

Chris: I wouldn't hit a girl, but I would if she did something to me

Sandeep: You sometimes hit a girl if you get annoyed if they say something to you

Nancy: So you hit a girl if they say something that annoys you?

Sandeep: Yeah.

Vikram: Sometimes you can hit hard and sometimes you can hit not very hard

Nancy: Right okay, so you are saying its okay to hit a girl if the girl...

Sandeep: No its not okay to hit a girl, but its okay if they annoy you

Nancy: So if you have a reason?

Both: Yeah

John: Like girls won't talk to you for ages, just  
cos you've given them a bruise on their  
arm...

Tommy: Yeah and like...are you recording this bit

Nancy: I'm recording it all

Tommy: Like when [whispers name] threw that  
bottle at her and she wouldn't talk to him  
for over a week

John: Yeah

Iain: Because boys always use carry on fighting and say I hit him it wouldn't really hurt him. Boys always carry on fight. If I go and hit a girl, they start crying and say that I am abusing her.

Emma: And the teacher says don't do fighting but they do it for real and just say its dummy fighting.

Cheryl: If you've seen their faces its really real

Stacey: If its fun fighting that's okay, but if its real its not

Nancy: So if they are just pretending...

Emma: Sometimes they do it with us like sometimes they come up and punch you

*[All talking at once]*

Cheryl: And I say just 'Go Away!' And he just ignores me and keeps on hitting me

Nancy: And is he doing that or is he pretending?

Cheryl: He pretends that he is doing it but it is really sore.

Stacey: You try and get them to stop but they keep doing it

Lucy: He wants to have fun with you, so he just goes up and does it

Cheryl: I was going to Sarah's house once and he kept threatening me and following me and I was like, no! Just go away

## **Processes of justification**

- Needs to be contextualised by how young people understand and experience gender inequality
- The construction of heterosexuality and the institution of marriage
- 'Accepted' frameworks of male dominance
- Morality of gender codes
- Construction of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' victims

## Young People and *their* gender

- Their own understandings and expectations of gender were shaped upon their own present lived experiences and their anticipation of their future lives
- They saw their own lives now as being a period of freedom expressed in the fluidity of their gender roles
- But saw adulthood as a time that was constrained and restricted by rigid heterosexual roles – especially girls

**Lucy: I mean now I have lots of friends, girls and boys. But when I'm older, like when I am married, I'll probably just have one friend and it'll be a woman**

**Sarah: I want to be a dancer or a doctor(.....) I'm going to have two babies and work part time in the shop down the road.**

## Heterosexuality

- The restrictions they attributed to heterosexuality manifested themselves within adulthood, but particularly within their constructed understandings of marriage.
- The differences between the relationships between their peers *now* and the relationships they anticipated for the *future* differed greatly.

**Lindsay: Me and my friends we made up this rule. So now if we argue and we both fancy the same boy, we say 'Friends are forever, boys are for whenever' and its true. Its better to have your friends than a boyfriend.**

## **Marriage as restrictive**

Daisy: Like if you have a boyfriend now and he does something wrong, you just dump him. But when you are married its different. You have to forgive him. Like if he hits you and then say sorry, you forgive him because you have been together longer and you are married, so it means more.

Siobhan: If they live together and they are not married, she should just leave

Tom: I mean if they are married then she should have tried harder not to make him mad. She should be with him and make it work.

## Starting off defiant....

Melanie: She's not a slave, if he wants his dinner he can make it himself

Aimee: He's wrong to slap her. That's like really wrong

Rosie: Yeah. To slap someone cos they didn't make your dinner. He's just really lazy.

Aimee: Yeah like *it might not be her fault* if she's spent all of her time at the shops. There could have been like really long queues or something

Melanie: He's not the boss of her.

Aimee: She's her own person

Melanie: Like even if she agreed to make him dinner, he definitely shouldn't, not even if...

Monica: He didn't even listen to her

Aimee: She could have said, I'm sorry I'm late, the queues were long and just explain

## And then appeasing....

Nancy: So should Lizzie ask Dave the next time she wants to go to the shops, like he says she should?

Melanie: She shouldn't say, could I please go to the shops, she should say, I am going to the shops so we can eat today I'll try and get back in time, and if I'm not back there's something there for your dinner.

Monica: I don't think she should ask him, she should tell him

Aimee: But in a nice way, as in, I'm going out to the shops. Is that okay?

## Still a long road ahead....



“Violence against women cannot be tolerated, in any form, in any context, in any circumstance, by any political leader or by any Government.

The time to change is now.”

*Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary General,  
2009*

Gayle: I mean that's what men do to mum's, I mean women. Just like shouting and controlling what she does. Its not fair on them or the children.

## Any questions?

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