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Intimate Intrusions[1] Revisited: A Case of Intimate Partner Abuse and Violations of the Territories of the Self

Abstract

Intimate partner abuse is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, highly situated and "locally-produced" by intimate partners in the domestic interactional milieu. Adopting a symbolic interactionist approach, this article uses a limited topical life-history case study to investigate the interactional experiences of a male victim of female-perpetrated intimate partner abuse. The theoretical analysis utilises Goffman's conceptualisation of the "territories of the self" and their subjection to various forms of contamination or "modalities of violation", applied in this case to the contested domestic interactional milieu. The paper seeks to add to a developing qualitative literature on male victims' experiences of intimate abuse and violence, and to extend Goffman's conceptual insights into a new domain.

Keywords

Intimate partner abuse; Abused men; Erving Goffman; Territories of the self; Topical life history

She criticises him for buying a new shirt. He points out that it is a replacement for the one that she ripped to pieces at the weekend. She takes exception to this. First she gags him so he is gasping for air. She then pushes him into a corner. The next action is a new one – she is forcing her fingers into his mouth. It makes him wretch as he tries to pull them out of his mouth. She pushes in the fingers of her other hand. Their son is watching at the bedroom door, silently. Her nail cuts his tongue and he can feel the blood flowing freely. With her fingers still pulling at his mouth… he is choking. He is now spitting blood onto the sheets. She is angry with him for this. He is trying to get his breath back. She bites the knuckle of his index finger with great force. Searing pain. [Diary, 21.10.03]

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[1] Title taken from the book by Elizabeth Stanko (1985)

This instance of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence is taken from the diary of a middle-aged, senior-professional man who, as part of his diary-keeping[2], systematically charted for a period of just over two years the abuse to which he was frequently subjected by his wife. The physical abuse escalated in both frequency and extent to the point at which the husband was forced to flee his home and children with few clothes and personal possessions, never to return. The diary of abuse, together with transcripts of a series of seven (to-date) in-depth interviews, constitute the topical life-history data upon which this paper is based. The purpose of the article is to examine a case of intimate partner abuse at the micro-level, as a situated interactional activity, "locally-produced" by partners mainly - but not exclusively - in the domestic milieu. To this end, the article is structured as follows. First, as contextualisation of the topical life-history data, some of the general literature on intimate partner abuse and violence (IPA&V) is considered, before discussing the interactonist perspective adopted here. Methodological issues, including ethical concerns, are then addressed, before proceeding to the theorisation and findings of the study, in which Goffman's (1972) conceptualisation of the "territories of the self" and their modalities of violation are used to explore specific experiences of intimate partner abuse, in this case as recounted by a heterosexual male victim, a perspective under-represented in the research literature.

Abuse in the Intimate Context

As Dutton (2007) highlights, what is deemed to constitute "abuse" varies considerably according to the gender of perpetrator and victim, and at the level of terminology a panoply of terms exists in relation to "domestic violence". For some researchers, "violence" fails to evoke psychological abuse, and "domestic violence" - like "family violence" - may obscure who actually initiates and/or perpetrates the violence and whether it is uni- or bilateral. Carlson succinctly defines abuse as: "A pattern of behaviours that can be physical, emotional or psychological, verbal, or sexual that is intended to control or demean" (1997). For the purposes of this article, intimate partner abuse (IPA) refers to any abusive act deemed to have the intention, or perceived intention, of generating fear, causing physical injury, intimidation, disorientation, denigration or emotional or psychological pain to an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to any act deemed to have the intention or perceived intention of causing physical injury to an intimate partner. In many cases these forms are perpetrated simultaneously.

As Palin-Davies (2006) notes, domestic violence is extremely complex, not only in terms of its dynamics but also how it is presented, and by/for whom; the "ethics of presentation" (Katz Rothman 2007), and indeed *non*-presentation are key issues here. For there exists a gamut of studies, embracing empirical studies and meta-analyses of empirical research, that indicates IPA&V to be perpetrated by women and girls in heterosexual relationships as frequently, or (in some studies) almost as frequently as they are by men and boys (e.g. Archer 2002; Dutton 2007; George 2003; Hines 2008; Morse 1995; Straus 2006) and for very similar reasons (Medeiros and Straus 2006). Such "gender symmetry" findings have been challenged (Kimmel 2002; Pagelow 1985) on a variety of grounds, including methodological concerns, reporting and recording

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[2] The diary was written in the third person in order to help reduce the emotional impact; see discussion in the methods section.

differences, and lack of identification of whether the violence was unilaterally initiated or responsive/defensive. Further, as Loseke and Kurz (2005) note, much of the research on family violence in general is characterized by a lack of clarity in key concepts. In contrast to the "gender symmetry" findings, other researchers contend that IPV is primarily an asymmetrical problem of men's violence to women, on the dimensions of frequency, severity, consequences, the victim's sense of safety and well-being (Dobash and Dobash 2004), and the greater likelihood of women being injured and repeatedly beaten by male partners (Archer 2002). The gender symmetry/asymmetry debate continues unresolved, however, and the overall picture appears to be that with IPA&V, women and men, heterosexual, bisexual, Lesbian, gay (Island and Letellier 1991; Lockhart et al., 1994; Renzetti and Miley 1996), queer (Leventhal and Lundy 1999), and transsexual/transsexed (Brown 2007), across age, physical ability, socio-economic and ethnic background, find themselves victims of such abuse. Indeed, the prevalence of domestic violence amongst same-sex couples appears to be comparable to that of heterosexual couples (Seelau and Seelau 2005).

As McHugh and Hanson Frieze (2006) note, research demonstrating women to be both victims *and* perpetrators challenges many long-held assumptions and explanations of IPA&V, giving rise to calls for more in-depth, qualitative studies into the experiences of abused men. Writing recently, George (2003) notes specifically that: "case analysis of battered husbands, by virtue of an almost complete absence of academic qualitative study of assaulted men, is limited to just a few sources". This article seeks to address this research lacuna in a small way, by focusing at the micro-level of a particular case. The contribution of this particular article is then to examine the interactional accomplishment of IPA&V using a limited topical life-history method, and employing some of the insights of Goffman's (1972, 1976) work on the "territories of the self" and their violation. To widen the analysis, research accounts of both abused women and abused men are incorporated where relevant, for as Migliaccio (2002) notes: "The expression of commonalties that are shared between abused males and females can assist researchers in bettering their understanding of the abusive experience" for all. This comparative element, it should be emphasized, in no way minimizes or exculpates the appalling incidence of violence against women, but the use and abuse of power by women in intimate relationships is clearly worthy of rigorous, scholarly investigation by feminist and other scholars. The current lack of empirical research into female-on-male intimate violence limits greatly our understanding of its nature and processes. Although open to debate, De Welde (2003), for example, has argued that "hegemonic discourses of women's powerlessness are not equipped to deal with power from women" (p. 250), and such discourses require our research attention.

Theoretical Perspective

Symbolic interactionism offers us a powerful analytic lens through which to examine IPA&V, and has been used to investigate the perspective of both the perpetrator (e.g. Goodrum et al. 2001) and the victim (e.g. Lempert 1994). As Goodrum *et al.* (2001) indicate, the symbolic interactionist tradition acknowledges both the free will of the actor, and the interpersonal and social forces shaping and constraining her/his action, so that social agency is theorized as both structurally constrained and actively constructed (Allen-Collinson and Hockey 2007). From an interactionist/phenomenological perspective, Denzin (1984) has analysed "domestic violence" and what he terms *negative symbolic interaction*: interactional structures that

create negative structures of experience. His critical phenomenology advocates that violence be examined at the micro-level, for whilst structural processes, including the ideological, influence and shape interpersonal violence, their meanings are filtered and woven through the embodied lives of individual, interacting social actors.

With its meticulous attention to aspects of meaning-making, in particular the local production of meanings, emergent from and negotiated within situated everyday interaction, symbolic interactionism can offer insights into the experience of IPA&V from both "sides". Role-taking, one of interactionism's key concepts, permits us to enter theoretically speaking into a violent or abusive encounter, for as Blumer (1980) himself noted, the study of violent behaviour requires identification of the way in which a social actor her/himself perceives and defines the situation. Analogously, "synesic role-taking" (Scully 1988) involves the imaginative construction of another person's feelings, attitudes, and the anticipation of their behaviour, for example, in order to avoid or minimize a partner's physical violence (Goodrum *et al.* 2001), as examined below. Whilst many interactonists have attended to the micro-spatial elements of interactional encounters, Goffman's work remains particularly apposite and powerful in this domain, and his conceptual framework will be considered below in relation to the theorisation of the data. First, the methodological approach is described.

Methodological Approach

The life history approach is particularly well-suited to an in-depth examination of the nexus of social structures and personal experiences, particularly those of a sensitive and emotionally-charged nature, such as IPA&V (c.f. Townend and Smith 2007). Here, it is perhaps more accurate to term the study a limited, topical life history, or an "edited topical life history" (Ward 1999), given the focus on a particular period and element in an individual's life - intimate abuse. As Plummer (2001) highlights, the life history approach is a *sine qua non* in its ability to reveal the subjective, inner realm of experience. This was one of the primary aims of the pilot stage of a study; the full project will examine lived-body experiences of IPA&V via victims' accounts. The pilot phase involved a series of in-depth interviews with two male victims of IPA&V, one of whom also offered his own personal diary of abuse, details of which follow below. Although the men were unknown to each other, of different generations (one early 30s, one mid-50s) and nationalities, from very different class and occupational backgrounds, the similarity between their experiences and the congruence between their narratives and those portrayed in the literature on both female and male victims of IPA&V were noteworthy.

In order to provide analytic focus and consistency, this article is based on the series of interviews with just one of the participants, together with his personal diary. The data are thus dual-sourced, from: 1) a series of seven (to-date) in-depth, initially semi-structured and then subsequently unstructured interviews with one of the male participants, subsequent to his having left the abusive relationship; and 2) a copy of a "life document" (Plummer 2001): his personal diary, kept for a period of just over two years towards the end of the relationship (although at the time he was unaware that the relationship would end), and during which time the abuse was actually taking place. Delamont (1992) emphasizes the symbolic significance of pseudonym choice, and the participant, NH, selected his own. NH had lived in a relationship that became increasingly abusive and violent, for over twenty years, and included marriage and the birth of children, before eventually fleeing the family home only at a point when he felt in danger of *permanent* injury from his wife's violence. In his diary, a prologue recounts

salient events before the "real-time" entries begin; an epilogue details some of the principal events occurring immediately after his departure. In the last year of diary records, the text is supplemented by photos, some taken by NH with his home webcam and others by a close relative; together these provide a photographic record of a range of facial and body injuries. NH eventually left the abusive relationship when he realised that the negative symbolic interaction (Denzin 1984) that had structured his marriage and family life for so long, was unlikely ever to change.

The personal diary and interview transcripts were read and re-read as part of a lengthy and continuing process of "indwelling" (Maykut and Morehouse 1994) that seeks empathic understanding of participants' lived experiences. The personal diary was first read prior to the interviews with NH. Observations about, and responses to both the diary and the interview process were also noted in analytic memo form (Burgess 1982). This aided efforts at boundary maintenance between empathic understanding and a wish to avoid colonization of, or merger with interviewees, to try and establish a dialogic rather than monologic relationship (Frank 2005; Smith et al. 2009 in press). Using thematic content analysis and sensitising concepts, including those derived from literature, the principal emergent themes were identified, interrogated, compared and contrasted. It should be emphasized that this article is *not* a narrative or discourse analysis *per se*, but an examination of specific interactional instances within one man's account of intimate abuse. The thematic form of analysis necessarily has the effect of fragmenting the endogenous narrative flow of NH's diary, but for the purposes of this article it is the interactional exchanges upon which the analysis focuses. It is thus, in terms of the subjectivist/objectivist continuum (Anderson 1999), perhaps more akin to a "realist" account (Van Maanen 1995), or "realist tale", which Sparkes (2002) describes as a genre with the power to connect theory to data in a way that, "creates spaces for participant voices to be heard in a coherent text, and with specific points in mind ..."

Extracts from the personal diary are reproduced verbatim, and include my explanatory comments in square parentheses. NH originally wrote his diary of abuse in the third person, finding it initially too emotionally difficult and embarrassing to write in the first. Subsequently he considered that the relative "neutrality" afforded by use of the third person also helped bring analytic distance to bear on a very stressful and disempowering situation (c.f. Enosh and Buchbinder 2005). NH commenced his diary-keeping in order systematically to document the abuse to which he was subject, primarily as a means of enabling him temporarily to "bracket" such stressful experiences so that he could "get on with the rest of his life", as he elucidated in an interview. It is thus NH's own accounts of his feelings, experiences and perceptions that provide the data. As Ellis and Bochner (2000) note, in telling their stories people make judgments about how best to present self-relevant facts, and this performativity of course applies to NH's interview and diary narratives, as it does to all account-based research. Indeed, in this form of research, insistence upon an overly-rigid (neo)realist ontological and/or epistemological stance is problematic, for as Gilbert and Abell (1983) remind us: "accounts are all we have to work with". Questions of "validity" and "reliability" sometimes arise with regard to qualitative research based on participants' accounts of experiences, which are not "corroborated", for example via participant observation or other witness accounts. Given the overriding need to maintain the anonymity of victims of IPA&V, it is very often not desirable or possible to seek the account of the abuser. As Warrington (2001) notes in relation to the "truth" of the accounts given by the abused women she studied, the accuracy of such accounts is substantiated by similarities with those of other participants, and within the research literature generally. This was certainly the case with the accounts of the two pilot participants in this study, and

questions intra- and inter-interviews produced highly consistent responses. No claims regarding representativeness or generalisability are, however, made for the study, given that this was not its purpose.

Ethical Concerns

The ethical challenges raised by sensitive and controversial research topics such as female-perpetrated abuse are substantial, but to borrow from Sieber and Stanley (1988) "shying away from controversial topics simply because they are controversial, is an avoidance of responsibility"; not least our responsibilities as researchers and sociologists. My key ethical concerns here related to confidentiality, the protection of informants' anonymity and the minimization of any distress during the research process; in sum, an "ethic of care" (Plummer 2001). The research was approved by the relevant University authorities, and it was agreed that all audio/digital recordings of interviews would be transcribed by the researcher herself. Pseudonyms were used throughout and every effort made to remove/conceal identifying characteristics from the accounts. In particular, there were grave concerns about retribution from NH's ex-wife, who, judging by analogous previous instances would have punished him severely and violently for the disclosure of "private troubles" to any outsider. Although NH had left his wife prior to the interview process, as Pagelow (1985) warns, violence may continue after the abusive relationship has ended. Indeed, NH's wife had attacked him on several occasions subsequent to their separation, including one occasion at work when security personnel had to be called in by colleagues in fear for his safety.

The courage and openness with which interviewees spoke was notable, as was their willingness to discuss so fully and in such a thoughtful manner such highly personal and sensitive issues. Narrating abuse may be threatening or painful to recount so that the very telling may represent trauma (Owens 2006). As those involved in researching violence have noted, the researcher her/himself can be deeply affected by such research (Skinner et al. 2005), including during the reading of highly disturbing accounts; indeed qualitative research often demands a high level of emotion work (Holland 2007). Encouragingly though, Langford (2000) also notes advantages to research participation, including catharsis, healing, being given a voice, and gaining a sense of purpose. NH indicated that these latter two factors were of particular salience to him. The social agency of "victims" or survivors of IPA&V should also be acknowledged and, as Berns and Schweingruber (2007) note: "victims" of domestic violence do not necessarily make the victim identification themselves. Indeed, NH hardly ever used the term "victim" in the interviews and never in the diary, despite serious physical abuse being perpetrated upon him; "victim" for him connoted negative self-imagery.[3] Further, in relation to survivors of female-perpetrated IPA&V, including Lesbian women, many struggle with the understanding that they *are/were* abused because they believe that only men abuse women (Giorgio 2008). Having portrayed some of the ethical issues, the conceptual framework will now be addressed.

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[3] For an excellent discussion of the gender dimensions of narrative reframing of victimization, see de Welde (2003: 257)

Goffman's Territories of the Self and their Contamination

As a "third-generation interactionist" (Denzin 1992), Goffman's work can, I contend, offer us conceptual insights applicable to the study of IPA&V. His study of "territories of the self", for example, in *Relations in Public* (1972), together with their potential violation via various modalities such as contaminative acts, extracted from the mortification processes described in *Asylums* (1976) are highly pertinent. In *Relations in Public*, Goffman posits eight different territories of the self, culturally and situationally-contingent. Although there is not the word-space here to consider all eight, five are of particular relevance to the present analysis: 1) personal space; 2) use space; 3) the sheath; 4) possessional territory; and 5) information preserve (a further territory, "conversational preserve" will be examined in another article). These territories of the self are portrayed below and subsequently discussed in relation to their violation via three specific modalities of contamination encountered within the interactional realm of IPA&V: a) violation of informational preserve; b) physical contamination; and c) interpersonal contamination. First then, the "territories of the self" are described.

1) **Personal space** Goffman (1972) portrays as: "The space surrounding an individual, anywhere within which an entering other causes the individual to feel encroached upon". It has also been defined as "a kind of spatial envelope surrounding an individual, and it implicates the required distance to other people, whether strangers or intimates alike" (Czarnowski 1978, quoted in Toiskallio 2002: 171). The amount of space required by an individual is culturally and situationally contingent, depending on an array of variables, such as cultural norms, and the degree of intimacy of the co-participants. Hall (1968), in his theory of proxemics, posited four kinds of personal space ranging from the public to the intimate, the latter permitting very close contact. Further, Low (2003) highlights the tacit nature of these spaces, where social actors usually only become aware of the boundaries upon their breaching. As Sommer (1969) notes, the violation of personal space is the violation of society's expectations and an intrusion into a person's self-boundaries. Such intrusion appears to constitute a regular and frequent occurrence for many victims of IPA.

2) Linked to personal space, is Goffman's notion of **use space**: "the territory immediately around or in front of an individual, his (sic) claim to which is respected because of apparent instrumental needs" (Goffman 1972). Goffman provides the example of gallery-goers who can expect that when standing close to a picture other people will make efforts to minimise blocking the formers' vision. A shower cubicle would constitute use space, as would kitchen worktops when preparing a meal.

3) **The sheath** is Goffman's term (ibidem) for the skin and clothing; different parts of the corporeal sheath being accorded differential degrees of concern and ritual respect. The face and "private parts" of the body are generally accorded greatest concern, the face even more so than the sexual organs in some interactional contexts, for example in prostitutes' prohibition against clients' kissing or handling of their face. Smith and Davidson (2006) highlight that the skin is experienced and conceptualized as the outer boundary of self, so that the touch of an object not actually invited is an intrusion into the most intimate realm of personal space, another salient aspect in many accounts of IPA&V.

4) **Possessional territory** Goffman (1972) defines as: "Any set of objects that can be identified with the self and arrayed around the body wherever it is". Victims

of IPA often find their possessional territory violated, and possessions damaged or destroyed.

5) **Information preserve** Goffman relates to: "The set of facts about himself (sic) to which an individual expects to control access while in the presence of others" (ibidem), under which category Goffman includes a person's "content of mind", biographical information, contents of pockets, bags, letters, and to which we might add in contemporary times, email, phone and text messages. The ways in which all these territories may be subjected to violation within IPA&V is discussed below in relation to the data, and along three dimensions of contamination, as originally identified by Goffman (1976) in *Asylums*.

Modalities of Contamination

In his study, _Asylums_, Goffman (1976) portrays a range of mortification practices imposed upon inmates of total institutions and encompassing contaminative exposure of various kinds. As Goffman notes: "on the outside [of a total institution] the individual can hold objects of self-feeling - such as his (sic) body, his immediate actions, his thoughts, and some possessions - clear of contact with alien and contaminating things" (Goffman 1976: 31-2). Inside total institutions, however, these territories of the self become subject to surveillance, and regular, routine violation; the "embodiments of self [are] profaned" (Goffman ibidem: 32). Goffman posits three different forms of contaminative exposure: a) violation of informational preserve; b) physical contamination; and c) interpersonal contamination. These conceptualisations are discussed below in relation to IPA&V, drawing on data from the current study and also linking this to wider research findings in those areas where commonalities emerged.

Violation of Informational Preserve

When an inmate is admitted to a total institution such as a prison, facts about her/his personal life, normally disclosed only to chosen individuals, are made freely available to a range of others, including staff and fellow inmates. Similarly, patients admitted to hospitals or other medical settings may find that the healthcare professionals with whom they interact hold detailed, intimate and embodied knowledge of them although they themselves are not intimates (Morgan 2007). Within intimate relationships too, "violation of informational preserve" (Goffman 1976: 32) can occur when one partner deliberately violates the other's privacy, by for example looking through or destroying private correspondence and confidential documents, as an entry in NH's diary testifies:

> She went into the study after he had gone to bed. He could hear her going through his things. The next morning, the instructions for accessing his work emails from home (which he had hidden) had disappeared. She could now hack into his confidential emails at any time. [01.09.03]

Goffman (1972) also notes how pockets, purses, and letters may be rummaged through. In relation to NH, it emerged that his wife not only regularly violated his informational preserve by accessing personal items and information, but even binned personal and important documents without his permission:

> On Monday night he asked if she had seen his Buddhist literature because it had disappeared from the desk. 'No,' she said. On Thursday night he had

cause to put something in the study bin. The bright yellow paper of one of his Buddhist programmes caught his eye in the bin, under some other papers. He moved the top set of rubbish to find all of his Buddhist papers. In addition he found the whole contents of his 'personal and private' box file. All of his memories – letters from school chums, student cards, old postcards etc. – all ceremoniously binned. More upsettingly, his parents had given him a copy of their will two years before, and she had binned that as well. [29.11.02]

Having one's possessions and personal papers rifled through in such a manner can leave a deep sense of violation and contamination, as similarly recounted by victims of burglary (Shover 1991) and theft. The unilaterality of informational preserve in NH's marriage was demonstrated, however, when he wanted to discuss his relationship difficulties with a Relate (Marriage Guidance) counsellor. The very idea that "couple informational preserve" might be compromised met with a violent response from his wife:

He said that he had made an appointment at Relate to discuss the mediation of their relationship to a third party. She went to throttle him, cutting his neck with her fingernails. She pushed him against the mantelpiece with some force, cutting his elbow. [10.09.03]

Physical Contamination

A second, more direct form of contamination pertains to the physical contamination of the self and also the "extended self" (Stephens et al. 2005), as examined below in relation to possessional territory. First though, the physical exposure and contamination of the body itself is highly pertinent to the analysis. The indignities and humiliation of enforced corporeal exposure, for example during medical[4] or security examinations, via communal sleeping and showering arrangements, and enforced use of doorless toilets, have all been vividly illustrated by Goffman (1976). Further, Cover (2003) notes how the frame of the communal shower operates in connection with disciplinary institutions such as schools, gyms, and sporting facilities where, "Nakedness in the shower or locker-room allows an extremity of policing of the body" (Cover ibidem: 59). The physical exposure and/or corporeal policing of an abused partner may take a variety of forms, for example insisting that they leave open and accessible spaces usually reserved for private usage (in much contemporary "Western" housing at least), such as bathrooms, showers, and toilets, unless the couple normally shares such spaces amicably. NH's attempts to retain some privacy often met an angry and/or violent response from his wife, as described in the interviews and reflected in many diary entries, including the following:

He goes into the bathroom and puts the catch on the door because their daughter has a 16-year old female friend staying. He does not want any embarrassment when he is in the shower. As he wets his face to shave, his wife is pushing at the door – harder and harder until she manages to sheer the catch completely. She is in. She then proceeds to tell him off for putting the catch on the door. [19.10.03]

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[4] In medical encounters, however, efforts are also made to *limit* such exposure. See for example, Lawler's (1991) study, examining the use of screens during the performance of potentially contaminative tasks of health care

He closes the bedroom door slightly in order to get undressed. His wife interprets this as slamming the door in her face even though he did not know that she was following him (she sleeps in a separate room). She delivers a full force blow to his face. It is like a thunderstorm: he sees a panorama of fork lightening, somewhat speeded up, followed perceptibly later by a searing pain right across his face and a hissing in his ears. The pain abates, but this hissing does not. His vision becomes blurred. He pleads to her to stop this. She hits him again. He goes down to the kitchen, hoping that she will calm down. She is there immediately. She pushes him into a corner and takes a kitchen knife with an 8" blade from the block. She is now holding this overarm, above him, threatening to stick it in him… [22.04.03]

Physical stripping of clothing to leave a person naked, cold and vulnerable is a "punishment" tactic used both in total institutions, and also within abusive intimate relationships where one partner may use nakedness to increase the vulnerability of her/his victim, as did NH's wife:

She has thrown his dressing gown away (on the basis that it was torn) so that her 'backing him into a corner and taunting him' routine is now done with him naked and cold – and in particular, vulnerable. [6.12.03]

NH explained in the interviews that working full-time, he was unable to go to the shops during his working-day, and so it sometimes took some time before he could replace damaged clothing. As Pence (1987: 37) notes in relation to female victims of IPA&V, such physical exposure and sexual abuse may be combined in various ways, such as attacks upon the sexual parts. Male victims too report attacks to their sexual organs by female abusers, as illustrated by one of the participants in Migliaccio's (2002) study, whose partner would regularly "kick me in the balls or hit me in the balls… "

A highly contaminative form of exposure occurs when one's body is forced into contact (including that of a visual or olfactory nature), with dirty, sullied or defiling objects and substances. More extreme examples cited by Goffman (1976) include prisoners in concentration camps forced to share a bed with a corpse, and Chinese political prisons where inmates were given only two minutes to squat over a filthy, open Chinese latrine under public scrutiny. More common, mundane sources of physical contamination within total institutions such as prisons, hospitals and boarding schools, include exposure to soiled towels, bedding and communal clothing, unhygienic, tainted or poorly prepared food, and dirty cutlery and utensils, as graphically described by interviewees in Smith's (2002) study of female prisoners. Dirty, soiled and stained sinks, baths, showers and toilets constitute further sources of contamination, horror and disgust in total institutions. In less "total" institutions, Fusco (2006) portrays some of the "geographies of abjection" encountered in communal sporting spaces, such as locker rooms, where people are confronted by others' body fluids, hair, and spittle. Forcing a dirty, defiling object or substance - the "abject" (Kristeva 1982) – particularly human or animal waste, upon another human being is not only disgusting for the victim, but physically and symbolically a highly contaminative act, demonstrating disrespect and contempt for the other, and violating her/his territory of the self along various sensory dimensions. Examples abounded in the interviews, and a diary entry vividly portrays such a contaminative act forced upon NH by his wife (dog-care was shared by all members of the family):

> This morning, after she had cleaned up three lots of dog shit from the ironing room, she placed them on the kitchen table in a see through bag as he was finishing breakfast. Still warm, still smelling. He placed it on to the floor to save retching, but she replaced it on the table again … Five minutes later, when the gesture had run its course, she removed the shit from the kitchen table and put it in the bin. [09.10.02]

The destruction or concealment of one's personal objects, or "possessional territory" (Goffman 1972), can also be experienced as highly disturbing and threatening, for as Stephens et al. (2005) note, a person's possessions form part of self-identity, constituting a component of the "extended self". Thus, if an individual deliberately damages, defiles or destroys another's belongings s/he is in some ways attempting to diminish the other's sense of self, as well as communicating a threat of harm to the owner. S/he may also seek to control a partner and curtail her/his agency in the occupational and public spheres via the removal or concealment of personal items and official identifications. One of the informants in the Stephens et al. (ibidem: 49) study, for example, indicated that her partner either destroyed or concealed her birth certificate and Social Security card, documents essential as proof of identity. As the authors (ibidem: 49) contend, when an abuser systematically destroys possessions that are both a means to, and symbolic of a partner's autonomy, they are destroying proof of social agency and demonstrating complete control of a partner's life. Analogously, NH's diary entries revealed a range of attempts to challenge and constrain his autonomy, agency and self-determination as an adult, including removal of his passport, required regularly for business purposes:

> Whilst on holiday, he checks [for] his passport. He always keeps it in his briefcase (because he often has to travel abroad on business) but his wife has always said that she should keep it with the other family passports. It is missing from his briefcase when he goes to look. He asks his wife if she has seen it. She does not say yes or no (as usual) but becomes agitated that he has accused her of stealing it (which he has not done). [23.08.03]

Furthermore, his wife's misappropriation of NH's house keys effectively denied him autonomous access to his own home as, with no spare, he was unable to have a duplicate cut:

> Back home – she removed the key to the house from his key ring. He must now knock if he is to enter and clearly will not be in the house on his own. [21.11.02]

In addition to the destruction or concealment of such objects confirmatory of adult status and agency, more personal, cherished possessions may also constitute the target of a perpetrator's attack, for, as Stephens et al. (2005) argue, these possessions can represent interests or talents central to the abused's self-identity and autonomy. Not only are symbolic possessions such as creative artifacts of great sentimental value, but if created by the victim, they are unique and irreplaceable, standing as potent testimony to her/his autonomy, creativity and skill; elements that a perpetrator of IPA may find particularly threatening in her/his attempts to restrict, control, demean and undermine the victim. NH was a musician and had accumulated an extensive collection of songs,

written and recorded over several decades, but which vanished from the study, to which only he and his wife had access:

> He has about 100 songs that he has written over the years, nearly all recorded on tape or cassette. He finds an old tape recorder and records all of them on to CDs so that they will no longer deteriorate. There are four full CDs of his songs (which she has always told him are 'crap') dating from the age of 16. He places them in his CD rack in the study. Within four weeks they all have disappeared. He asks her if she has seen them. 'Are you accusing me of stealing them?' is her only reply. [06.08.03]

Goffman's concept of physical contamination has been examined above in relation to both the body of the abused husband, and his possessional territory. The final form of contamination to be considered is that of interpersonal contamination; a salient feature within accounts of both female and male victims of IPA&V (see Lempert 1994, and Migliaccio 2002, respectively).

Interpersonal Contamination

Goffman (1976) reminds us that when the agent of contamination is another human being, an individual is contaminated not just physically, but also by forced *interpersonal* contact. His account of interpersonal contamination focuses primarily upon the social relationship, however fleeting, consequent upon forced interpersonal contact, such as within prison cells, barrack rooms and convents, where a person is unable to choose with whom s/he shares even the most "private" of spaces. In the wider social world too, unwanted touching and invasion of personal space are signifiers of interpersonal contamination, and have been subject to extensive feminist analysis in the case of gender violence. Extreme examples of interpersonal contamination include rape and sexual assault where the victim involuntarily incorporates the perpetrator into her/his extended self; the depth and enduring nature of the contamination being evidenced by the victim's feelings of violation (Stephens et al. 2005), and in many cases, of disgust, shame, guilt, grief and rage.

The following analysis focuses upon less extreme, but nonetheless highly deleterious contaminative elements of interpersonal abuse within the domestic milieu. The nature of unwanted touching may of course not *necessarily* be violent, as has been noted in relation to physical and sexual harassment in occupational and public settings of various kinds, where touching may take the form of superficially "gentle" or "affectionate" behaviour such as patting and hugging (Giuffre and Williams 1994). If unwanted however, whatever the degree of force applied, it is defined as harassment in many occupational contexts. The complexity of IPA can make particularly difficult the identification and definition of harassment and abuse within an intimate relationship, given that such relationships are generally acknowledged to encompass intercorporeal affection and touching. Definitional complexities are salient in the following extract from NH's diary, where there is seemingly nothing untoward or aggressive in the act *per se* – one of cuddling, usually taken to be an indication of affection. Here though the recipient social actor's definition of the situation is crucial, for the context, intent and lack of reciprocity transform a normally benign act into one of aggression, invasiveness and interpersonal contamination; a regular occurrence, as NH further explained in the interviews. This entry follows the recounting of a bout of violent physical aggression from his wife:

> Then, when he is distressed by the aggression, she turns 180 degrees to feign comfort – attempts at stroking and cuddling … which are really only another form of aggression, invading his space when he needs it to recover. Along with this, dogged insistence on her part - 'I won't leave you alone until I have had a cuddle' - this can go on for about two hours until he is emotionally drained and unable to sleep because of the invasive behaviour. [13.03.03]

A more overtly hostile tactic favoured by his wife was what NH termed "cornering". In this form of interpersonal contamination, evoking Goffman's notion of "the sheath" (1972: 62) as the most minimal of all possible personal spaces, NH's wife (a tall, strong woman) would roughly hustle him into a corner leaving him no space for manoeuvre, pushing her face so closely up to his that he felt her hot breath upon his skin. Fearing that she would accuse him (to others) of attacking her, should he attempt to push her aside (see Concluding Comments below), NH would often endure such cornering for hours in an attempt to avoid "provoking" violence. Her proximity was so great that he was unable to focus clearly upon her, thus being unsighted and rendered more vulnerable to sudden hits and punches. As relevant to such contamination, Goffman (ibidem: 71-72) portrays a range of modalities of violation, including the intrusion of bodily excreta and their stains. A further category of more ethereal but nevertheless unpleasant "excreta" encompasses odour, including tainted breath and body odour, and also, as Goffman perceptively highlights, body heat. As such cornering might go on for several hours, NH was subject to a prolonged excreta-contaminative experience, often in conjunction with direct physical violence, leaving him feeling abused, defiled and exhausted.

A further form of interpersonal contamination, which emerged from interviews and the diary, was NH's wife's insistence on sleeping in his bed on occasion (they normally slept in separate bedrooms). For NH, this enforced togethering represented a violation of his space, and an unhappy reversal of the usual happier connotation of sleeping with a partner as being symbolic of togetherness, intimacy and trust:

> She allows him to bed at 12:30, insisting that she sleep in the same bed. She wakes him twice in the night by prodding him, and she is awake by 5:30. He has had five hours' broken sleep and he is exhausted. He complains to her about this and she hits him full on the face again. She also tries to suffocate him with a pillow. He goes to the bathroom. He has a sore jaw, a black eye and a large bruise on his leg. [24.04.03]

In addition to the unwanted physical presence of an aggressive and confrontational partner in the intimate space of a bed, disruption and contamination of sleep space can result. Usually, adults in contemporary "Western" society enjoy the right to sleep more or less in a manner of their choosing, unless insomniac, or subject to the demands of young children (see for example, Venn et al. 2008). As Meadows (2005) points out, we usually move from infancy where sleep is open to observation, to adulthood where we attain the right to be left alone whilst sleeping. Infringement of this right may consequently be experienced as infantilising, highly controlling and also threatening, although the categorisation of sleep deprivation as a weapon within IPA&V may not always be made by victims themselves (Berns and Schweingruber 2007). Sleep deprivation was often used by NH's wife as part of her array of control tactics, as illustrated within the interviews and by this diary entry:

> She will often come into his bedroom after he has gone to bed (sometimes after he has gone to sleep) for 'a chat'. This is often acrimonious and intrusive and sometimes lasts until gone 2:00 in the morning. His tiredness makes work the next day difficult. He finds this all extremely disorientating… [3.12.02]

Actively depriving one's partner of sleep is a way in which power relations are re/constituted in and through the control of sleep (Williams 2007: 148) and can render the sleep-deprived person disorientated and vulnerable. Williams also observes that this has clear links to the use of sleep deprivation in other contexts as an instrument of interrogation, punishment or torture. The systematic use of sleep deprivation is commonly used in total institutions as a form of punishment, but also constitutes a component of the "intimate terrorism pattern of abuse" identified by Johnson and Ferraro (2000) in relation to IPA&V.

Not only did NH's wife invade and contaminate his sleep space and domestic space more generally, but as the relationship further degenerated over time, he recounted how increasingly she sought to contaminate the previously safe haven of his workplace, by forcing her way into his office, even when he was engaged in meetings. This caused a high degree of social embarrassment to NH, who was in a high profile job where presentation and maintenance of a professional persona was essential. On several occasions NH's wife barged her way in through his office door, and refused to leave:

> He's in a meeting. His wife bursts in to his office. He asks if she will wait outside until he has finished. She ignores this and goes to sit at his desk. Whilst he is still in the meeting in the same room, she proceeds to open his emails, and even plays a song on his computer. Many of his emails are sensitive because of the nature of his job… [19.03.03]

Such invasion was not just confined to interpersonal contamination of the material occupational domain but extended to frequent vitriolic, abusive and intrusive telephone calls at work. His wife would also telephone other work colleagues, on occasion senior managers, to discuss him and sometimes to make arrangements regarding meetings and social events without his knowledge. This violated his informational preserve, causing embarrassment and confusion, and undermining his credibility as a competent senior manager. These then were just some of the modalities of violation and contamination that emerged so evocatively from analysis of both the interview and diary data.

Concluding Comments

This article has sought to contribute new insights into the analysis of IPA&V from an interactionist perspective, utilising Goffman's conceptualisations of the "territories of the self" and modalities of their violation, in order to examine data from a case study of a male victim of intimate abuse. The data revealed three specific modalities of contamination to be employed by the female perpetrator: violation of informational preserve, physical contamination, and interpersonal contamination. Whilst far from an exhaustive portrayal, it should be emphasized that the contaminative acts described above constituted only part of an ongoing, long-term strategy, which appeared to be

directed at achieving heightened control over the abused husband and systematically wearing down his resistance. This form of sustained and systematic abuse has been termed the "intimate terrorism pattern of abuse" (Johnson and Ferraro 2000), motivated by a desire for coercive control where violence is just one tactic deployed in a more general pattern of control over a partner. Such "coercive control" and "microregulation" (Stark 2006: 1021-1022) of all aspects of a partner's everyday life usually involve sustained psychological and emotional abuse as well as physical violence, as was revealed in NH's case. His wife's long-standing and frequent abuse, as described in both the diary and interviews, certainly appeared to be directed at the coercive control of her husband, including via the discrediting of both his professional and familial roles, and via systematic attempts at erosion of his sense of self. As NH said: "You're told off and told you're wrong so often that after a while you don't know who you are any more". Also of analytic interest, and addressed in another paper, was NH's steadfast refusal to resort to "hitting back" or even pushing his wife away, in order to halt her violent attacks. He explained in the interviews that this would have violated deeply his own ethical principles, and also been counter-productive in 1) allowing his wife to claim that *he* was the violent one in their relationship; and 2) exacerbating the attack; both factors reflected in other research on female-on-male intimate abuse (Sarantakos 2004; Migliaccio 2002). Many of the processes of mortification and control described systematically by NH, although of course differing in institutional context, resonate strongly with those identified by Goffman as standard practices employed within total institutions to demean and control inmates. Word limit precludes a wider analysis of other associated tactics, such as isolation of the victim from sources of social support, processes of stigmatisation, and identity contestation; addressed in other articles.

Whilst no claims regarding data representativeness or generalisability are made for this study, given that it is based upon a limited topical life-history, some tentative theoretical generalisations have been made in extending Goffman's original conceptual frame to provide new insights into the intimate interactional arena of partner abuse. In the particular case examined here, the victim was a heterosexual man, but many of the forms of contaminative violation he experienced at the hands of his female partner appear to share similarities with studies of both female and male intimate abuse victims and also of same-sex IPA&V. Although it is not possible from this small-scale, qualitative, micro-level project to speculate as to the existence of any gendered patterning in the perpetration of IPA&V using the forms of territorial violation and contamination portrayed here, future research might usefully explore whether male-on-female and same-sex IPA&V share similarities with the forms of contaminative abuse identified in this study, and investigate whether there are any specifically gendered and/or sexuality-related elements of IPA&V.

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