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A sociology of everyday violence: interactional encounters in intimate partner abuse

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Abstract

Sociology has sometimes been accused of overlooking the sociological significance of domestic violence, and intimate partner abuse/violence (IPA&V). Phenomenological sociology provides a specific sociology of the everyday, offering powerful insights into the production of interactional routines, including abuse and violence. Drawing upon data from a qualitative study of IPA&V, this article focuses on an in-depth life-history of a British male victim/survivor, who endured unilateral violence from his wife for over 20 years. Data were gathered via six topical life-history interviews and a personal diary. Employing insights from the sociology of the everyday, the article analyses the domestic interactional domain of IPA&V, drawing upon a sociological-phenomenological framework to explore the lived, everyday experience of abuse and violence from the standpoint of a male survivor. This constitutes a relatively under-researched perspective in extant sociological literature.

Introduction

Attention has been called to the growing phenomenon of routine violence, often rendered invisible due to its normalisation in everyday life (Purkayastha & Strother Ratcliff, 2014). Whilst highly active in analysing and explaining social conflict at the macro-level, sociology has been accused of neglecting the sociological significance of domestic violence (Hearn, 2013) and intimate partner abuse and violence

(IPA&V). For many, there is an awful mundanity in being regularly and frequently subjected to such abuse by an intimate partner, both within and beyond the domestic sphere. Phenomenological sociology provides a key strand within the sociologies of the everyday, offering powerful insights into everyday sense-making activities and the production of the 'mundane' and 'unmarked' (Allen-Collinson, 2006). As Warin & Dennis (2008) note, it is important to examine the ways in which traumatic occurrences and memories are transformed into 'unremarkable' practices of everyday life. The purpose of this article is thus not to engage in debates regarding the incidence of male perpetrated or female perpetrated violence, but to explore sociologically at the micro-level, the everyday, routinised abuse of a man by his wife, as lived and recounted by an insider to that particular interactional domain. This perspective is currently under-researched within the sociology of the everyday.

In the case study described here, part of a wider research project on experiences of IPA&V, a white-British, middle-class, senior academic reported his experience of living in a violent intimate relationship. His wife's abuse, both emotional and physical, began in the early years of their relationship and endured for over 20 years. It increased in severity in the final years of the marriage, before the husband eventually decided there was no feasible option but to leave the family home and his two children. During the final two years of the relationship, he charted systematically in a personal diary the abuse and violence to which he was routinely subjected, in order to help him cope, and to give himself some analytic distance from the ongoing stress. Together with a series of six in-depth interviews,

the diary provides the data for the topical life-history upon which this article is based. Here, I analyse everyday abuse and violence as a situated interactional activity, locally-produced, primarily in the domestic milieu, but also on occasion in the workplace and public spaces.

In the article, I draw upon Schütz's (1967) phenomenological insights regarding sense-making and the ongoing stream of consciousness that we experience in *Dasein* (being-in-the-world). This sense-making allows us to engage in the *Lebenswelt* (the world of everyday) with a degree of confidence that we know and understand what is happening and what to expect, without having endlessly to question our taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the 'real'. This mode of being Schütz (1967) termed the 'natural attitude', where we are not (usually) reflexively aware of the ways in which we actively construct and interpret reality. As part of the natural attitude, we tend to apply the same interpretations and meanings to other analogous situations subsequently encountered, drawing upon our extant 'stock of knowledge' (Schütz, 1967). This knowledge is composed of multiple 'typifications', beliefs and assumptions about other social actors and situations based on prior experience, including those relating to significant others: family, friends, colleagues and intimate partners (Allen-Collinson, 2008).

Whilst phenomenological sociology departs significantly from its philosophical roots phenomenology can be used as an *empirical* method of describing, thematising and interpreting human experience. As noted elsewhere (Allen-Collinson & Owton, 2015), forms of more 'sociologised' phenomenology', including feminist phenomenology, explicitly address and theorise the historically specific,

structurally-located and contoured, aspects of human experience. Drawing upon Denzin (1984: 487), I too argue that 'the phenomenon of violence needs to be examined from within', and that although structural processes clearly influence and shape IPA&V, their meanings are filtered and woven through the lives of interacting, embodied individuals within the *Lebenswelt*.

In order to contextualize the data generated by the topical life history described below, the general literature on domestic violence and IPA&V is first considered. The research project itself is described, and the key findings, cohering around everyday interactional abuse, are subsequently presented. My focus here is on the account of a heterosexual male victim, a perspective that remains under-represented in the literature, although research in this domain is beginning to develop (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Drijber *et al.*, 2012).¹ As Hearn (2013) notes, there are less studied forms of domestic violence, and this article explores one such under-researched and 'gender transgressive' (Malinen, 2014) form of domestic violence/IPA&V: unilateral female-perpetrated abuse upon an intimate male partner.

Intimate partner abuse

The research literature on domestic violence and IPA&V is characterised by a multiplicity of approaches with regard to the theoretical, political and methodological perspectives adopted. Analogously, there are myriad definitions of what is commonly referred to as 'domestic violence'. The current UK Government (Home Office, 2013) definition of domestic violence and abuse, for example, is:

'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional...'

The general term I employ is intimate partner abuse and violence (IPA&V): 'intimate partner *abuse*' (IPA) refers to any abusive act deemed to have the intention, or perceived intention, of generating fear, deliberately disorientating, causing physical injury, intimidation, denigration or emotional pain to the intimate partner (Allen-Collinson, 2009a, 2011b). 'Intimate partner *violence*' (IPV) refers to any act deemed to have the intention or perceived intention of causing physical injury to the intimate partner. IPA&V thus combines both forms. This choice of terminology emphasizes the occurrence of IPA&V not just in the domestic context, but in other domains too, such as at work and in public places, and in diverse forms of intimate relationship.

Abuse and violence toward an intimate partner are internationally widespread. Estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) indicate that around 2 million adults experienced domestic abuse in the year 2011/12 (Dar, 2013). The Office for National Statistics for England and Wales (2013, p.2) reports that 'some 7% of women and 5% of men were estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in the last year, equivalent to an estimated 1.2 million female and 800,000 male victims'. Results from a systematic review undertaken by the Partner Abuse State of Knowledge (PASK) indicate that in the USA and other English-

speaking Western industrialised nations, across all types of sample, 35.8% of women and 21.7% of men report having been physically assaulted by an intimate partner at some point during their lifetime (Desmarais *et al.* 2012).

Differences in terminology, reporting and recording practices render it difficult to ascertain precise figures, however, and under-reporting is highly likely due to the stigma of being labelled a 'victim', particularly for abused men (George, 2002). A study by Gadd and colleagues (2002), for example, found that few men reported their experiences of domestic abuse to the police, with fear of disbelief emerging as a primary reason. The gendered dimension of domestic violence is the focus of long-standing debate, particularly in relation to gender symmetry/asymmetry in perpetration (Archer, 2000; Johnson, 2006; Straus, 2006), with wide variations in findings attributed to a plethora of factors, including methodological differences (e.g., Nazroo, 1995). In relation to the use of 'unselected samples', it has been argued that women and men appear to use similar amounts of physical aggression towards their intimate partners (Graham-Kevan, 2007), including studies employing a meta-analytic framework (e.g. Archer 2000).

Hines and colleagues (2007) argue that in order to understand IPA&V we need to acknowledge that women *can* be violent in their own right, and to investigate the contextualisation of abusive behaviour. This is important for feminist researchers also, given that, as Hines *et al.* (2007) note, various studies over a considerable time-frame fundamentally challenge the notion that women are violent *only* in self-defence. To date, the empirical evidence suggests the ubiquity of IPA&V, with women and men, lesbian, gay, heterosexual, bisexual, transsexual or queer found

to be perpetrators of IPA&V (Renzetti & Miley, 1996; Erbaugh, 2013; Malinen, 2014), across all ages (Peguero & Lauck, 2007).

Research finding women to be perpetrators of IPA&V, particularly when unilaterally perpetrated, has generated intense academic debate, and problematised a raft of traditionally accepted explanations (McHugh *et al.*, 2005) and theorisations relating to the gendered nature of IPA&V. As Malinen (2014, p.354) argues, the male aggressor/female victim model can be deemed 'gender paradigmatic', conforming to cultural stereotypes of men as perpetrators of violence and women as victims, whereas the 'woman as aggressor model' – whether against a woman or man – can be conceptualised as 'gender transgressive'. Calls have been made for more in-depth research into female-perpetrated IPA&V (Hines *et al.*, 2007), and the lived experience of male victims; an area in which relatively little qualitative sociological research has to date been undertaken (Gadd, 2002; Migliaccio, 2002; Palin-Davies, 2006; Allen-Collinson, 2011b), particularly into men's own accounts of being abused (Migliaccio 2001, 2002; George 2003). This article responds to that call.

As Lempert (1994) argues, qualitative sociological research drawing on victims' own accounts is important in analysing the ways in which abusive relationships have courses, and how victims/survivors' actions within these relationships can be conceptualised as reasonable, rational and comprehensible. Here, I analyse the lived experience of IPA&V as recounted by Alec (his chosen pseudonym), a male, white-British, senior academic. Initially, psychological and emotional abuse were perpetrated by Alec's wife, and as time went on, she became

increasingly physically violent. Alec told his parents and brother of his wife's violence after many years of suffering in silence, and later still consulted a GP and a marriage-guidance counsellor. After his leaving the marital home, work colleagues and security personnel also witnessed his wife's violence at Alec's workplace.

The research

The research project was approved by the university ethics committee, with two case studies constituting the pilot stage of a wider study of women's and men's narratives of domestic violence. The ethical issues confronting IPA&V researchers are considerable, particularly regarding participant and researcher safety, protection of anonymity and confidentiality, and the minimisation of psychological distress. Information relating to specialist victim-support services was made available to all interviewees. Interviews were digitally-recorded with the participants' permission and transcribed by the researcher. Here, I focus on Alec's topical life-history, which generated rich, detailed data, both diary- and interview-based. Pseudonyms are used throughout, and identifying characteristics have been removed from the quotations below, including the year of diary entries. As his wife had subjected Alec to very violent retribution previously, my primary ethical concerns were his personal safety and the protection of his anonymity.

In accord with the phenomenologically-inspired sociological approach adopted, I engaged in *epochē*, seeking as far as sociologically possible to identify and bracket key presuppositions (Allen-Collinson, 2011) regarding the phenomenon of 'domestic violence' (as I originally conceptualised this). As a feminist sociologist,

one of my enduring assumptions had been that domestic violence was almost exclusively perpetrated by men against women. This assumption was fundamentally challenged during literature reviewing and subsequent data collection. Case-study data were collected via a series of six in-depth interviews with Alec, ranging in length between one and two hours. Drawing on Seidman's (2013) approach, the first interview was a focused life-history, followed by interviews to elicit detailed information about specific experiences of abuse and violence, and then reflection on their meanings. Five interviews were conducted after Alec had left the abusive relationship but before his divorce, with one follow-up interview post-divorce. The entire diary was made available to me, and Alec explained in the initial interview that his motivation for diary-keeping was as coping mechanism - to put some analytic distance between himself and his increasingly intolerable marital situation. Analytic distance was further enhanced by writing in the third person, in a 'neutral voice'.

Diary entries were written primarily at Alec's place of work, for security reasons. In the second year of diary entries, photos accompany the text, either taken by Alec or by his brother. These provide a graphic record of a range of facial and bodily injuries. Having previously undertaken research on a variety of sensitive topics, including child abuse/protection, I was familiar with handling emotive data, but nevertheless found many entries and photographs emotionally disturbing. The diary and interview transcripts were read and re-read as part of a lengthy process of data 'indwelling', seeking to understand Alec's lived experience from an empathic position (Smith *et al.*, 2009). Salient emergent themes were identified, compared,

and distilled into key themes or structures of experience. Extracts from the diary are reproduced verbatim below, and constitute the primary data source, in order to 'give voice' to Alec. Questions of 'validity' are often raised vis-a-vis qualitative research, and as Warrington (2001) notes, qualitative researchers generally respect the 'honesty' of participants' accounts. In Alec's case, this was also borne out by consistencies *intra* and *inter* interviews, between diary and interviews, and also close similarities with accounts of other IPA&V victims/survivors. From data analysis, a raft of key themes emerged, some of which are explored elsewhere (e.g., Allen-Collinson, 2009a, 2009b, 2011b). Here, it is the *everyday* routines of IPA&V upon which the analysis focuses.

The mundanity of IPA&V

In abusive relationships, research indicates a discernible *patterning* of abuse and violence. Walker (1985), for example, posits a cycle of violence incorporating three distinct phases; this model has been widely adopted internationally by organisations supporting IPA&V victims/survivors (e.g. US National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence:

Tension building: often regarding domestic issues such as money, children, domestic responsibilities. Verbal abuse begins and the victim tries to anticipate trouble and dispel tension by 'pleasing' the abuser, 'giving in', and/or avoiding him/her. None of these placatory efforts usually prevents violence, tension continues to build, reaching a tipping point where physical abuse commences.

Acute battering episode: tension peaks, physical violence commences, often triggered by an external event or the abuser's emotional state; thus the victim experiences the tipping point as beyond her/his control.

Honeymoon phase: post-battering, the abuser may express remorse, try to minimise the seriousness, even blame her/his partner. The abuser may then exhibit 'loving', contrite behaviour, promising that the abuse will not recur.

Although there are limitations to this phase-model approach, particularly in relation to different interactional contexts of perpetrating and 'receiving' abuse, it is useful for heuristic purposes. The context-dependency, fluidity and inter-relatedness of the phases should, however, be borne in mind. Elements of the cycle were reported by Alec, who indicated in the interviews that he recognised a routine patterning, although the 'honeymoon' phase was a rarity, as scant remorse or contrition were expressed by his wife. The following data sections, structured via these theoretical stages, outline the findings relating to the 'everydayness' of IPA&V, as experienced and recounted by Alec.

Tension building

During this phase of the cycle, it is theorised that tension builds, often over common domestic issues (Walker, 1985). The following diary extract exemplifies the way in which such issues often became the focus for dispute, with Alec's wife often starting arguments just as he was trying to leave for work. Such disputes were not only emotionally upsetting, but also threatened his professional being-in-

the-world, making him late for work. In the following diary extract, Alec and his young son are distressed by the aggressive interactional encounter:

Up at 7:00 as usual. He's just going downstairs to leave when his wife catches him. She wants to go to a reception that evening... She, however, has not been invited: it is a works 'do'. She follows him downstairs and pushes him into a corner. She will go with him. He just keeps insisting that she cannot go – there is no invitation for her.... She begins the prodding and poking. She knocks off his glasses. She scratches him in the face. This continues for 40 minutes without let up. He is pinned in the corner. He is wound up to a point of tension now. He feels angry, disorientated, claustrophobic. He has lost all of the calm and focus that he needed for his work. Their son is exposed to this attrition and refuses to go to school as a result. He cannot stand this arguing. Everyone is now late for work and school. He takes their son to school, stopping to buy him some breakfast on the way. He finally arrives at work nearly two hours later than normal. He is tense, flustered, nervous, unable to work. (17 October)

In the above instance, Alec avoided further physical abuse by physically removing himself from the interactional sphere, a coping mechanism Alec reported utilising frequently, whenever it was possible to escape without resorting physically to pushing aside his abuser (for reasons explained below). An earlier diary entry

testifies to Alec's desperation to avoid his wife's anger and the 'negative interaction' (Denzin, 1984), one Christmas Eve:

He brings home the turkey but gets into trouble because there is not the right stuffing at the butcher's. Once home, she tells him to 'get out of the house' until 17:30, when her parents are coming round... He sits in the car on the common for three hours, getting more cold and more tired... (24 December)

Another tactic employed by Alec in seeking to avoid escalation to acute battering was attempting intersubjectively to 'read' his wife's moods and signifiers of impending violence. In Schutz's (1967) terms, Alec's typifications of his wife's behaviour were used to anticipate her actions and take avoidance action. Goodrum *et al.* (2001) similarly note how victims of abuse develop skilled role-taking abilities in order to anticipate a partner's physical violence. Alec described in the interviews how he had become adept over the years at identifying his wife's moods, and anticipating the likelihood of violence as a sequitur to her goading, taunting and verbal abuse. When difficult to exit the interactional space entirely to avoid impending violence, he would try to 'keep a low profile', seeking social invisibility and/or inaudibility:

He comes in quietly to watch TV. His wife and daughter are also in the room.

The wife starts goading him from nothing. He was selfish, incompetent, etc.

He does not respond at all – sitting quietly.... She starts telling him to get out

of the room repeatedly, because he has no right to be there. This aggravates the daughter: 'For God's sake shut up, Mum.' She ignores this and carries on. He leaves the room to read the paper in the kitchen over a beer. She is in there presently with much of the same abuse... (7 January)

Whilst these avoidance techniques did sometimes succeed in restricting the abuse to the verbal level, more usually Alec's attempts at halting the cycle of violence failed to prevent a physical attack, commensurate with Walker's (1985) theorisation that despite a victim's best efforts, tension will continue to build until reaching a 'tipping point', culminating in stage 2: the 'acute battering episode'.

Acute battering

Although the tri-phase model of IPA&V might suggest relatively well-defined temporal stages, in Alec's lived experience, such differentiation was problematic. At times, progression from the tension-building phase to acute battering was so swift there was little opportunity for tension-dispelling. Alec's experience was of his wife's rapid escalation from displays of anger and verbal abuse to physical aggression, as highlighted in many diary entries:

He's gone to bed – lights off. She's in about money. He has left more of it on the bedroom mantelpiece. She can't find it. She's getting irate. It starts with accusations. She's then pushing his face into the mattress and he

can't breathe. He pulls his head up and screams. He's frightened. She's now mauling his face, pulling at his mouth and ears. Blood is dripping from his face... (4 August)

Another normal day. Another row leading quickly to violence. She throws his briefcase around and kicks it repeatedly (as well as thumping him). She snaps the aerial of his mobile phone (which belongs to his employers)... (15 November; my emphasis)

Further complexities emerged in Alec's lived experience: the responses to tension-building portrayed by Walker (1985) as occurring within Phase 1 of the cycle were also utilised during acute battering. The following instance highlights how, when his wife was in the process of attacking him, Alec would seek to avoid escalation. This appeared to infuriate his wife, however, resulting in further violence:

He has tracked this treatment and she thumps him, kicks him or smashes up his things on average three times a week. Sometimes the wounds are visible – cuts to the face, injured back, etc – but more commonly they are not visible – bruising to the body, cuts under clothes. She claims to do this not in anger, but to 'teach him some manners'... When she is attacking him, he often (usually reflexively) tries to calm himself with Buddhist meditation techniques that he is learning... This infuriates her as she

claims that he is being facetious, praying at her. Universally this leads to him being belted again... (11 November)

This diary entry portrays the routineness of the attacks, together with his wife's technique of neutralisation (Ferraro, 1983) vis-à-vis the violence: 'to teach him some manners'. In the following episode of acute battering, Alec's diary voice briefly transitions from the neutral, 'matter-of-fact', prosaic style to a more emotional tone:

He gets up to leave the room. He is in a panic at the prospect of another violent onslaught. Momentarily he wants to give himself up to death or an institution or somewhere, anywhere that is not this place of bullying and violence from her. He wants to get out of the house and just go. She grabs him and forces him into a corner. The first blow is a searing thump in the testicles. Then a slap to the face... *He cannot get past her without touching her and then her tactic will be (as always) to accuse him of being violent.* He weathers the scratching, slapping and thumping for about 10 minutes. She backs off to go for a kitchen knife from the block and he runs for the door. (17 October; my emphasis)

At this point, the routine 'everydayness' seems breached; the moment is recounted as extraordinary rather than routine, but only in terms of Alec's brief consideration

of desperate exit strategies, not in terms of the extraordinariness of the violence *per se*.

In the above extract, one of the key rationales for Alec's refusal to retaliate with violence emerges: his fear of being construed as violent himself. He explained in the interviews that whenever he made any effort to defend himself, including via pushing his way past his wife to escape the room, she would then claim that *he* was the violent partner. This tactic resonates strongly with findings from a research corpus on IPA&V (e.g., Migliaccio, 2002; Sarantakos, 2004) where men report fearing that if responding to violence with violence, even in self-defence, their behaviour is more likely to be labelled as 'wife abuse' than is their female partner's as 'husband battering' (Freeman, 1979). Sarantakos (2004) found some abusive women threatened to report husbands to the police for assaults husbands had never actually committed. Analogously, men in Migliaccio's (2002) research noted that if they struck wives in self-defence, any visible scars or bruises would likely convince others that the man was the violence *initiator*. This sense-making and rationalisation for non-retaliation emerged strongly in the interviews and throughout Alec's diary:

He holds his arms up against his chest to defend himself. She loses her balance and falls back, hitting her head on the sofa. She accuses him of hitting her. This is significant as he is now [deemed to be] the violent party in the relationship. He has been waiting for this moment – that she will injure herself as a result of him defending himself, and then he will

become the guilty one... Throughout the rest of the evening, she is saying that *he* is the violent one in the relationship or at best he is as violent as her. (6 November)

A further reason for non-retaliation with force was Alec's fear of exacerbating an attack. As previously reported (e.g., Denzin, 1984; Dobash & Dobash, 1984), when female victims respond to physical abuse by hitting back, this serves only to increase the violence. This response was similarly found by Migliaccio (2002) in relation to men's defence against female aggressors, with some men explaining that they just wanted to get the violence over and finished. Alec, too, described how he came to view the acute battering as the culminating phase of a bout of his wife's aggression, and he wished 'to get it over and done with as quickly as possible'. The physical assault came almost as relief in contrast to the increasing tension and stress of threats and psychological abuse in Phase 1, with its pervasive threat of violence. In the lived moments of the violence, however terrifying, at least Alec knew from experience that the violent-interactional nadir had been reached, albeit temporarily.

Honeymoon

Alec reported scant experience of Walker's (1985) 'honeymoon' phase in terms of loving and contrite behaviour, apologies, or promises not to repeat the violence, as explained in an interview:

Interviewer: Did your wife apologise or show regret after attacking you?

Alec: There was never any sense of that, or remorse, whatsoever, except, probably three months after I had left, when she rang to tell me to come home and she said that she had, she admitted that she'd may be got one or two things wrong. She didn't apologise for that, but that was the only statement I ever recall her saying that might acknowledge she'd done anything at all out of the ordinary. (Interview 1)

Alec's decision finally to leave the relationship (after many previous attempts) was made, he explained, on the basis of 'practicality' and life-preservation. In order to escape the increasingly deleterious consequences for his health, he realised he would have to leave, being convinced that *he* alone was the target of his wife's violence, not their children. The epiphany came when he was diagnosed with a bruised retina after a vicious blow from his wife:

Once I had a bruised retina, there was no longer any dilemma as to whether I should try and keep the relationship alive, because my own personal safety became more important. It was a practical rather than an emotional decision. (Interview 6).

Discussion

This article examines IPA&V at the micro-level, from the perspective of an inhabitant of an abusive and violent *Lebenswelt*, drawing on data from a diary-

interview (Spowart & Nairn, 2014) case study. The primary purpose of the research was to describe in detail people's lived experience, rather than to make generalisations to wider populations or to engage in 'grand' theorisation. This might be perceived as a limitation of phenomenological (and case-study) approaches when considered in relation to traditional evaluation criteria of validity, reliability and generalisability. Nevertheless, as one of the long-standing sociologies of the everyday, phenomenological sociology does offer rich possibilities for theoretical conceptualisation (Denzin 1984). In the case reported here, the participant was a white-British, highly educated, professional academic, but the resonances of his account with those of other victims/survivors – both female and male - emerged strongly, as detailed in the analysis. In particular, the initial two phases of Walker's (1985) cycle of violence were clearly illustrated in the data. Drawing on typifications of his wife's behaviour and demeanour, and on the basis of his lived experience, Alec made sustained efforts to escape or endure the growing tension, for example, by physically escaping his wife's corporeal presence or making himself as visibly/audibly 'unpresent' as possible. As also theorised by Walker (1985), these attempts to prevent violence generally failed, and acute battering ensued.

In a departure from Walker's model, Alec reported scant evidence of any 'honeymoon phase', although he did indicate that between battering episodes, *relative* familial calm might prevail temporarily. Even during such periods, however, he felt there was omnipresent 'the possibility that anything could happen' (Interview 1), and described in the diary how: 'he lives in fear of this kind of

treatment [battering] and walks around hunched up a lot of the time' (11 November). Thus, even when there appeared to be relative interactional calm, Alec's being-in-the-world was characterised by uncertainty and fear that at any moment his wife might again engage in 'violent embodied emotion' (Denzin, 1984, p.500), over which he had little or no control, including at his workplace where she would 'barge into the office'. The only time he felt any sense of respite was when he or she was 'at a distance of at least 2 or 3 hours away' (Interview 3). For Alec, the everyday was experienced as 'troubling and troubled' (Scott Jones & Raisborough, 2007, p.1).

This article responds to calls for more in-depth qualitative sociological research into IPA&V (Gadd *et al.*, 2002; DeKeseredy, 2006), to examine the social contexts, meanings and sense-making surrounding its perpetration (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Swan & Snow 2006), to capture the fluid, contextual nature of such violence, and to understand IPA&V from the perspective of its *Lebenswelt* inhabitants. This is central to the phenomenological-sociological enterprise to identify the key structures of lived experience of a particular life-world. Alec encountered in the everyday interactions of his marital relationship routinised abuse and violence, which came to be lived as part of an ongoing pattern of abuse, rather than sporadic incidents; the 'intimate terrorism pattern of abuse', in Johnson & Ferraro's (2000) potent terminology. The similarities between Alec's account and those of other victims/survivors, as detailed in the extant literature, were salient. Such commonalities are worthy of further investigation, via 'bracketing' the taken-for-granted assumptions relating to the social-structural and gendered nature of IPA&V.

Such critical questioning and problematisation lie at the very heart of phenomenology and other sociologies of the everyday.

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ⁱ For the accounts of female IPA&V perpetrators themselves, see for example, Miller and Molloy (2006).