Positioning and power in police-victim interactions during first response call-outs at the scene of reported domestic abuse incidents

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Abstract

This study centres on interactions between police officers and alleged victims during first response call-outs to domestic abuse incidents in the England and Wales jurisdiction. *First response call-out* (FRC) is adopted here to denote police officers’ period of attendance at the scene of a suspected crime that has been reported to the emergency number (see further College of Policing 2022). To the best of the author’s knowledge, no previous empirical linguistic studies have been conducted in this speech context to date, reflecting the numerous complexities around researcher access. This thesis presents an analysis of data extracted from police body-worn video footage of naturally occurring interactions during three FRCs from one force area in 2019.

The research takes as its point of departure the pivotal nature of FRCs, which are characterised by undetermined social relations involving the speakers, the alleged perpetrator, the potential investigation and the wider power structures which govern the speech context. Analysis is guided by the fundamental theory of *positioning*, conceptualised as a dynamic, relational and sense-making process by which “who one is is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices” (Davies and Harré 1990: 46). This conceptual tool unlocks the central question to be answered in this thesis: In what ways are social power relations constituted through interactional positioning during the FRCs?

The inductive approach identifies three key dimensions in which participants are (re-)positioned, forming the basis of the analysis chapters: (i) ownership of the setting and control of the interactional spaces within it; (ii) police expertise-in-interaction in performing institutionally-defined tasks, and (iii) the co-construction of victims’ responsibility in relation to the reported events. The Critical Discourse Analysis framework (Fairclough 1995) is grounded in a fine-grained conversation-analytic approach (Sacks et al. 1974) to shed light on the moment-by-moment manifestations of power in this consequential speech context. The findings are critically interpreted in relation to the victims’ vulnerability, the police-victim relationship and the nature of the evidence produced.

With rare access to authentic FRC data, this thesis contributes valuable new knowledge about the nature of talk and the construction of power in this pivotal context. The findings reveal FRC interaction to be characterised by tensions between the dis/empowering processes of protection, agentialisation, mediation, entextualisation and domination. Adapting the victim’s territory for a (typically high-pressure) interaction involves reconfiguring interactional spaces and redistributing authority, with parallels between ownership of the setting, narrative authority and the coherence of the initial account of the incident. The co-construction of police expertise is shown to hinge on officers’ ability to harness the various positionings available to them during FRCs to progress their objectives without amplifying the inherent power imbalance between speakers. Finally, victims orient to their own responsibility while describing and making sense of what has happened to them, and officers’ discursive choices are instrumental in crystallising victims’ subject positions within their ongoing lifeworld and legal storylines.
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This project was also reliant on the commitment, enthusiasm and resourcefulness of numerous police force personnel, who cannot be named here but to whom I am very grateful.

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my dad, Rusty: a linguist who never knew it.
Transcription conventions

**Action**
- Actions occurring during and between turns
- (. ) Just noticeable pause
- (2.1) Timed pause (in seconds)
- {sniffs} Non-verbal and extra-linguistic information
- ((name)) Redacted/omitted talk
- [speech] Overlapping talk
- [[speech]] Additional participant overlapping
- .hh Inbreath
- hh Outbreath
- .hih/huh Voiced inbreath (when sobbing)
- hih/hih Voiced outbreath (when sobbing)
- but- Sharp cut-off
- yea:h Sound preceding colon is stretched
- (something) Unclear speech (best guess/number of syllables)

**turn**
- =turn Latching; no discernible pause between two turns
- >quick< Faster speech
- <slow> Slower speech
- *loud* Louder speech
- SHOUT Shouting
- °quiet° Quieter speech
- °°whisper** Whispering
- ~upset~ Wobbly voice
- #distress# Sobbing voice
- @funny@ ‘Laughing’ voice

**emphasis**
- emphasised word/syllable
- ? Question intonation
- . Full stop intonation

(PO: yeah) Minimal feedback within other speaker’s turn
# Acronyms and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRC</td>
<td>First response call-out</td>
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<td>DA</td>
<td>Domestic abuse</td>
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<td>AV</td>
<td>Alleged victim</td>
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<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Alleged perpetrator</td>
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<td>CoP</td>
<td>College of Policing</td>
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<td>CPS</td>
<td>Crown Prosecution Service</td>
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<td>MoJ</td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>E&amp;W</td>
<td>The England and Wales jurisdiction</td>
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<td>ABE</td>
<td><em>Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings</em> (MoJ 2022)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Conversation Analysis</td>
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<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>App.</td>
<td>Appendix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch.</td>
<td>Chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex.</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract  
Acknowledgements  
Transcription conventions  
Acronyms and abbreviations  

## Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 First response call-outs to domestic abuse incidents in England and Wales  
   1.1.1 Domestic abuse first response procedure  
   1.1.2 Domestic abuse first response: key challenges  
      1.1.2.1 Evidential difficulties  
      1.1.2.2 Criticism of the police response  
1.2 Introducing the study  
   1.2.1 Data and frameworks for analysis  
   1.2.2 Key concepts: Power and positioning  
   1.2.3 Research questions  
1.3 Structure of the thesis  

## Chapter 2: Research background

2.1 Domestic abuse: Key concepts and debates  
   2.1.1 Violence, abuse and gender  
   2.1.2 Domestic abuse, vulnerability and first response  
2.2 FRC interaction as institutional discourse  
   2.2.1 The role of setting in institutional talk  
   2.2.2 The defining characteristics of institutional talk  
      2.2.2.1 Goal orientations and inferential frameworks  
      2.2.2.2 Participation rights and power relations  
   2.2.3 Characteristics of FRC encounters  
      2.2.3.1 Allowable contributions during FRCs  
      2.2.3.2 The distribution of knowledge during FRCs  
      2.2.3.3 Institutional talk and vulnerability during FRCs  
   2.2.4 Institutional, professional and personal modes of police talk  
   2.2.5 Expertise-in-interaction  
2.3 Domestic abuse and police-victim interaction  
   2.3.1 Police-victim FRC experiences
2.3.2 Discourses of domestic abuse in investigative and legal contexts 34
2.3.3 Domestic abuse and victim (self-)blame 36
2.3.4 Accountability, responsibility and police-victim interaction 36

2.4 Interactional positioning 39
  2.4.1 Positioning theory 39
  2.4.2 Positioning and power 42
  2.4.3 Positioning in institutional contexts 43
    2.4.3.1 Positions, frames and roles 43
    2.4.3.2 Task-positioning and expertise 44
  2.4.4 Positioning in setting and space 45
  2.4.5 Positioning and domestic abuse 46

2.5 Chapter summary 49

**Chapter 3: Methodology** 51

3.1 Data for analysis 51
  3.1.1 Ethical considerations 52
    3.1.1.1 Participant consent 53
    3.1.1.2 Data protection 55
    3.1.1.3 Anonymisation 56
  3.1.2 Transcription 56
  3.1.3 Description of the data 59
  3.1.4 Body-worn video as a data source 60

3.2 Framework for analysis: Critical Discourse Analysis 62

3.3 Methodological approach: Conversation Analysis 64
  3.3.1 Turn-taking organisation 65
  3.3.2 Adjacency pairs: Questions and answers 67
  3.3.3 Conversation Analysis and social context 68
  3.3.4 Conversation Analysis and interactional positioning 69

3.4 Procedure 71
  3.4.1 Identifying focal themes 71
  3.4.2 Analytic process 71

3.5 The DAS focus group 72

3.6 Chapter summary 73

**Chapter 4: Positioning in the setting and interactional space** 74

4.1 Entering the victim’s territory 75
4.2 Disrupting the narrative space 82
4.3 Controlling the victim’s movements 91
4.4 Harnessing the material environment 96
4.5 Entering the victim’s personal space 100
4.6 Synthesis: Positioning in setting and space 111

Chapter 5: Positioning and police expertise-in-interaction 114

5.1 Pursuing a difficult diagnosis 115
  5.1.1 Questioning to probe for detail 116
  5.1.2 Voicing the institution 117
  5.1.3 Translating the offence 118
  5.1.4 Invoking institutional obligation 119
  5.1.5 Releasing the pressure 121
  5.1.6 Conferring as a team 122
  5.1.7 Displaying doubt 125
  5.1.8 Questioning ‘a bit more in depth’ 126

5.2 Addressing victim-initiated concerns 131
  5.2.1 Explicating an investigative ‘difficulty’ 131
  5.2.2 Offering a victim-led solution 136

5.3 Progressing to statement-taking 141

5.4 Synthesis: Positioning and police expertise-in-interaction 148

Chapter 6: Positioning and victim responsibility 152

6.1 Reconstructing past blame 153
  6.1.1 Blame from the perpetrator during the incident 154
  6.1.2 Past blame from other sources 162

6.2 Responsibility for ‘what happens next’ 167
  6.2.1 Claiming responsibility for leaving the AP 167
  6.2.2 Negotiating responsibility ‘to get your life back’ 171

6.3 Responsibility-implicative police questioning 175
  6.3.1 (De)centralising responsibility for past decisions 175
  6.3.2 Recentralising accountability for the reported incident 179

6.4 Synthesis: Positioning and victim responsibility 189

Chapter 7: Discussion 192

7.1 Revisiting the research question:
  Positioning and power in FRC settings and their interactional spaces 192
7.1.1 Controlling entry .......................................................... 193
7.1.2 Controlling the stability of the narrative space ............... 194
7.1.3 Controlling the function and environment of spaces ........ 195
7.1.4 Controlling victims’ movements ................................... 197
7.1.5 Controlling physical proximity and touch ....................... 200
7.1.6 Controlling visibility of the setting ............................... 200

7.2 Revisiting the research question: Positioning, power and police expertise-in-interaction .................................. 202
  7.2.1 (De)centralising the victim’s lived experience ............... 202
  7.2.2 Positioning domestic abuse as evidence ....................... 204
  7.2.3 Expert knowledge and cooperative power ..................... 205
  7.2.4 Professional autonomy and protective power ................. 206
  7.2.5 Victim-perpetrator positioning and police impartiality ...... 207

7.3 Revisiting the research question: Positioning, power and AV responsibility ..................................................... 209
  7.3.1 Representing the domestic abuse control mechanisms of blame and silencing ........................................... 210
  7.3.2 Responsibility, blame and the police-victim power gradient ................................................................. 211
  7.3.3 Victim (self-)blame, entitlement to support and (dis)empowerment ......................................................... 212
  7.3.4 Gendered abuse dynamics and male victims’ responsibility positionings .................................................. 212
  7.3.5 Lifeworld responsibilities and mediating across power structures .......................................................... 214
  7.3.6 Responsibility-implicative questioning and the power of entextualisation .............................................. 214
  7.3.7 Crystallising positions in victims’ lived storylines ........... 215

7.4 Synthesis: Power positionings in domestic abuse FRCs .......... 217

Chapter 8: Conclusion ............................................................ 220

8.1 Implications and recommendations for FRC practice ........... 220
  8.1.1 Specialist domestic abuse training ................................ 220
  8.1.2 Positioning, permeable boundaries and rapport .......... 221
  8.1.3 Managing officer and victim accountability .................... 222
  8.1.4 Reconceptualising the setting ...................................... 223
  8.1.5 Updating authorised procedure ................................... 223
  8.1.6 Repositioning FRC interaction .................................... 224

8.2 Evaluation of the study ...................................................... 225
  8.2.1 Key strengths ............................................................ 225
  8.2.2 Limitations ............................................................... 227

8.3 Future directions for FRC research ................................... 228
8.4 Conclusion

REFERENCES

Appendices

Appendix I: Participating force DA first response policy
Appendix II: Applicable criminal offence groups
Appendix III: Ethics paperwork

Restricted appendices

Appendix R1: FRC1 transcript (‘Amy’)
Appendix R2: FRC2 transcript (‘Julia’)
Appendix R3: FRC3 transcript (‘Neil’)
Appendix R3: DAS focus group transcript

The restricted appendices are not included in the publicly available version of this thesis.
Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines initial interactions between first response police officers and alleged domestic abuse victims during three call-outs in the England and Wales jurisdiction in 2019. Summoning the police in an emergency can prove pivotal for a victim of domestic abuse, depending on what happens next:

M6: y’know we all remember the times when the police came (.) and I think that they don’t realise that that could be the most important moment of someone’s life
M2: absolutely yeah
M6: I mean it could be a life-changing moment (.) their response might- y’know could save a life basically
and actually it is it’s a moment that we will remember the time that policeman walks in there (.) we’ll remember it for the rest of our lives what happened (.) whether it was good or bad

DAS focus group, App.R4: 10

The term call-out is fading from police parlance, which more frequently conflates the reported crime and officers’ attendance at the scene as one continuous ‘incident’, representing the object of initial investigation (College of Policing [CoP] 2022). This thesis adopts the term ‘first response call-out’ (FRC) to more accurately capture the timeframe and official procedure which define the interactions at the centre of this research. FRCs thus epitomise Gumperz’ (1982: 164) conceptualisation of speech events as “units of verbal behavior bounded in time and space”. At the time of writing, there is no existing research using authentic data to shed light on the nature of communication during these consequential encounters. This inductive study draws from police body-worn video (BWV) footage to explore the discursive means by which participants are positioned in relation to each other, the reported abuse and the power structures that govern the FRC context.

Domestic abuse (henceforth DA) is defined as “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” (Home Office 2018). Abusive behaviours comprise physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological abuse and emotional abuse. There is no specific criminal offence of DA, so it must be assigned to a

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1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (s.1) has replaced the summary definition with an expanded list of elements, but with no substantive changes applicable to the data.
relevant offence group (Crown Prosecution Service [CPS] 2022a; see App.II). This categorisation process begins in the emergency control room, when a call from the alleged victim (henceforth AV) comes through, and continues when the first response officers arrive at the scene to establish what has happened. It is this initial interaction between AVs and police officers that forms the focus of this thesis. The remainder of this chapter introduces the research project, beginning with the police procedure and key challenges involved in DA first response. The approach taken in the study is then summarised by introducing the data, frameworks for analysis, key concepts and research questions. The final section of this opening chapter outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.1 First response call-outs to domestic abuse incidents in England and Wales

1.1.1 Domestic abuse first response procedure

The forty-three territorial police forces in England and Wales operate autonomously, resulting in substantial variation (HMICFRS 2019). However, as is mandated throughout the United Kingdom (UK), the force participating in this study follows the College of Policing (2022) Authorised Professional Practice that is specific to DA first response. The force supplements these guidelines with an in-house policy document (App.I), which will be cited where it varies from or expands on the authorised practice.

First response officers are dispatched to an incident when it has been assessed as high risk by an emergency control room operator, according to the THRIVE criteria (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement). ‘High risk’ denotes that the alleged perpetrator (henceforth AP) is still present or nearby and that the AV needs immediate help, although the risk level is upgraded for callers flagged as ‘repeat victims’³. FRCs vary considerably in terms of the officer’s specialist training, the presence of the AP, the AV’s ability or inclination to accept help, the length of the call-out, the potential for intoxication, the presence of other people (including children), the severity of physical injury, the AV’s distress, and numerous other factors. Because FRCs are unpredictable, high-pressure and time-sensitive, official procedure remains subject to ad hoc adaptation by officers (Lagdon et al. 2015; Horwitz et al. 2010; Maple & Kebbell 2020). Guidelines therefore adopt a broad sequential framework with “checklists” of duties (CoP 2016a) and associated synchronous considerations, contrasting with the tightly structured frameworks for investigative interviewing and emergency call-handling.

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² Victims and perpetrators denote generalised reference; ‘police-victim’ denotes their interactional roles in FRCs.
³ In police parlance, this term has been introduced to replace repeat callers to identify AVs who call 999 frequently.
Underpinning FRC procedure is the National Decision Model, by which officers must structure the rationale behind their actions (CoP 2014b). At the centre of the model is the Code of Ethics, applied by decision-makers to consider questions such as: *What would the victim, community and police service expect of me in this situation? Is this action likely to reflect positively on my professionalism and policing? Could I explain my decision in public?* (Code of Ethics, CoP 2014b). The model allows for ad hoc adaptation in a “fast moving incident”, stipulating that “the main priority of decision makers is to keep in mind their overarching mission to act with integrity to protect and serve the public” (Application, CoP 2014b).

Stemming from these values, the model supplies questions for “decision-makers” to ask themselves in relation to gathering information, assessing risk, applying police powers and policy, identifying options, taking action and reviewing what happened. These elements inform FRC authorised practice (CoP 2022), which is outlined broadly here (as per Figure 1) and will be referred to as required throughout the thesis.

![First response workflow](image)

*Figure 1: First response workflow (based on CoP 2022)*

First response officers’ duties begin on the way to the incident, when they must ascertain as much information as possible from the emergency call-handler, and on this basis begin the ongoing process of **assessing risk** to those present at those present at the scene and to the officers themselves. At this stage, officers in the participating force must switch on their BWV cameras (App.1), although this obligation varies across forces. Upon arrival, they must **ensure the immediate safety** of everyone at the scene, separate the AV and AP, assess the need for medical assistance and check the welfare of any children. The subsequent task of **rapprochement** is framed in the guidelines (as in the PEACE investigative interviewing model) to facilitate “effective communication”, which is conflated with cooperation⁴:

If an incident is handled effectively and sympathetically on the first occasion, the victim is more likely to have the confidence to call the police again if the situation recurs. Establishing a good rapport also means the victim is more likely to cooperate with the

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⁴ This conceptualisation of rapport is addressed more fully in Chapter 2.
risk assessment and safety planning process, thereby improving the chances of preventing or reducing future incidents. (Build Rapport, CoP 2022)

The guidance for rapport-building focuses on ensuring AVs feel listened to, believed, taken seriously and not judged. A corresponding emphasis is placed on officers’ understanding of abuse dynamics, including coercive control, and their patience with ‘repeat victims’. Interpersonal problems are identified by guidance on why a victim might appear unwilling to engage and why victims stay in abusive relationships (Build Rapport, CoP 2022).

The initial investigation to be carried out at the scene involves, primarily, gathering evidence (see CoP 2022b). Officers are instructed to prepare for an ‘evidence-led’ case which can proceed to prosecution should the AV withdraw their support (although with legal complexities, as discussed in Section 1.2.2). Visual evidence takes the form of the BWV footage and smartphone photographs, to capture parties’ demeanours and the general scene, along with physical evidence such as injuries, weapons, signs of disturbance and clothing. Technological evidence is gleaned from smartphones, laptops, and other devices. Verbal evidence includes ‘significant comments’ made by the AP and witnesses and house-to-house enquiries, but centres on the AV’s initial account of the incident: “the victim is often the primary source of evidence and should be treated as such” (Scene Protection, CoP 2022).

The initial account is to be taken as soon as possible after the incident, to aid recall, but officers are instructed to be sensitive to the AV’s vulnerability by explaining investigative processes and remaining mindful of the potential influence of coercive control on their responses (Initial Enquiries, CoP 2022). Notably, the force-specific policy (App.1) does not address the AV’s initial account, beyond a reference to their “comments”. More detailed guidelines for taking victims’ and witnesses’ initial accounts have been developed since the timeframe of the present research data (CoP 2019). Categories of advice include: rapport-building; clarifying sources of information; open questioning; non-leading questioning; allowing uncertainty; and identifying needs and vulnerabilities (CoP 2019). However, because these guidelines are not specific to DA incidents, they are absent from the authorised FRC procedure (2022). This guidance will be referred to as necessary throughout the thesis, primarily in the concluding chapter when addressing recommendations for practice.

Nonetheless, it is the formal written evidence from FRCs which assumes primacy for prosecution purposes (CPS 2018c). Firstly, the “most desirable form of victim account” is the written ‘section 9’ statement (Initial Enquiries, CoP 2022). Obtaining this statement is usually the next investigative step in the process after arrest and completion of the main FRC workflow.
Secondly, the first response officer makes a written statement, which should provide a comprehensive “initial appraisal” of the allegations, any injuries, the scene, and the demeanour of AV, AP and others present. Beyond this statement, response officers are not involved in further investigation (although may be called upon to give evidence in court), leading one officer in the participating force to characterise their role as an “arrest team” (pc).

A cornerstone of FRC practice is the **positive action** policy, by which it is an officer’s “duty” to arrest the AP when there are grounds to do so, regardless of the AV’s support (HMICFRS 2019: 31; CoP 2018). Guidelines underscore that the AV should never be asked if they would like the AP to be arrested: “That is your decision” (CoP 2016b). A lawful arrest requires (i) the target’s actual, suspected or attempted involvement in committing a criminal offence and (ii) the officer's reasonable grounds for deeming the arrest necessary (PACE 1984, s.24; Home Office 2012). If these elements are not satisfied, other ‘positive actions’ include removing the AP from the property and issuing them with a Domestic Violence Protection Notice or Order.

**Initial support and protection planning** is informed by the ongoing process of risk assessment, and can involve urgent safeguarding, such as emergency accommodation, or referral to DA specialist support workers (App.I). First response officers in the participating force must also complete an electronic **risk assessment** form to categorise AVs’ situations as standard, high or medium risk. The force-specific form cannot be shared here, but it follows the standard DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence) model (Richards 2009). This checklist comprises between thirty and fifty questions (Richards 2009: 6-10) which relate to the AV’s current situation, the abuse history, the relationship with the AP, the AP’s criminal and mental health background, their children or dependants, and additional situation-specific information.

**1.1.2 Domestic abuse first response: key challenges**

As illustrated by the previous subsection, FRC procedure has become progressively more detailed over recent years. These developments reflect two overlapping challenges which inform FRC practice: the evidential difficulties associated with DA cases and the police inspectorate’s ongoing criticism of DA first response. The remainder of this section outlines these two central issues which underpin FRC procedure.
1.1.2.1 Evidential difficulties

DA is summarised in police guidelines as “not only high volume but also high risk” (CoP 2022c). During FRCs, the evidential challenges facing first response officers concern both the function of AVs’ initial accounts (via the BWV footage) as evidence and the legal implications of victims losing trust in the police. Of the 1,459,663 recorded DA crimes in the year ending March 2021, the charging rate was 7.9%, the prosecution rate 6.4% and the conviction rate 5% (Office for National Statistics 2021a). This conviction rate demonstrates for victims that the path from reporting an incident to convicting the perpetrator is fraught, and that ultimately the criminal justice system is limited in its capacity to offer them lasting protection.

Almost a quarter of DA cases break down due to evidential difficulties stemming from the AV declining to support or withdrawing their initial support for prosecution (Office for National Statistics 2021c). Chapter 2 will review the literature to demonstrate the difficulties victims face in taking action against the perpetrator, including fear of retaliation, financial insecurity and sanctions involving their children (WHO 2017; Towns & Adams 2009; Woods 2010). Victims who are tuned into perpetrators’ escalating behaviour often call for help when they perceive danger, before a physical assault occurs, and then decline further police support (e.g. Dobash 2003; Ganley 2005; Stark 2007). Furthermore, despite the increasing recognition of coercive control and non-violent forms of DA (Serious Crime Act 2015 s.76; see Walklate & Fitz-Gibbon 2019), these cases still face substantial procedural difficulties due to their reliance on proof of behavioural patterns and non-physical effects (Barlow et al. 2019; Brennan & Myhill 2022). These evidential complexities place the onus on first response officers in two main aspects: to encourage AVs’ confidence in the police and criminal justice system, and to elicit an initial account which might suffice as evidence should the AV decline to pursue prosecution.

1.1.2.2 Criticism of the police response

Following prolonged and amplifying criticism of the UK police response to DA cases, the Home Office commissioned an inspection in 2013. The police inspectorate's report (HMIC 2014) uncovered many shortcomings, reaching the stark conclusion that the “overall police response to victims of domestic abuse is not good enough”, with DA characterised as a “poor relation” to the way other forms of crime are investigated (2014: 6). Among the primary ‘organisational issues’, the report identified initial response, the focus of the present study, as a crucial juncture at which cases frequently break down:
Many frontline officers, and in some cases specialist police officers, lack the skills they need to tackle domestic abuse effectively. Officers are often ill-equipped to identify dangerous patterns of behaviour in domestic abuse perpetrators accurately, in particular where there is no overt physical violence but instead there is psychological intimidation and control, which can also have fatal consequences. (HMIC 2014: 9)

Although acknowledging the “complex and sensitive work” (HMIC 2014: 11) required of first response officers, the overarching finding was of widespread inconsistency in the quality of support, with victims reporting “very mixed” experiences during FRCs (in line with the DA research discussed in Chapter 2). The national recommendations for first response were (i) better education and training for frontline officers to address “poor attitudes” and (ii) more stringent measures for collecting evidence and assessing risk (HMIC 2014: 11-13).

The report prompted police forces across the UK to design substantial changes in their DA policies, including specialist training for first response officers (primarily Safelives n.da), which focuses on reducing stigma and misunderstanding of AVs’ behaviour. Another major development since the 2013 inspection is the roll-out of BWV, which has addressed some of the identified problems around capturing visual evidence and, ostensibly, officers’ dismissive attitudes towards AVs (see further Ch.3). The most recent inspection found that by 2017, the overall police response had “improved markedly” (HMICFRS 2019: 3). Regarding first response, the update report found that the most valuable development was the specialist training, which had increased officers’ understanding of vulnerability and contributed to improving AVs’ experiences during FRCs (2019: 22). However, the report flagged continuing problems in the form of officers’ lack of awareness about coercive control and a decline in arrest rates (2019: 31), echoing the dual interpersonal and evidential concerns emerging from the first report.

Despite the noted improvements, police forces across the UK continue to face an uphill struggle in implementing the necessary changes laid out by the inspectorate and other bodies (SafeLives 2021; Women’s Aid 2022). A series of government cuts to police funding have left forces increasingly overstretched, exacerbated by the pressure of policing during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Ali et al. 2021; Sharma & Borah 2020). The success of specialist DA training is contingent on a significant majority of the relevant officers participating (HMICFRS 2019: 25; SafeLives n.db: 9), but with forces unable to invest sufficiently, the goal of having a specially trained officer attending every incident is unattainable for most, including the force represented in this research. A primary aim of this study is to contribute to improving officers’ ability to maximise evidence gathering and support vulnerable victims during FRCs.
1.2 Introducing the study

This section will introduce the research data and frameworks for analysis, the key concepts underpinning this study, and the research questions to be addressed.

1.2.1 Data and frameworks for analysis

The data, which will be described in full in the Methodology chapter, represent BWV footage from three FRCs to DA incidents reported in 2019 within one police force area in the England and Wales jurisdiction. In all three situations, the AV summoned the police by calling the national emergency telephone number: ‘999’. Two of the alleged AVs are female and one is male, and the officers comprise a mix of genders. Given the size of the dataset, the study does not claim to represent ‘FRC practice’ in any generalised sense. Rather, the research aims to illuminate some key dimensions of discursive behaviour during a consequential speech event which has been identified as a site of interpersonal and evidential complexity, but which has not yet been studied using authentic spoken data.

To this end, the inductive study is grounded in Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sacks et al. 1974), a fine-grained, data-driven methodological approach which does not presuppose interactional features of interest. To address the lack of knowledge about this pivotal stage of the criminal justice process, analysis also requires an approach which reveals the ways in which “language represents and contributes to the (re)production of social reality” (Mayr 2008: 7). The study therefore applies a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework (Fairclough 1995) to explore the discursive manifestations of social power relations in terms of the police-victim relationship, the reported abuse and the overarching social structures which govern the FRC context. Therefore, instead of adopting a case study approach to the three FRCs, analysis will be structured according to key themes emerging across the dataset (see 1.2.3), to allow for a more nuanced exploration of the various positions made available to FRC participants. Discussion will evaluate these themes relative to the broader social context, to demonstrate how the findings contribute to our knowledge of FRC discourse beyond the focal cases. The following subsection will introduce the central concepts of power and positioning which drive this analytic approach.

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5 Gendered labels and pronouns for participants are based on police data and are deemed to align with individuals’ self-identification and/or self-presentation during the interactions.
1.2.2 Key concepts: Power and positioning

M5 it doesn’t matter whether you call it abuse or violence or whatever it’s about power and control
[...]
so it’s getting across to the people that are there to help protect support and prevent and
all the rest of it (.) is that this is about power and control whatever form it manifests in
( .) and to get that across they need to be approaching it from that perspective.

DAS focus group, App.R4: 37

There are several key power structures which can be identified at this stage as inextricable from
the FRC context: the power that drives all forms of DA, the power of the criminal justice system
to define abuse and design solutions, and the power of the police to enforce the legislation and
administer support. These manifestations express the dual conceptualisation of power as
domination and power as production that informs this research. The CDA framework for
analysing power (see Ch.3) was designed to uncover the ideologies and inequalities ingrained
in the social context of discursive events involving dominant groups (Fairclough 1995). Rooted
in social constructionism, CDA views language in use (discourse) as a form of social practice
which contributes to the construction of social reality (Fairclough 1992). This approach is
explicit in connecting “what is observed in interaction to the power structures of a given
context” (Cameron 2000: 30).

At the same time, the unpredictability of the FRC context invites a less restrictive
approach which recognises that “power does not just prohibit and negate but produces: it
produces identities, knowledge and possibilities for behaviour and it does this through
discourse” (Mayr 2008: 15, emphasis in original; Foucault 1977). As argued by Tew (2006: 40),
“the operation of power may be a double-edged or contradictory process, oppressive or limiting
in some respects and productive or protective in others”, so that an inherently asymmetrical
relationship still bears the potential for productive power relations to form. Tew categorises
these operations of power and powerlessness according to limiting modes of power, which
encompass both oppressive and collusive power, and productive modes which encompass
protective and cooperative power (see further Tew 2006: 41). Limiting modes of power are thus
realised through ideologies, which are “representations of aspects of the world which contribute
to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation” (Fairclough
2003: 218). The complementary perspectives on power introduced here are ideally suited to a
nuanced analysis of three cases with distinct characteristics. The approach taken in this study
thus aligns with Thornborrow’s definition of power as
a contextually sensitive phenomenon ... a set of resources and actions which are available to speakers and which can be used more or less successfully depending on who the speakers are and what kind of speech situation they are in. (2002: 8)

The National Decision Model guidelines on applying ‘police powers and policy’ encourage first response officers to continually consider such questions as: *What police powers might be required? What legislation and other official guidance covers this type of situation? What research is available?* Crucially, this advice concludes by emphasising officers’ power to use their discretion: “it may be reasonable to act outside policy as long as there is a good rationale for doing so” (CoP 2014b). In this last aspect inheres the potential of police powers to both dominate and produce. During the process of designing this study, a senior officer in the participating force appealed to productivity in expressing their hope that the research would “help officers realise their power to communicate with people” (pc). This sentiment captures the power of discourse to represent, reinforce and transform social identities and relations (Fairclough 1992).

With the last point in mind, this analysis uses the conceptual tool of *positioning* to tease out the discursive manifestations of power during the focal interactions. Positioning can be introduced here in its vernacular sense as “an act of placing or arranging”, with a *position* denoting “a relative place, situation, or standing” or “a situation that confers advantage or preference” (Merriam-Webster 2022). The theory of interactional positioning (Davies & Harré 1990), detailed in Chapter 2, does not repurpose the word but rather harnesses its versatility to explore how social actors and entities are positioned discursively. The following subsection will connect the concept of positioning to the overarching focus on power by laying out the questions to be addressed by this research.

### 1.2.3 Research questions

The aim of this research is to examine the ways in which power is manifested, reproduced and challenged through the discursive positioning of participants in relation to each other and other social actors and entities which are made relevant in the talk. The main research question to be addressed is thus:

*In what ways are social power relations constituted through interactional positioning during the FRCs?*
The data collection process involved initial intensive engagement with the BWV footage, followed by a prolonged period of detailed conversation-analytic transcription. As explicated in the Methodology chapter (Ch.3), this close engagement with the data uncovered prominent themes which are evident in all cases, providing three strands of analysis which focus on: the setting and its interactional spaces; police expertise; and AV responsibility. These central concepts will be developed in more detail in Chapter 2 in the context of previous research. To unpack the main research question, the three themes are addressed by the following subsidiary research questions.

1. The first strand of analysis addresses the question: **In what ways are participants positioned discursively in relation to the setting and its interactional spaces?** A striking feature across the dataset is the overarching and moment-by-moment ‘presence’ of the setting. Previous research has underscored the influence of setting in shaping communicative norms in different institutional contexts (e.g. Yoong 2010; Iedema 2006). FRC settings are characterised by a hybridity resulting from the institution entering the private realm. This process necessitates the reconfiguration of interactional spaces which normally form the backdrop to aspects of the AV’s private life, including the reported abuse. The ownership status ascribed to the AV through fixity in the setting (Giddens 1984) provides a point of departure for various possible (re)positionings once the police arrive. The data yield some variety in the characteristics of each setting, inviting an exploration of how participants manage the considerations, affordances and limitations posed by each.

2. The second analytic theme addresses the question: **In what ways are participants positioned through officers’ expertise-in-interaction?** This strand builds on the policing context detailed in the first two sections of this chapter, in that expertise-in-interaction is defined as “showing knowing how to do things” (Arminen & Simonen 2021) and is thus crucial in the FRC context. As established earlier, first response officers attending FRCs face "complex and sensitive" work involving checklists of duties and ad hoc decisions (HMIC 2014: II). The interactions under analysis revolve around the officers’ performance of certain key tasks at the scene. Previous research has explored expertise in other institutional contexts (e.g. Candlin & Candlin 2002a) but it remains under-studied in policing, especially in FRCs. Officers’ capacity (and displayed capacity) to carry out their work bears consequences not only for the AV’s safety, but also their
confidence in the police and, by extension, the ongoing criminal justice process. Analysis is informed by the distinction between expertise which is ascribed by institutional status and that which is achieved through the performance of actions.

3. The final theme for analysis addresses the question: In what ways are participants positioned while co-constructing the AV’s responsibility in relation to the reported events? Rather than intending to place undue focus on the behaviour of the AVs over that of the AP (see Ch.3), this line of enquiry attends to the fact that both AVs and officers make the AVs’ responsibility relevant in various manifestations regarding the reported abuse and wider relationship with the AP. This theme reflects the legal context, in which DA cases often hinge on parties’ opposing versions of events, and DA research which demonstrates patterns of victim-blaming and self-blame in DA discourses (e.g. Lempert 1996a; Thapar-Björkert & Morgan 2010; Pallatino et al. 2019). Analysis considers AVs’ responsibility positionings both in the storyworld (Schiffrin 1996) of their initial account and in the local interactional context, in relation to the evidential and sense-making functions of both.

1.3 Structure of the thesis
The next chapter (2) contextualises the study in relation to the academic research background, beginning with a broad overview of two current sociolegal issues regarding DA, then moving on to situate FRC interaction as a genre of institutional discourse, which includes a review of the literature on setting, interactional space and expertise. An overview of the relevant DA research will then focus on police-victim encounters and victim blame. The discussion of blame is then developed with a theoretical overview of responsibility. The latter portion of the chapter is dedicated to interactional positioning, beginning with Positioning Theory, before demonstrating its merits as a tool for each strand of analysis.

Chapter 3 details the research design and methodology, beginning by introducing the data for analysis. After addressing the data access and collection processes, including their extensive ethical and practical complexities, the data are described in detail. The affordances and limitations of the data source, police BWV, are also discussed. The chapter then outlines the overarching Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, before detailing the methodological approach of Conversation Analysis, describing the tools and procedure employed.
In line with the staged CDA approach of analysing then critically interpreting texts (Fairclough 1995), Chapters 4 to 6 present the fine-grained analyses of the three research strands introduced above. The first analysis chapter examines positioning in the setting and its interactional spaces. Chapter 5 focuses on positioning in relation to police expertise in the course of performing key tasks at the scene. Chapter 6 concludes the analysis section with an exploration of AVs’ responsibility positionings in relation to key aspects of the events they describe. The findings are synthesised and critically interpreted in Chapter 7 to address the central question of how power relations are constituted by the positionings identified in the analysis chapters. The implications of these evaluations are discussed in light of the potential for power to both dominate and produce. Finally, Chapter 8 will conclude the thesis by considering recommendations for police practice, evaluating the study and looking ahead to the research opportunities opened up by this exploration of FRC discourse.
Chapter 2: Research background

Having introduced the research context and central aims in the previous chapter, this chapter will position the study within its rich research context. The first section provides a bridge between chapters by addressing two key sociolegal issues which inform our understanding of domestic abuse (DA) first response policing. The second and longest section then situates police first response call-out (FRC) interaction as a genre of institutional discourse. To this end, the section details the role of the setting, the defining characteristics of institutional talk and their relationship to the FRC context, the interactional complexities entailed by officers’ professional role and how these can be unpacked using the key concept of expertise-in-interaction. The third section builds on the previous two by considering the interactional complexities generated by the realities of DA as a lived experience, with a focus on victim (self-)blame and responsibility. The fourth section shifts to a more theoretical focus to demonstrate how the fundamental tenets of interactional positioning theory provide valuable conceptual cornerstones to guide analysis.

2.1 Domestic abuse: Key concepts and debates

This section will contextualise the study relative to several relevant themes which are subject to ongoing debate in relation to the conceptualisation and description of DA, and which inform aspects of the present analysis and critical discussion. First to be addressed is the issue of differentiating or conflating violence and abuse, after which the legal status of DA victims as a vulnerable group will be problematised in the context of FRCs.

2.1.1 Violence, abuse and gender

Abuse between partners or former partners who are not biologically related can be identified specifically as intimate partner violence, although the broader terms domestic abuse and domestic violence are more widely recognisable in the UK (Lagdon et al. 2015). The former is now applied uniformly in UK legislation (Domestic Abuse Act 2021), the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice and the police force participating in this study. The move away from the specificity of ‘domestic violence’ recognises the broader scope of abuse and addresses related concerns (e.g. HMICFRS 2019) about failures throughout the criminal justice system to deal with coercive control, which is a primary precursor to domestic homicide (WHO 2017; Sabina & Tinsdale 2008).

Women’s rights campaigners and researchers in violence against women (e.g. Aldridge 2020; Kelly & Westmarland 2016; Hester et al. 2017) warn about the injustices perpetuated by
blurring legislative and, by extension, conceptual boundaries between violent and non-violent abuse:

Although the focus on nonphysical forms of abuse in the proposed new legislation is important as it helps to recognize and cement coercive and controlling behavior in law ... the removal of ‘violence’ as a key rubric suggests a ‘watering down’ or obfuscation of the serious and gendered nature of DVA. (Aldridge 2020: 2)

The alternative term *domestic violence and abuse*, which is growing in prevalence in such work (as DVA), implicitly communicates the fact that the overwhelming majority of DA involves men’s physical coercion and violence against women (WHO 2017; FRA 2015), who constitute three-quarters of UK domestic homicide victims (CPS 2022a; UNODC 2019). In light of the statistics, critics of the shift towards gender neutral language in DA discourses feel that a ‘gender symmetry paradigm’ irresponsibly promotes the notion of equal victimisation across genders (Johnson 2011; Hester 2012; Ainsworth 2021). Demonstrably, therefore, the debate about labelling DA is inextricably interwoven with concerns about gender discrimination. A gender-based analysis is beyond the scope of the present study, but because it includes a male AV reporting violence from a female AP, it is crucial to bear in mind the wider social context in which such cases are associated with distinctive abuse dynamics and societal preconceptions (Hester 2012; Nybergh et al. 2016; WHO 2017).

The present research context is predetermined by the conflation of domestic abuse with violence or other immediate physical danger, as the basis for the emergency control room’s assessment of a ‘high risk incident’ (Critchfield et al. 2021). Nonetheless, as will be detailed throughout analysis, the abuse described by the AVs involves both violent and non-physical behaviour, and the distinction between these forms becomes topicalised in all cases. This complexity brings to light the impossibility of capturing the continuous, pernicious reality of DA on the basis of individual or even serial ‘incidents’ (Kelly & Westmarland 2016). This study’s use of the term *domestic abuse* does not purport to encompass its myriad manifestations in the lives of victims, including the AVs represented in the data. A related consideration is that the research cannot make assumptions about the nature and extent of the abuse reported. Rather, the term allows for consistency of reference by encompassing both DA as a lived experience and as a determiner of the unique policing context in which the focal interactions take place: DA is currently the only type of crime in the UK for which there is an extensive, nationally mandated procedure dedicated to first response (CoP 2022; detailed in Ch.1.1).
2.1.2 Domestic abuse, vulnerability and first response

To contextualise the data, it is also necessary to parse the concept of vulnerability, which is used throughout this thesis to encompass its overlapping legal, operational and ordinary meanings. In formal legal proceedings, a DA victim is classified as a ‘vulnerable or intimidated witness’ on the basis of being a victim of the most serious crime and, depending on individual circumstances, an intimidated victim (Ministry of Justice [MoJ] 2020: 10-II; Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, s.32; Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999, s.17). These classifications afford them enhanced rights (MoJ 2020), including access to the special measures laid out in the Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings (henceforth ABE) guidelines for interviewing vulnerable and intimidated witnesses (MoJ 2022). For instance, DA victims have the right to request a police interviewer of a particular gender (MoJ 2022: 61) and the right to a specially designed interview setting to minimise distress (MoJ 2022: 67; see further 2.2.1).

Despite recent developments in DA victims’ rights within the justice process, most notably in court (Domestic Abuse Act 2021, s.68), AVs’ rights during FRCs remain narrower in scope than those available once formal proceedings begin. The College of Policing supplies a broad definition of vulnerability ‘for the purposes of incident management’, adopted from the THRIVE risk assessment model used in the emergency control room:

A person is vulnerable if, as a result of their situation or circumstances, they are unable to take care of or protect themselves or others from harm or exploitation. (Critchfield et al. 2021: 14)

This operational definition is reflected throughout FRC guidelines (CoP 2022), which refer to AVs’ vulnerability in relation to their and officers’ behaviour. However, the guidelines make a distinction between this operational conceptualisation of vulnerability and its legal definition. Procedure for safeguarding others at the scene highlights that the legal status of ‘vulnerable’ applies only to children and adults who lack the capacity to make their own decisions (Vulnerable Adults, CoP 2022; Mental Capacity Act 2005). Guidelines for interviewing such witnesses instruct officers to refrain from doing so at the scene, so that the ABE measures can be implemented. This brings to light the fact that AVs who are not classified as vulnerable adults are not entitled to statutory special measures during FRCs, as is the case later in the legal
process. This disparity is revealed by guidance for first responders to encourage ‘reluctant
witnesses’ by informing them about the special measures that may be available should they
proceed with legal action (CoP 2019: 22).

As with the ABE special measures, the extensive FRC guidelines summarised in Chapter
1 are designed to facilitate good quality evidence, according to the vulnerabilities associated
with DA (see CoP 2022d). Yet because AVs do not have statutory rights related to their
vulnerability when giving their initial account during FRCs, the onus is on the officers to enact
the appropriate procedures. Furthermore, the officers are tasked with evaluating AVs’
vulnerability on a moment-to-moment basis as the call-out unfolds. This ‘primary risk
assessment’ forms the basis of subsequent assessments which determine the AV’s legal status as
vulnerable and intimidated, if the crime is officially recorded (CoP 2022d). These responsibilities
bring to the fore the power of first response officers to determine the support AVs receive, both
in the moment and throughout the criminal justice process.

This first section has outlined two areas of contention which lay bare some of the complexities
characterising DA as a sociolegal issue and which in turn shape the power dynamics of FRCs.
The next section homes in on the discursive means by which these dynamics are realised, by
illuminating the type of talk that characterises institutional encounters.

2.2 FRC interaction as institutional discourse

Agar (1985: 164) defines an institution as “a socially legitimated expertise together with those
persons authorized to implement it”. This thesis builds on a wealth of research which considers
the institutional context of speech situations as fundamental to interpreting the meanings
constructed therein. This section will situate DA FRCs as a genre of institutional discourse,
taking into account the unique characteristics of FRCs detailed in Chapter 1.1 and in the section
above. Thornborrow’s definition of institutional discourse captures how certain talk is
recognisable as ‘institutional’, describing it as

a form of interaction in which the relationship between a participant’s current
institutional role (that is, interviewer, caller to a phone-in programme or schoolteacher)
and their current discursive role (for example, questioner, answerer or opinion giver)
emerges as a local phenomenon which shapes the organisation and trajectory of the talk.
In other words, what people do in institutional encounters is produced, overall, as a
result of this interplay between their interactional and discursive role and their institutional identity and status. (Thornborrow 2002: 5)

The first subsection will focus on the role of the settings in which institutional interactions occur, before moving on to consider the defining characteristics of this talk.

2.2.1 The role of setting in institutional talk

Because institutionality is constituted through talk-in-action, as per Thornborrow’s summary above, institutional talk is neither restricted to nor imposed by specific material settings (e.g. Heritage & Greatbatch 1991; Schegloff et al. 2002; Mayr 2008). In their seminal introduction to institutional talk, Drew and Heritage (1992: 27) distinguish between formal settings, such as investigative interviews, and non-formal settings with formal procedures, such as social workers’ visits. Non-formal settings are characterised by conversational or quasi-conversational talk which has less uniformity in interactional roles and patterns (Drew & Heritage 1992: 28). FRC interaction typically occurs in the distinctly non-formal setting of an AV’s home, as borne out in two of the three cases represented in the data (with the third in the AV’s workplace) (see further Ch.3). Yet FRCs are bound by formal procedures with highly visible and conventional markers of institutionality in the form of sirens, marked vehicles, police uniforms and other ‘occupational accoutrements’ (Niederhoffer 1967). This is especially true of the one FRC in the data which involves five officers (App.Rl). Moreover, DA incidents are formalised further as they are excluded from the usual stipulation that body-worn video (BWV) should not be used in private dwellings (College of Policing [CoP] 2014a: 18). Indeed, the officers’ formal appearance was a recurring theme of concern with the members who participated in the focus group (see Ch.3.5) conducted during this research:

M4 they’re in uniform (.) they’re in the uniform as well which they don’t seem to understand that if you’ve never had anything to do with the police all your life you know it’s such-
M2 it’s a huge uniform as well isn’t it
M5 yeah yeah more layers and more pockets
M3 and bits of stuff-
M6 and bits of things hanging everywhere
M2 it’s huge
M5 yeah and cuffs and radios and (.) yeah.
M4 it’s actually very (.) intimidating

DAS focus group, App.R4: 12
The institutionality of FRC interaction is thus constituted not only through talk but through the visual encoding of institutional authority (Cohn 1989). Shon (2003) found that in encounters with citizens during traffic stops, officers “relied on the semiotic nature of their uniform and identity to convey their institutional affiliation” (2003: 106-7; see also de Camargo 2016) and that these visible markers precluded the need for verbal opening sequences. In FRCs, the officers’ formal physicality is borne out in their rigid procedures for securing safety, making an arrest and assessing immediate risk, amounting to a ‘legitimate intrusion’ (Shon 2003) of the institutional into the private that reconfigures the material structure of the setting.

There is a body of research to demonstrate the influence of the ‘architecture for interaction’ (Hausendorf & Schmitt 2016; Hausendorf 2022) on institutional talk. Jucker and colleagues (2018: 86) categorise settings according to structure, ranging from heavily to weakly structured. For example, police interview rooms are defined as heavily structured, in that they are purpose-built and impose clear boundaries and expectations on the interaction. The inscribed authority of such settings inheres in the fact that the “material environment predisposes us in very specific, important and lasting ways in our doings and sayings” (Iedema 2000: 65). For instance, Yoong (2010) correlates the interactional norms established in interrogation rooms with the deliberate disempowerment of suspects, illustrating “the fundamental role of space in enacting social practices” (van Leeuwen 2008: 90).

Oxburgh and colleagues (2010: 54) emphasise the role of setting in shaping police interviews as speech events, citing the purpose-built suites designed for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. The ABE special measures for these interviews underscore the need for “active consideration” given to interview location and room layout, taking into account interviewees who might prefer a setting “familiar and comfortable to them” (Ministry of Justice [MoJ] 2022: 67). The measures frame this familiarity in terms of institutional goal-orientations: retrieval cues in the environment might prompt better recall, although this can be hindered by witnesses’ anxiety upon returning to the scene of the crime (MoJ 2022: 204). This tension brings to light the complexities of authority within FRC settings: despite their ownership rights, the AV’s connection with the space may be infused with the trauma of an abusive relationship and the reported incident.

The three FRCs in the dataset take place in the AVs’ private sphere: two private homes and a rented barbershop (while closed). Jucker et al. (2018) categorise homes and shops as moderately structured because although they are not built for communication, it takes place frequently and is shaped by spatial and material configurations. Crucially, we associate moderately structured settings with specific types of talk (2018: 89), and there is a clear
mismatch between the type of talk implied by homes and workspaces (e.g. family talk, work talk, small talk) and the urgency and procedural character of FRCs. The AVs’ realm is thereby appropriated as a ‘temporary architecture’ (Misselwitz & Steigemann 2022) for institutional interaction.

At the time of writing, there is no previous research to capture the high stakes, institutional-private dynamics of FRC settings. The impact of urgency is addressed by Ainsworth and colleagues (2009) in their work on emergency departments, in which they describe a spatial model based on the fixity of staff and flow of patients. This setting is markedly different from FRCs in both its unmistakable institutionality and the degree of mobility, but the authors make the important observation that for the institutional actors, “being ‘fixed’ in one place was also used as a signifier of moral authority: it brought with it greater knowledge, ownership and experience” of the department (2009: 18). This finding not only reiterates the inherent lack of neutrality in institutional spaces (Lefebvre 1991; Taylor & Spicer 2007), but also raises the question of whether AVs during FRCs derive the same sense of authority through being ‘fixed’ in the setting.

Also relevant is work on ‘liminal’ spaces in institutional talk which probes the function and nature of talk in spaces that blur institutional boundaries (e.g. Iedema et al. 2006; Waring & Bishop 2010; Hazel & Mortensen 2013; Vesala & Tuomivaara 2019). In a policing context, Wegorowski (2018) explores the liminal spaces occupied by UK Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) when carrying out work such as door-to-door enquiries. The study reveals how the latter encounters bring the officers to the cusp of citizens’ private realms, creating a space in which the public and private meet and are interactionally negotiated. In the current dataset, because the first response officers cross the AVs’ thresholds, these settings can be conceptualised not in terms of liminality but as the interpolation of the institutional into the private, capturing both the direction of movement and its transformative effect. This dynamic is borne in mind throughout the next subsection, which focuses on the talk that occurs within this complex environment.

2.2.2 The defining characteristics of institutional talk

Due to our lack of existing knowledge about FRC interaction, it is useful to approach it in relation to the fundamental characteristics of institutional talk, as identified by Drew and Heritage (1992). Drawing from Levinson’s broader conceptualisation of activity types (1979, 1992), Drew and Heritage define institutional talk in terms of goal orientations, inferential frameworks and allowable contributions. These basic elements create “family resemblances”
across contexts (1992: 21), inviting a consideration of FRCs according to what is known about talk in other settings.

2.2.2.1 Goal orientations and inferential frameworks

Institutional talk is informed by “an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or identity (or set of them) conventionally associated with the institution in question” (Drew & Heritage 1992: 22). All three AVs in the dataset called the emergency services themselves, an action which frames the FRCs according to AVs’ displayed goal orientation of resolving an immediate problem with the AP. The emergency call sets in motion a police process that entails a series of institutionally-defined objectives, as detailed in Chapter 1. Officers’ primary requirements are to secure the safety of the AV and any children, determine what (if any) crime has been committed and if the AP should be arrested, and collect evidence from the scene. Verbal evidence takes the form of the AV’s first account and any ‘significant comments’ made by witnesses, written evidence takes the form of the officer’s report, and photographic evidence includes the BWV footage and smartphone photographs of physical evidence (CoP 2022b; App.1). Gathering evidence thereby feeds into the goals of determining criminality and the necessary next steps, with the AV’s account positioned as central to these decision-making processes (CoP 2016b). However, as indicated in Chapter 1, FRC procedure is informed by legal frameworks and complexities to which the first response officers have more access than the AVs. Accordingly, Drew and Heritage (1992: 22) characterise institutional talk as relying on inferential frameworks which dictate participants’ variable understanding of context-specific procedures and ‘orders of discourse’, the “discursive practices of an institution and relationship between them” (Fairclough 1993: 138). Emerging from the concept of inferential frameworks is the question of who has the right to speak and when during institutional interactions, as will be addressed in the next subsection and related to the overarching research focus on power relations (see Ch.1).

2.2.2.2 Participation rights and power relations

Power inheres in “privileged access to socially valued resources”, including knowledge and discourse (van Dijk 1993: 254). Accordingly, institutional-lay⁶ communication is characterised by power asymmetry, with the institutional actor in a position of ascribed authority and procedural familiarity which affords them discursive control (e.g. Agar 1985; Fairclough 2015;

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⁶ Use of the term ‘lay’ in binary opposition has been problematised in other professional contexts (e.g. Sarangi 2001), but is used here to demarcate those with institutional affiliation (and see Section 2.2.5 on lay expertise).
Thornborrow 2002; Mayr 2008). This asymmetry is (re)produced in talk through unequal access to participation rights, with "special and particular constraints on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contributions to the business at hand" (Drew & Heritage 1992: 22, italics in original). Speaker constraints are further legitimised in investigative and legal contexts in which personal safety or freedom is at stake, as evidenced by the rigid, pre-allocated turn-taking structures of formal police interviews and trials (e.g. Atkinson & Drew 1979, Harris 1984; Ainsworth 1993; Eades 2008; Haworth 2009).

Dyadic legal-lay interactions, therefore, are driven by the dominance of the questioner, who can package lay participants' talk into evidentially salient points through the strategic use of question types and other features (e.g. Auburn et al. 1999; Heydon 2005; Ehrlich 2013; Ferraz de Almeida & Drew 2020; May et al. 2021). Institutional questioners are thus in a position to control the production of information according to the legal framework of the offence (Haworth 2021). Central to this goal-orientation is the influence of the 'overhearing audience’ (Heritage 1985): the absent others who will base decisions (and their evaluation of the questioner's performance) on this verbal evidence (e.g. Coulthard 1996; Haworth 2013). In this way, institutions are “primary sites of ‘reality construction’” with “considerable control over the shaping of our routine experiences of the world and the way we classify that world” (Mayr 2008: 1; Fairclough 2003). In the context of FRCs, the information produced by the AV either initiates or precludes further investigation, so the officer-questioner assumes a central role in shaping the recontextualisation of the reported incident (Linell 1998), with implications for AVs' understanding of both the legal and moral import of what has happened to them (Pennebaker et al. 1988; Linehan & McCarthy 2000).

Constraints on allowable contributions are maximised in urgent encounters such as emergency calls, which share many contextual similarities to first response encounters. Zimmerman (1992) demonstrates how the emergency call’s tight interactional structure is designed to facilitate the swift “working through of issues” (211) according to the goal-orientation expressed in the caller’s act of calling. Yet research shows that call-takers’ institutional drive for specificity can hinder the emergence of information, resulting from a clash of expectations that Tracy (1997) conceptualises in terms of callers’ “customer service frame” and call-takers’ “public service frame” (see also e.g. Imbens-Bailey & McCabe 2000; Garner 2013; Raymond 2014; Garcia 2015; Kent & Antaki 2020; Garcia & Palmer 1999; Paoletti 2012; Raymond & Zimmerman 2016; Riou et al. 2018), a problem that is exacerbated when callers are distressed (Whalen & Zimmerman 1998). Emergency calls therefore epitomise the tension, identified by Agar (1985), between institutional and ‘client’ frames, whereby the former
seek to fit clients’ lifeworld accounts into institutional frameworks while clients “come to the
encounter with a variety of ways of thinking about themselves, their problems, and the
institution’s relationship to them” (1985: 149). Emergency call research thus indicates that the
time pressure associated with the FRC context may influence the distribution of power between
speakers. The following subsection considers the nature of FRC discourse in light of what we
know about institutional talk.

2.2.3 Characteristics of FRC encounters

2.2.3.1 Allowable contributions during FRCs

Benwell and Stokoe refer to a “continuum of institutionality” (2006: 90), which ranges from
highly restricted speech situations to those with little or no formal structure (Heritage &
Greatbatch 1991; Hutchby 2005). In contrast to the formalised procedures for investigative
interviews and emergency calls, FRCs lack a predetermined communicative structure, giving
the officers (and potentially the AVs) leeway to adjust their communicative behaviour according
to the demands of the situation. Very little research has been done in first response contexts to
illuminate the nature of FRC interaction. An exception is Kidwell’s work (2006, 2009), which
draws from television camera footage recorded for the US reality show COPS, comprising clips
from officer-citizen interactions in both first response and non-emergency situations. Kidwell
acknowledges some limitations of using footage that has been extensively edited for the purpose
of entertainment (2006: 750), namely that it precludes analysis of stretches of talk. An arguably
more important limitation is the ‘Hawthorne effect’ created by the presence of television
cameras, amounting to a markedly different genre of interaction from the current data.
Nonetheless, Kidwell identifies some pertinent features, such as the officers’ “less institutionally
obvious” strategy of using eye gaze to calm victims (2006: 747), a finding which demonstrates
the potential role of embodied and other non-verbal aspects of this speech context (cf. Whalen
& Zimmerman 1998). In the lower-pressure context of traffic stops, Voigt and colleagues (2017)
demonstrate that ad hoc police-citizen encounters can create opportunities for officers to
perpetuate ideologies with their discursive choices.

The more flexible format of FRC interaction may also present opportunities for AVs to
exert some control over proceedings. In line with the ‘productive’ view of power introduced in
Chapter 1, Giddens (1982: 199) argues that in “all social systems there is a dialectic of control,
such that there are normally continually shifting balances of resources, altering the overall
distribution of power”. Victims’ representational choices shape the version of events that is
entextualised into the system via their emergency call and the BWV footage of the FRC, as
indicated by Kidwell’s (2009) work on impression management in police-citizen encounters (see also Tracy & Anderson 1999). Victims thereby assume a degree of control over the text trajectory (Blommaert 2005) of their information as it travels through the legal process (see Rock et al. 2013). If used in court, the BWV footage preserves the AV’s voice and overrides the traditional primacy of written police reports and witness statements as the original accounts of events (Rock 2001; Haworth 2018; Walton & Brooks 2021; Jones & Li 2016).

Furthermore, there is no legal obligation that the AV either answers the officers’ questions or accounts for non-cooperation. Frequently, victims who have reached out to the police for immediate protection will then decline to support an arrest and prosecution (Office for National Statistics 2021c). Research which explores resistance to institutional questioning demonstrates that discursive control does not always straightforwardly correlate with institutional membership (e.g. Newbury & Johnson 2006; Haworth 2006; Cerović 2016; Smith 2010; Berger et al. 2017; Marquez Reiter et al. 2016; Hildebrand-Edgar & Ehrlich 2017). The possibility of resistance therefore inheres in the answerer’s possession of information desired by the questioner, revealing how power and knowledge “directly imply each other” (Foucault 1977: 27).

2.2.3.2 The distribution of knowledge during FRCs

Just as the undetermined nature of the FRC context complicates the distribution of power, the same applies to the distribution of knowledge. Circumstantially, FRCs entail two epistemic assumptions: the AV’s lifeworld knowledge about what happened and the officer’s institutional knowledge about police procedure, mapping onto Heritage’s (2013) distinction between ‘epistemics of experience’ and ‘epistemics of expertise’. Heritage conceptualises ‘epistemic status’ in terms of gradients between speakers:

\[
R\text{elative epistemic access to a domain will be stratified between two speakers }A\text{ and }B\text{ such that they occupy different positions on an epistemic gradient (more knowledgeable (K+) or less knowledgeable (K–)), which itself may vary in slope from shallow to deep. (Heritage 2013: 558)}
\]

The police goal of obtaining verbal evidence entails filling gaps in officers’ lifeworld knowledge to fulfil their duties, positioning AVs with a K+ epistemic advantage. However, when AVs indicate resistance to pursuing legal action, or have provided insufficient information, officers are instructed to “take steps to build a case for a potential evidence-led prosecution” without
the AV’s input (Unsupportive Victims, CoP 2022). Because speakers derive their inferential schemata from the structure of the specific activity type (Levinson 1992), first response officers hold a K+ epistemic advantage in relation to the complexities of FRC procedure.

Applicable here are the three aims of institutional discourse proposed by Agar (1985: 149): *diagnose* the client’s problem and the solution according to institutional frameworks; *issue directives* for actions to solve the problem; and *summarise* these processes in a *report*. Beyond the frontstage diagnosis of questioning the AV about the incident, officers are to remain vigilant for additional salient information for their written report, including AV’s “demeanour” and signs of coercive control beyond those indicated by the AV (CoP 2022). Every aspect of the FRC may be subject to scrutiny, yet AVs’ awareness of this ongoing monitoring process is dependent on their grasp of procedure, based on officers’ explanations and/or the AV’s previous experience. In this way, the gradients of both propositional and procedural knowledge which underpin FRCs are subject to negotiation through talk.

An illustrative point can be made by revisiting the issue of rapport-building, which police guidelines associate with diverse aims: ensuring the AV’s safety, preserving evidence, encouraging the AV’s future trust in the police force and increasing the likelihood of their present cooperation (Build Rapport, CoP 2022). The conflation of trust with cooperation reflects the policing conceptualisation of rapport as a tool in investigative interviews: ‘a comfortable witness is a good witness’ (Vallano & Schreiber Compo 2011). Therefore, talk that is not obviously procedural, such as small talk, may also produce points of evidence which bear consequences for the AV further along in the investigative process. This procedural opacity recalls Hak’s (1994: 469) characterisation of the “interactional form of professional dominance” as “the unequal distribution of the parties’ access to each other’s objectives” (see also Drew 1991).

A key consideration emerging from the procedural knowledge gap relates to the evidential function of the BWV. Officers have insider knowledge as to how the footage might be recontextualised and interpreted by future legal actors and juries and can shape their conduct accordingly (Johnson 2008; Stokoe & Edwards 2008). This asymmetry of access is redressed to an extent in a recent legislative update that gives AVs the option of reviewing their first account before proceeding to the statement and interview stages (First Accounts, CoP 2022). However, this measure assumes AVs’ awareness of being recorded and, furthermore, they may only review footage that specifically shows their account of the incident, giving them limited visibility of the policework conducted elsewhere. This inscribed knowledge gap indexes the redistribution of authority within the setting resulting from the ‘legitimate intrusion’ (Shon 2003) of the institutional into the private. The following subsection considers another
characteristic of FRC discourse, namely the AV’s potential vulnerability (see 2.1.2), in light of what is known about institutional talk.

2.2.3.3 Institutional talk and vulnerability during FRCs

The disempowering potential of asymmetrical access to speaking rights and institutional frameworks, outlined in Section 2.1.2, is compounded in the case of vulnerable groups. Vulnerable victims and witnesses may be more susceptible to questioners who seek to infuse the account with a preferred version of events, as demonstrated with victims during investigative interviews (Richardson et al. 2019) and in court (Aldridge & Luchjenbroers 2007; Aldridge 2007). In this way, the communication barriers faced by vulnerable victims can lead to revictimisation according to systemic biases which dictate “who is heard as credible in the legal system” (Luchjenbroers & Aldridge 2008: 191). Research on vulnerable victim interviews underscores the interpersonal and evidential importance of doing relational work to mitigate against retraumatisation (e.g. Childs & Walsh 2017; Antaki & Richardson 2015). For instance, in their study of police interviewers’ use of disbelief and disapproval with vulnerable victims who have reported rape, Antaki and colleagues (2015) found that an interviewer’s obligation to be dispassionate conflicts with their ability to deal with interviewees’ distress. However, despite recent developments to FRC guidelines (see Chapter 1.1.1), rapport-building remains underspecified as a means of minimising the trauma of disclosure7 (CoP 2022). The section ‘Build Rapport’ focuses primarily on psychological barriers to rapport, in the form of victims’ hidden motivations for non-cooperation. While the rubric of What you’re thinking vs. What they might be thinking recognises the potential for communication breakdown resulting from AVs’ vulnerability, it does not propose specific interactional solutions to the list of potential misunderstandings.

In sum, despite the inherent power asymmetry and vulnerabilities associated with police-victim interactions, the lack of structural determination and epistemic nuances of FRC discourse represent an opportunity for the present analysis to uncover what happens in practice. To this end, the Methodology chapter (Ch.3) will detail the analytic approach that will explore how discursive control “emerges as a local phenomenon which shapes the organisation and trajectory of the talk” (Thornborrow 2002: 5). With this approach in mind, the next subsection

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7 The generalised guidelines for taking witnesses’ initial accounts, developed since the timeframe of the present research data, include more detail about rapport-building (CoP 2019). However, as discussed in Ch.1, this guidance is not DA-specific and therefore not provided in the authorised call-out procedure (CoP 2022).
explores the complexities of the officers’ role, to inform analysis of their (self-)positioning during FRCs.

2.2.4 Institutional, professional and personal modes of police talk

The discussion so far about police goal orientations and victim vulnerability highlights the multifarious responsibilities faced by first response officers. FRC guidelines (detailed in Ch.1) recognise that officers “are likely to have a number of competing demands placed on them”, in the form of a list of professional duties in which practical tasks are juxtaposed with “reassuring the victim” (CoP 2016a). Overwhelmingly, DA research identifies these ‘competing demands’ as a source of interpersonal tension (see further 2.3.1), as illustrated by this officers’ input from Lagdon and colleagues’ focus group study of AV and officer perspectives on FRCs:

The fact of police officers, well which hat do we put on going to this call? Am I a counsellor today, am I a parent, am I this persons [sic] husband or wife, am I a doctor, am I... That’s... People think police are there... and we’re police, they don’t realise exactly what we do (P3: Our big bag of hats.) It’s a big bag of hats, It really is! (P4: One stop shop.) Yeah. (Lagdon et al. 2015: 38)

This description recalls Goffman’s conceptualisation of role-shifting as “changing hats” (1981: 145) and is supported by a body of discourse studies which demonstrate the need for professionals to switch between modes of communication. Much of this work focuses on medical discourse, another context in which the core goal of diagnosis requires the interactional negotiation of lifeworld and specialist knowledge.

Mishler’s (1984) work has been influential in characterising this dynamic in terms of a binary distinction between the ‘voice of medicine’ and the ‘voice of the lifeworld’. Research since then has increasingly demonstrated a more nuanced range of different voices activated in medical professionals’ talk (e.g. Atkinson 1995; Silverman 1987; Coupland et al. 1994; Barton 2005; Iedema 2007; Hernández López 2008; Lindström & Weatherall 2015; de Silva et al. 2015). For instance, Cordella (2004) identifies three voices assumed by doctors in medical consultation: the ‘doctor voice’, the ‘educator voice’ and the ‘fellow human voice’. The empathy encoded in the latter category is echoed in the FRC guidelines on what you’re thinking/what they might be thinking, which encourage officers to balance their institutional goal-orientations with the AVs’ perspective (Build Rapport, CoP 2022). The professional process of mediating between these two perspectives reflects Roberts and Sarangi’s influential work on ‘discursive
hybridity’ (1999; see also Sarangi 2000), by which professionals activate professional, institutional and personal modes according to variable communicative goals. As with medical discourse, the function of legal actors’ language to map citizens’ behaviour onto institutional frameworks relies on a precision which is at odds with lay modes of communication (see Heffer 2005). This blurring of boundaries has been demonstrated in a range of policing contexts, including emergency calls (Garner & Johnson 2006), delivery of the caution (Rock 2007), investigative interviewing (Johnson 2006) and witness statements (Komter 2002). The interactional complexity arising from the need to blend modes is demonstrated by Stokoe and colleagues (2020) in relation to vulnerable witnesses. The authors note that officers can struggle to put the ABE special measures into practice while interviewing sexual assault victims:

> Police officers sometimes had difficulties reconciling a dilemma at the heart of the official guidelines: the need, on the one hand, to offer rapport and empathy to the interviewee (who, if their account is true, will have suffered a potentially traumatizing experience) but, on the other hand, to conduct the interview without potential accusation of bias, and in the interests of maximizing the quality and quantity of evidence they can obtain. (Stokoe et al. 2020: 39)

Other researchers highlight the complicating influence of technologisation on professionals’ modes of communication with clients (e.g. Engeström 2005; Kevoe-Feldman 2019) and the lack of resources for sufficient training in meeting clients’ diverse needs (e.g. Lane 2019).

These complexities are amplified in time-sensitive situations, as illustrated by Slade and colleagues (2008) in their work in high-pressure hospital emergency departments (see also Slade et al. 2016; Pun et al. 2017). Communication in this context frequently breaks down as a result of doctors’ conflicting demands and the prioritisation of life-saving over interpersonal concerns: “the complexities inherent in emergency care ... lead to a prioritzation of medical tasks over the experiences and sensibilities of people involved” (Slade et al. 2008: 292). Yet communicative breakdown during patients’ most vulnerable moments erodes their trust in the system (see also Kohn et al. 1999), a consequence that relates to DA AVs’ confidence in the police. Aside from the institutional setting, a key difference between hospital emergency departments and FRCs is the role of hospital nurses to mediate between patients and frontline doctors. Slade et al. (2018) note the “empowering and inclusive” (290) effect of nurses’ personalised discourse, which offsets the alienating process of emergency diagnosis. This
delineation of medical professionals’ roles brings to the fore the pressure on first response officers, whose ‘bag of hats’ involves attending to both ‘diagnosis’ and reassurance during FRCs (e.g. Lagdon et al. 2015; Lane 2019).

First response officers’ positions in relation to these various goal-orientations can be probed with the distinction, proposed by Sarangi and Roberts (1999), between the institutional order and the professionals who enact it (see also e.g. Sarangi et al. 2005; Sarangi & Candlin 2011). Institutional talk comprises “features which are attributed to institutional practice, either manifestly or covertly”, whereas professional talk is “what the professionals routinely do as a way of accomplishing their duties and responsibilities” (Sarangi and Roberts 1999: 15). There is therefore a mutual dependency between institutional and professional modes in interaction. On one hand, if we consider professionals’ talk as the “voices used by the institution to represent itself to the outside world” (1999: 16), officers derive their professional identity from the institutional order they embody. Furthermore, the evolution of institutional frameworks necessitates adjustments in professional practice (Iedema 2005). For instance, the criminalisation of coercive control in England and Wales in 2015 has transformed the scope of first response officers’ diagnostic practices, which now include detecting signs of coercive control during FRCs (CoP 2022b). At the same time, officers’ representational position affords them some power: “the institutional order is real only in so far as it is realized in performed roles” (Berger & Luckmann 1967: 67, emphasis in original). The act of arrest is governed by formal frameworks (PACE 1984, s.24), as explicated by the verbal caution, but the decision to arrest results from professional judgement and discussion. First response officers are thus set apart from the policing institution as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991) whose shared professional resources include their chosen modes of discourse while performing policework. The officers’ management of the institutional, professional and relational dimensions of this work can be explored using the construct of expertise, a key analytic theme of this study which is the focus of the next subsection.

2.2.5 Expertise-in-interaction

The study of expertise is rooted in the realm of epistemics (see e.g. Stivers et al. 2011, van Dijk 2013, Drew 2018), in particular Ryle’s (1945) distinction between ‘knowing-that’ and ‘knowing-how’ (see also Fantl 2008). Arminen and colleagues (2021b: 573) describe expertise as the “conventionalized form” of know-how; the means by which knowledge is converted into action. Professionals’ expertise therefore inheres in excellence in practice, in the form of specialist knowledge, professional judgement and evidence of learning over time (Dreyfus & Dreyfus
In this way, first response officers’ legitimacy is associated with their expert vision, which equips them to identify the implications of the information gleaned from the AV and endows them with the authority to dictate the next steps.

Discursive realisations of expertise are frequently observed in conjunction with other focal phenomena in organisational settings (e.g. Clifton 2014, Halvorsen & Sarangi 2015, Ford et al. 2019), but it is gaining prominence as an analytic focus in its own right (e.g. Candlin & Candlin 2002a, Collins & Evans 2007, Arminen et al. 2021a). Arminen and Simonen (2021) develop the concept of expertise as an interactional construct, emphasising its negotiable rather than fixed nature:

[T]he meaning of expertise is fluid and contestable. On occasion, it is referred to as being owned by the experts; it may also be institutionally accredited entitlement, an activity-specific mastery of a task, or practical knowledge that is learned by experience. Further, expertise may be taken for granted and acquiesced to, or it may be topicalized and challenged. (2021: 579)

The study of expertise-in-interaction, therefore, is concerned with how participants in talk display their understandings of and orientations to their own and each other’s expertise. Discursive manifestations of expertise fall into two categories: ascribed expertise, in the form of “institutionally-accredited entitlement”, and what will be referred to here as achieved expertise, which is exhibited through action formation in talk. First response officers have been ascribed expertise on the basis of their institutional status and related expectations about their training and experience. However, the extent to which the officers’ authority is legitimated in FRC practice relies on their “showing knowing how to do things” through talk-in-action (Arminen & Simonen 2021: 592), so that ‘expert talk’ is that which exhibits rather than merely claims expertise (Linell et al. 2002; Bassetti 2021). This distinction echoes that of Heritage (2013) between epistemic status and epistemic stance, with epistemic congruence dependent on the latter realising the former on a moment-by-moment basis in talk. In this way, the situated achievement of expertise is “not only the exercise of discipline-specific professional practices and behaviors but also intimately related to the management of discoursal practices” (Candlin & Candlin 2002b: 115).

In his influential study of ‘professional vision’, Goodwin (1994) probes the police-lay expertise gradient in the context of a criminal trial involving video evidence of police violence against a Black civilian. A defence expert witness successfully recontextualised the event
through the lens of professional vision, inviting the jury into the domain of police expertise by strategically highlighting elements of the coding scheme applied by the officers to justify the use of force. Goodwin demonstrates that officers’ expert status engenders an expectation of their “capacity for seeing and knowing what is to be seen and known” more so than civilians (Bassetti 2021: 6II-2). These ‘objects of knowledge’ (Goodwin 1994) are then entextualised in the officers’ reports, which represent “sense-making devices” to make their work “visible to a range of ratified participants” (Sarangi & Candlin 2011: 10). The recontextualisation of video footage in Goodwin’s study reflects the role of present-day BWV which, along with the report, indexes the expert vision of future audiences and positions the officers as accountable for demonstrating excellence in their practice.

According to Sarangi and Candlin (2011: 16), Goodwin’s concept of professional vision is realised discursively according to four types of knowledge: institutional, disciplinary, experiential (practice-based) and communicative. These epistemological dimensions map onto the distinction between ascribed and achieved expertise, revealing a tension between the association of expertise with both institutional status and professional autonomy:

Professionals in different institutional contexts strive to retain their control over specialized knowledge, and thus their freedom, by not allowing such knowledge to be routinized (and hence controlled through institutional means). However, what counts as an authoritative professional opinion (i.e., invested with legitimacy) is derived from institutionally sanctioned roles. When one talks about “expert opinion,” institutionally sanctioned authority and roles may be a prerequisite to adopting an expert stance. (Sarangi & Clarke 2002: I4I)

Accordingly, in their study of decision-making during social work team meetings, Dall and Sarangi (2018) define ‘situated expertise’ as the professional’s ability to mediate between institutional and client frames. To this end, members of the meetings ‘appealed to the institution’ in several ways: invoking the legal/institutional framework, categories, and procedures; invoking the institutional criteria for eligibility; and anticipating future institutional scenarios (see also Nielsen et al. 2012). In the present research context, institutional appeal is considered a key strategy for constructing ascribed expertise-in-interaction. Some implications of ascribed expertise were probed by D’Hondt (2009) in his analysis of a criminal trial in which the institutionality of the arresting officers’ conduct was used as a barometer for its acceptability (recalling Goodwin 1994). He identifies in the lawyers’
arguments an "agency-structure dichotomy that contrasts individual voluntarism with the constraints of routine procedures" (2009: 250). Whereas the prosecutor appealed to procedure to legitimise the officers’ actions, the defence reframed them as deviant by foregrounding the officers’ individual agency in interpreting procedure.

The interpersonal implications of the institutional-lay expertise gap are explored by Ford and colleagues (2019) in the context of palliative care interactions. In instances of incongruence between patient’s experiential knowledge and doctors’ expertise-based knowledge, the doctors’ empathic responses were instrumental in bridging the gap between the two perspectives, especially when discussing distressing topics. These findings reflect the move towards a participatory model in medical communication (e.g. Rowland & Politi 2016) away from the paternalistic approach documented by Heath (1992), who observed patients’ passivity in the face of general practitioners’ authority during diagnosis. The implications of this shift in relation to expertise are addressed by Peräkylä (2002), who found that doctors construct their expert status by making visible for patients the evidential bases of their diagnoses. By topicalising their own accountability in decision-making, the doctors temper the authority ascribed to them and foreground their professional duty of care (Peräkylä 2002: 221).

At the same time, lay participants can develop ‘lay expertise’ (Wynne 1996) through experience, which in the case of frequent callers to the police may inform both their interpretations of police expertise and their self-positioning vis-à-vis FRC procedure. The lay expert status of frequent callers invites comparison with that of chronically ill patients, who “draw on specific knowledge and expertise to assume ritualised role performance” with doctors (Sarangi & Candlin 2011: 6, see also Prior 2003). In the context of a police interview with an ‘experienced’ interviewee, Rock (2016) found that familiarity with procedure was oriented to in talk so as to mutually constitute lay and professional expertise: “the witness claims to understand the task at hand and sanctions the officer to take knowledge of processes and norms for granted” (2016: 423).

With the analysis presented in Chapter 5 (‘Positioning and police expertise’), this thesis adds to the developing field of expertise-in-interaction by focusing on a setting in which police actions are maximally consequential but under-researched. The experiential and legal complexities of DA place a considerable onus on first response officers to both successfully resolve the immediate situation and encourage AVs’ ongoing trust in the police. Therefore, although this research harnesses the concept specifically as a means of examining officers’ positionings vis-à-vis institutional procedure, expertise is understood in a broader sense as an overarching phenomenon that infuses FRC practice. Each of the published studies discussed
above illustrates how the distinction between ascribed and achieved expertise engenders questions about morality in professional practice (Dreyfus & Dreyfus 2005), and this linkage between expertise and morality comes to the fore when dealing with domestic abuse.

So far, this chapter has outlined two key sociolegal issues which inform our understanding of DA first response policing, before situating FRC interaction as a genre of institutional discourse in Section 2.2. The latter involved an overview of the role of the setting and interactional space, the defining characteristics of institutional talk, which were then mapped onto the FRC context, the complexities of the officers’ interactional role and, finally, the construction of police expertise. Underpinning the dynamics of institutional talk during FRCs is the complexity of DA as a lived experience (e.g. Kurz 1997; Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005; Walsh 2019), and this nexus is the focus of the following section.

2.3 Domestic abuse and police-victim interaction

2.3.1 Police-victim FRC experiences

Corresponding with its complexity, there is a vast body of DA research to inform our understanding of police-victim communication in the FRC context. Overwhelmingly, this research indicates that both victim reporting and the police response are fraught with difficulties. In the first place, victims may be hesitant to report abuse due to fears of retaliation, financial insecurity and institutional sanctions involving their children (Coulter et al. 1999; Erez & Belknap 1998; Towns & Adams 2009; Woods 2010). Confidence in the police can also be eroded over time by unsatisfactory responses to victims’ problems (e.g. Wolf et al. 2003; Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Meyer 2015). Various researchers (e.g. Lea & Lynn 2012; Robinson et al. 2018; Taylor 2022) have found that despite the increasing recognition of non-violent forms of abuse (Robinson et al. 2015, Crossman et al. 2016), officers remain disproportionately focused on physical violence and preconceptions about ‘ideal’ victims (Christie 1986; Strobl 2004; Jarnkvist & Brännström 2019; Meyer 2015). This perspective in turn infuses victims’ sense-making and reporting of their own experiences (Langan et al. 2016).

Key research by Lagdon and colleagues (2015) addresses many established issues around the police response to DA and, usefully, provides focus group data involving victims and officers with experience of FRCs in Northern Ireland. The victim participants reported feeling that attending officers did not believe them, take them seriously or understand abuse dynamics. Although some had had positive experiences, they emphasised a lack of consistency in the police approach. As established earlier in this chapter, the police participants expressed their struggles
in detecting non-violent forms of abuse, making decisions in such a limited timeframe and their lack of preparedness for the diversity of problems presented by DA.

A dominant theme in Lagdon et al.’s study and other work is the detrimental effect of repeated contact on the police-victim relationship. Familiarity between officers and ‘repeat victims’ can breed frustration and even contempt on both sides. These victims struggle with the repetition of FRC procedures, including questioning, which generate a sense of “prolonged victimisation” that is exacerbated for victims with PTSD and “learned helplessness” (2015: 49-50; Krause et al. 2006, Richards et al. 2008). Nonetheless, police focus group participants expressed frustration with frequent callers’ resistance to supporting a prosecution or leaving their abuser, as well as their frequent intoxication (see also Horwitz et al. 2011; Hildebrand Karlén et al. 2018). In turn, victims’ attitudes towards the police were coloured by their unsympathetic treatment (see also Wolf et al. 2003, Logan et al. 2006; Stewart et al. 2013), to the extent that they viewed calling the emergency number only as a last resort. It is important to clarify that in Lagdon et al.’s (2015) study, as in the wider DA literature, victims and officers on the whole express their desire for a better relationship with each other. A recurring theme is that systemic limitations, including lack of police resources for specialist training and staff, remain a hindrance (e.g. Shearson 2017; Maple & Kebbell 2020).

2.3.2 Discourses of domestic abuse in investigative and legal contexts

The DA research discussed so far in this section relies on self-reporting and can only provide an indication rather than a demonstration of FRC practice, highlighting the research opportunity to be addressed here, with rare access to authentic data. There is, however, a body of work focusing on DA victims’ use of language in other investigative and legal contexts, all of which illustrates interactional and interpersonal problems. In the first place, victims making emergency calls may struggle to provide enough detail due to the sensitive subject matter (Tracy & Agne 2002; Tennent & Weatherall 2019). In police reports of DA incidents, Canning (2021) found that officers used language which backgrounded victimhood and foregrounded aspects of victims’ behaviour that indicated agency and responsibility (2021: 66). The study cites the potential influence of ingrained “institutional discursive habits” in the form of ‘policespeak’ (Fox 1993; Hall 2008), but ultimately proposes that it is a preference for leniency which underpinned officers’ presentation of evidence in a way that “steered the decision towards an early disposal”

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8 This term has replaced ‘repeat callers’, which is still in colloquial use in police parlance and recalls the medical world’s “heart-sink” patients (Sarangi & Roberts 1999: 18): a practice-oriented framing which “affects how they are treated institutionally”. Two of the AVs in the data (Amy and Julia) refer to previous police involvement, but their reporting history is unknown.
Canning proposes that this process could amount to “writing off” DA crimes (2021: 67), indicating one means by which first response officers may contribute to the low rate of prosecution outlined in Chapter I.

In the context of victims’ protective order interviews, Trinch and Berk-Seligson (2002; Trinch 2003) discovered “divergent ideas of what constitutes “appropriate” speech behavior” (2002: 382). While the victims expected to tell their story in their own way, the paralegals sought a “normal” linear account to import into the affidavit (see also Fitzgerald & Douglas 2020). Nonetheless, the authors note that the paralegal’s mediating role served the women by co-constructing a narrative more suited to achieving their legal aims (see also Conley & O’Barr 1990). The complexities around police-victim communication thus reflect wider language ideologies which reverberate throughout the legal process, as demonstrated by the recontextualisation of DA victims’ accounts to fit legal frameworks in court (Andrus 2015; Hunter 2006; Naughton et al. 2018) and institutional definitions of DA that misrepresent victims’ experiences and thereby silence their voices (Ashcraft 2000; Easteal et al. 2012). The above overview of research on the language of DA, from the initial emergency call to appearance in court, reinforces that there is an empirical knowledge gap as to the nature of police-victim interaction in the unique context of FRCs.

Another factor to consider in relation to the police response is gender. McElhinny (1995) observed gendered patterns in a comparison of male and female officers’ interactions with victims, including female officers’ accommodation of their style according to their gendered community of practice (see also Ostermann 2003). The present dataset does not allow for a comparative study on the basis of either AV or officer gender, but the potential for gendered dynamics will be borne in mind throughout the discussion. The dominant communicative theme emerging from research on women’s violence against men is of representational difficulties stemming from conflicting cultural assumptions around masculinity and victimhood (see further Migliaccio 2001; Durfee 2009; Burcar & Åkerström 2009; Tsui et al. 2010; Enander 2011; Corbally 2015; Morgan & Wells 2016; Hine et al. 2020; Allen-Collinson 2009). This thesis, as there is one male AV, therefore represents a point of departure for further research that might expand our understanding of male victims’ experiences during FRCs. The next subsection addresses the key analytic theme of victim responsibility, by first addressing the prevalence of self-blame in DA victims.
2.3.3 Domestic abuse and victim (self-)blame

FRC discourse must also be considered in light of the research which shines a light on the dynamics of DA victim (self-)blame. Blaming, defined as the assignment of responsibility for “wrongdoings” (Pomerantz 1978), interacts with and amplifies victims’ vulnerability (e.g. Towns & Adams 2000; Hydén 2005; Enander 2010). Adams (2012: 463) explains self-blame in terms of the power of language to “mediate an interaction between violence and personal interpretations of reality”, so that systematic verbal denigration warps victims’ perceptions of their agency and responsibility (see also Lempert 1996a). Furthermore, research consistently shows that offenders blame victims for their own abuse (Pence & Paymar 1993; Adams et al. 1995; Hearn 1998; Anderson & Umberson 2001; Dobash & Dobash 2010; LeCouteur & Oxlad 2011; Edin & Nilsson 2014, Pallatino et al. 2019), bolstered by mainstream cultural discourses which focus on victims’ failure to resist or leave their abuser (Meyers 1997; Friedman 2003; Berns 2004; Thapar-Björkert & Morgan 2010; Easteal et al. 2018). Accommodation to the perpetrator’s perspective can generate ambiguities in victims’ accounts of events (e.g. Towns & Adams 2016; Robertson & Murachver 2006; Yang 2007) and conflicting self-constructions of passivity and resistance (Baly 2010; Boonzaier 2008; Hydén 1999; Trinch 2007). These complexities have prompted victims’ advocates to cite self-blame as a primary barrier to receiving assistance (Town & Adams 2016; Shearson 2017).

2.3.4 Accountability, responsibility and police-victim interaction

Accountability, by which we are positioned as responsible to others for our behaviour (Garfinkel 1967), is ingrained in the present research context. Yet the potential for victims’ self-blame problematises first response officers’ task of diagnosis, in that “elicitation of an account directly or indirectly orients the participants to the attribution of responsibility” (Johansen 2011: 2847). There are numerous discourse studies of blame and responsibility in institutional contexts to inform analysis of these phenomena in police-victim communication (e.g. Hill & Irvine 1993; Arribas-Ayllon et al. 2011; Östman & Solin 2015). The conceptualisation of responsibility as discursively constructed is captured by Solin and Östman thus:

Responsible selves, identities and relations are not perceived as predetermined and stable, but as construed and negotiated in discourse, in interactions and texts; responsibility can be taken on, denied, assigned to other participants and evaded. (2015: 289)
In Atkinson and Drew’s (1979) influential work on courtroom cross-examination, witnesses’ awareness of their questioners’ goal-orientations led them to anticipate blame and produce ‘defence components’, even when the prior question was not blame-relevant. These defence components constitute accounting: “the use of language to interactionally construct preferred meanings for problematic events” (Buttny 1993: 21). Speakers therefore deal with being positioned as responsible through accountings such as explanations, excuses and justifications. There is a clear parallel with the present research in that the (purported) diagnostic aims of the courtroom questioner make relevant the witness’ accountability for their behaviour.

Ehrlich (2007) problematises this practice in her examination of the legal motivations and implications of responsibility-oriented questioning during a rape trial. She cites the gendered cultural assumptions which equate rape victims’ lack of resistance with consent, a theme mirrored in DA discourses (Braber 2014), even though submission during attack is often a learned self-preservation strategy (Lempert 1996b). In a more recent study of police interviewing that demonstrates the persistence of misconceptions about appropriate victim conduct, MacLeod (2016, see also 2010) identifies instances of rape victims’ blame anticipation and correlates these with ‘common-sense’ gendered ideologies (Gavey 2005). Patterns in victims’ accounting followed themes of potentially problematic behaviour, including lack of resistance and prior involvement with the perpetrator, with the accounting effectively framing the behaviour in terms of compliance with social norms. Furthermore, the interviewers’ responses accepted the victims’ accountings as relevant, perhaps in anticipation of the perpetrator’s defence based on the same victim-blaming themes oriented to by the victims. Questioner receipt shapes not only the version of events produced but also the victim’s understanding of these events, a concern that is of central relevance to the pivotal FRC context, given that “our sensemaking is done with respect to a concrete other in moments of interaction” (Linehan & McCarthy 2000: 451).

As established earlier in this chapter, FRC discourse lacks the predetermined formal structure of courtroom questioning or police interviewing, and Johansen (2011) provides an interesting comparative case with her analysis of agency and responsibility in children’s narratives during family dinnertime. Of relevance to AVs’ first accounts, Johansen found that narrative constructions of accountability and responsibility were “anchored in the intersection of the processes of decontextualization from one social context to a recontextualization in another social context” (2011: 2848), with reported speech recurring as an agency- and responsibility-framing device used by children to justify their behaviour. The dynamics of blame were thus shaped by the parent-child power asymmetry. Furthermore, Johansen problematises
the presupposition of agency entailed by attributions of responsibility (Duranti 2004), and the current research builds on this observation in a context in which participants’ capacity to act may have been eroded by abuse (e.g. Aldridge 2013; Krause et al. 2007).

Centrally relevant to the issue of victim accountability is the distinction between moral and causal responsibility (Fletcher 1967; Baier 1991). Moral responsibility entails the autonomy to act in a way that exhibits rightness and respect for others, whereas causal responsibility “conveys that a particular action has caused an outcome, but that something could have been done to avert it” (Sarangi 2015: 298; Baier 1991). Sarangi explores moral and causal responsibility in parents’ decision-making about childhood genetic testing (2015; Thomassen et al. 2015), reflecting a wider body of research which demonstrates the prevalence of blame orientations in relation to parental care of children (e.g. Arribas-Ayllon et al. 2008, Ingrids 2014, Clarke et al. 2011, Franzén & Aronsson 2018). Correspondingly, research demonstrates DA victims’ sensitivity to repercussions involving their children (e.g. Buchbinder & Eisikovits 2004; Towns & Adams 2009; Woods 2010), and their concerns are borne out in current UK government structures which ‘responsibilise’ victims by assigning them the onus of protecting children from perpetrators (Hadjimatheou 2022; Duggan & Grace 2018; Coy & Kelly 2019).

With the analysis presented in Chapter 6 (‘Positioning and AV responsibility’), this thesis adds to our understanding of AVs’ (self-)positioning vis-à-vis the reported abuse, and specifically discovers how this is done during a pivotal investigative stage in which responsibility positionings are negotiated and entextualised into the system. The complexities of accountability, responsibility and blame outlined above necessitate an exploratory approach to reveal their discursive realisations on a moment-to-moment basis. To this end, Matarese has developed the concept of ‘responsibility talk’, which orients to responsibility but “extends beyond the dichotomies ‘responsible/irresponsible’ and ‘moral/immoral’” to afford a more nuanced analysis (2015: 342).

This third main chapter section has indicated several ways in which the alleged DA victims’ vulnerability may be amplified by the power asymmetries embedded in the FRC context. For instance, it was posited earlier that AVs have a degree of choice in whether to cooperate with police questioning, but this assumption is less straightforward given the potential impact of abuse on victims’ perception of their own agency and capacity to act. The myriad background factors influencing AVs’ discursive choices during FRCs are unknown to either attending officer or analyst, but both have a responsibility to bear in mind the complexity of DA when interpreting AVs’ talk. The primary concern of this thesis, therefore, is to examine how speakers
are positioned along the power gradient during these delicate encounters. Building on the research overview presented so far, the next section describes foundational positioning theory and relevant research, to demonstrate how this conceptual tool can unlock our understanding of power relations in the FRC context.

2.4 Interactional positioning

2.4.1 Positioning theory

Analysis will be guided by the fundamental tenets of positioning theory, which captures the dynamic construction of personhood, rights and duties, and relations with others in interaction. Hollway, in her work on gender differences in discourse (1984), found that men and women were positioned in relation to each other, “like the subject and object of a sentence” (236). Building on this concept and drawing from Goffman’s (1959) early dramaturgical model of social interaction, Harré and colleagues (Davies & Harré 1990; Harré & van Langenhove 1991, 1999) developed the theory of positioning as an interactional phenomenon that underpins this thesis. Rooted in social constructionism (see Howie & Peters 1996), positioning is defined as the “discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (Davies and Harré 1990: 48), while positions are “momentary clusters” of rights, duties and meaningful actions (van Langenhove 2011: 67). Analysis centres on social episodes, characterised by “orderly sequences of meaningful actions ... which seem to have some measure of coherence and structure” (Harré, 1993: 56), as epitomised by FRC interaction. The metaphor of life as an unfolding narrative comprising interlinking lived storylines\(^9\) encompasses macro-level social processes and personal autobiographies, meso-level storylines such as the social episode itself, and the meanings constructed at the micro-level of discourse (see Anderson 2009; de Fina 2013).

Harré and van Langenhove (1999) propose a positioning triad of three mutually determining elements of joint interaction: the storyline, the position and the social force of a speech-action (Figure 2). Their original model adapted the traditional notion of the illocutionary force of a speech act as determined by the speaker’s intention (Searle 1979) to view ‘speech-actions’ as being jointly achieved in interaction (Davies & Harré 1990: 45). These actions entail the (re)positioning of speakers in relation to the unfolding storylines and thereby also shape those storylines:

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\(^9\) The ‘lived storyline’ metaphor is retained as a guiding concept for analysis, but discussion will refer more specifically to particular storylines, for example the criminal justice process, to avoid confusion with the victims’ stories (see also e.g. Andrus 2019).
Increasingly, discourse-analytic approaches to positioning (e.g. Wilkinson & Kitzinger 1995; Anderson 2009; Depperman 2007; Wortham & Gadsden 2009; Clifton 2014; Shalaby 2019) eschew the traditional focus on speech actions in favour of finer-grained analysis to uncover local orientations to positioning, which can shift not only between turns but within utterances (de Fina 2013). The conversation-analytic approach taken in this thesis observes the same principle, as will be detailed in the Methodology chapter (Ch.3).

The value of positioning theory as a lens for exploring the undetermined, pivotal nature of FRC encounters inheres in the three key premises summarised here:

An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, who one is is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others’ lives. (Davies & Harré 1990: 46)

Firstly, positions are **fluid**; they can be contested, negotiated and transformed. Positionings reflect the diverse nature of personhood and are thus contradictory, ambiguous and variously interpretable. Secondly, positioning is a **relational** process, by which the positions speakers assign to others and take up for themselves constitute each other. For instance, the centralisation and decentralisation of positions entails repositioning others more or less centrally within storylines. The relationships unfolding during social episodes are determined by participant positions which “dynamically produce and explain the everyday behaviour of themselves and others” (Harré & van Langenhove 1991: 405). Thirdly, therefore, positioning is a **sense-making** process, which shapes “the development of a sense of oneself as belonging in the world in certain ways and thus seeing the world from the perspective of one so positioned” (Davies & Harré 1990: 47). The dynamic (re)positioning of AVs, officers, and others during FRCs
thus informs the perspective from which all participants interpret the reported incident, the relevant interpersonal relationships, and the investigative process.

Positioning theory has been expanded by different scholars, using various categorisations according to their research focus (notably Bamberg 1997). These expansions all follow the 'system of distinctions' on which the theory was founded (Bjerre 2021: 256) and which this study also adopts as its point of departure. According to Harré and van Langenhove (1991), we position ourselves through *self-positioning* and others through *other-positioning*. Reflexive self-positioning is done in response to another’s positioning. Predetermined positions, such as those assigned to first-response officers attending a crime scene, are described as *prepositionings* (Harré 2012). Amongst the additional distinctions are positionings that are *implicit or explicit* and *forced or unforced*, with forced positioning expressing the entitlements afforded to more powerful speakers (Depperman 2015: 373). These (overlapping) forms of positioning will be used as descriptive tools for analysis and, in line with the inductive approach, will be expanded as necessary to accommodate the discursive behaviour uncovered.

In the same way, although storylines and positions will be identified as they co-emerge in talk, it is useful at this point to map positioning theory onto the research context by establishing the lived storylines associated with DA FRCs (see Table 1 on page 42), based on given and optional (in grey) features of the context. The table provides an initial overview of the complex social structures within which actors and other entities are positioned during FRCs. As analysis will demonstrate, many of these relative positionings are mutually constitutive; for example, the trajectory of the AP-AV relationship is determined by investigative developments, and vice versa. The concept of prepositioning is exemplified by the officers’ authorised procedure for gathering evidence, but also in the more opaque aspect of the AVs’ prepositioning by the emergency control room, who supply the first response officers with information based on the emergency call. These prepositionings (such as the officer’s approach and the AV’s circumstances) are subject to change through dynamic repositionings during the FRC. The table also illustrates the consequentiality of FRC positionings, which reverberate throughout the criminal justice process to determine possible future actions. Other situation-specific lived storylines, including those constructed at the micro-level of discourse (Hirvonen 2013), will emerge in the process of analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro-level lived storylines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants' lived experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>The AP-AV relationship</td>
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<td>The (criminal) justice system</td>
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<td>The police-victim relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>The (future) investigation</td>
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<td>The (future) legal process</td>
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<tr>
<th>Meso-level lived storylines</th>
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<tr>
<td>The FRC</td>
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<td>The officer-AV relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>The (past/ongoing) reported incident</td>
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<td>The (past) emergency call</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual police duties (see Ch.1), including:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Safeguarding</td>
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<td>- Risk assessment</td>
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<td>- Obtaining the AV’s initial account</td>
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<td>- Visual/physical evidence collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The (present/future) arrest</td>
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<td>- The (present/future) statement-taking</td>
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<tr>
<th>Micro-level lived storylines</th>
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<tr>
<td>Interactional features</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrative elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Witness/AP contributions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk assessment form answers</td>
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<tr>
<td>The (future) content of the officer’s statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>The (ongoing/future) content of the BWV footage</td>
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<tr>
<td>The (future) content of the AV’s statement</td>
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Table 2: FRC ‘lived storyline’ structure

2.4.2 Positioning and power

The consequentiality of positioning in delimiting future subject positions, meanings and storylines reveals the intimate and reflexive relationship between positioning and social power relations (Fairclough 1992: 43). The theory of positioning “is based on the principle that not everyone involved in a social episode has equal access to rights and duties to perform particular kinds of meaningful actions at that moment and with those people” (Harré 2012: 5, emphasis in original). Harré and van Langenhove (1991: 406) identify three sources of variation in positioning practices which relate to power asymmetry. Firstly, speakers may differ in “capacity” and “mastery of the techniques”, which in a FRC context reflects factors such as language proficiency, cognitive capacity, emotional state and procedural awareness. Secondly, speakers vary in their willingness to engage in positioning practices, which relates to the degree of
cooperation assumed by all speakers in the process of producing verbal evidence during FRCs. Finally, speakers may have differing degrees of power to achieve their desired positionings. The asymmetrical speaking rights embedded in institutional contexts can therefore be understood in terms of the privileged prepositionings of certain actors (adapted from Henriksen 2007). However, local acts of positioning do not always reproduce the dominant discourses, particularly in less structured speech contexts (as per 2.2.3). Rather, the ephemeral quality of positions allows for local negotiation of power relations. A critical approach to positioning analysis therefore examines meanings generated at the micro-level of interaction as a means of unpacking how meanings pre-assigned by macro-social processes are reflected, reinforced or renegotiated (Moita-Lopez 2006; de Fina 2013).

2.4.3 Positioning in institutional contexts

2.4.3.1 Positions, frames and roles

As Bjerre (2021: 268) argues, foundational positioning theory has in the past come close to twinning concepts which are “conceptually different, while being semantically identical”, namely positions, frames and roles. Discursive choices reflect speakers’ understanding of their self-positioning within the “sort of occasion” in which they are engaged (Davies & Harré 1990: 49), and expectations about the positionings entailed by the occasion can vary between speakers. This potential for expectational difference maps onto Goffman’s (1986) concept of frames, demonstrated in Section 2.2 as central to institutional-lay communicative tensions (e.g. Tracy 1997; Aldridge & Luchjenbroers 2008, 2007; Coupland et al. 1994). Positions are more fluid and broader in scope than the adoption or switching of given frames, which are tied to specific lived storylines (institutional and otherwise). Nonetheless, the degree to which speakers’ (re)positionings correlate with frames reveals “the coherence or incoherence of contemporaneous storylines and the kind of challenges that can emerge” (Harré et al. 2009). On similar bases, foundational positioning theory traditionally differentiated positions from the concept of roles, where the latter was conceived of as static, predetermined by socio-cultural expectations and confined to the enactment of institutional agendas (e.g. Slocum & Harré 2003; Harré & Moghaddam 2003; see further Bjerre 2021). However, there is a body of roles research to problematise the ‘firm/fluid’ distinction (Henriksen 2007) by revealing the dynamic potential of role as a concept (e.g. Sarangi 2010; Halvorsen & Sarangi 2015; Dall & Sarangi 2018; Ylanne et al. 2021; Węgorowski 2018). Henriksen (2007) supplies a useful metaphor for the role/position distinction: crystallisation, when positionings are realised as role-enactments; and liquidation, when agreed positionings shift and are re-opened for negotiation. The process by
which speakers proffer and realise roles through their positioning practices is captured by Halvorsen and Sarangi’s (2015) concept of role-positioning.

Reflecting Bjerre’s observation of the ‘return of the dismissed concepts’ in positioning theory (2021: 267), frames, roles and positions can therefore be understood as conceptually complementary and overlapping, with the potential for one to be analysed relative to the other, depending on the scope and degree of granularity required (Henriksen 2007). Positioning analysis is distinguished by its potential for a finer-grained exploration of the gradients along which speakers’ positions shift as interactions unfold. The scope of analysis can also extend beyond personhood and the performance of actions to consider how positioning determines social structures and future meanings and actions. This approach focuses less on available categorisations and more on how all types of participants “cope with” situations that arise (Harré & van Langenhove 2010: 108), including but not limited to role-related elements (Hirvonen 2016: 2; Linehan & McCarthy 2000).

2.4.3.2 Task-positioning and expertise

In his study of small-group interaction during professional team meetings, Hirvonen (2016) considers ritualistic and other “role-like elements” in terms of the predefined rights and duties that preposition participants. During the meetings, Hirvonen observed these rights and duties being interactionally negotiated through a process he terms task-positioning, defined as “positioning the joint aims and ways of working together” (2016: 12). These tasks constitute lived storylines in themselves, either in the form of overarching storylines which structure the social episode or sub-storylines entailed by it (such as a manager’s presentation).

The concept of task-positioning is valuable to the present research in that it maps directly onto first response officers’ ‘checklists’ of duties (e.g. CoP 2016a). However, Hirvonen’s analysis follows the traditional positioning focus on speech acts (e.g. Davies & Harré 1990), which cannot reveal the micro-level nuances of (re)positionings as tasks unfold. FRCs require the swift completion of a series of tasks, inviting a closer analysis of how this is done on a moment-to-moment basis. Furthermore, positioning has been shown to transcend scales, to include not only speakers and other actors, but other entities such as activities, groups of people, institutions and entire cultures (Slocum-Bradley 2009). In task-positioning, therefore, speakers are positioned vis-à-vis the given task, which in turn may be positioned relative to other processes, institutional or otherwise. This dynamic is demonstrated in Brickley’s (2015) analysis of migration caseworkers’ complex self-positionings, which they constructed in relation to both the Home Office and to abstract elements of their authorised procedure.
Although relevant to all three analytic strands of the current study, the practice of task-positioning most directly relates to the construction of police expertise discussed in Section 2.2.5. While not engaging specifically with positioning theory, Arminen and Simonen’s (2021) conceptualisation of expertise-in-action conveys the integral role of (self-)positioning in constructing expertise:

[A]s participants in certain cases can be seen to adjust their actions and understandings according to their sense of what they know and assume others to know, the participants’ ‘know-how’ and its distribution may form the basis for adjusting and reshaping their actions, forms of participation and understandings. (2021: 592)

Despite the conceptual correlation, there is a lack of previous positioning research dedicated to analysing expertise, although Hirvonen (2013, 2016) and others (Clifton 2014; LaPointe 2010; Andrus 2019) have observed that positioning in professional contexts involves articulations of expertise. This thesis therefore builds on earlier work by developing a deeper understanding of how expertise is displayed and achieved through interactional positioning.

### 2.4.4 Positioning in setting and space

Another form of prepositioning is manifest in the role of setting in institutional interactions, touched upon by Anderson (2009) in her work on positioning in classroom interaction. She notes that “social interactions with others and tools in recurring types of settings that are oriented to as common-sensical, recognizable kinds … link acts of positioning to the resources by which positioning occurs” (294). Citing Giddens (1984), Anderson relates the degree of fixity of positions to the “chronic, tacit use of settings (the idea of kinds of spaces for interaction)” (2009: 294, emphasis mine). Given the (semi-)private locale of all three FRCs in the data, this concept of fixity in the setting is of primary interest in the Chapter 4 analysis (‘Positioning in setting and space’). As established at the beginning of this chapter, AVs’ fixed positions within the setting that is their home or workspace do not correspond with their temporary positions while it is appropriated for institutional purposes. Their prepositioning as owners of the space is thus overriden by the ‘legitimate intrusion’ of the officers. These dynamics invite an exploration, in Chapter 4, of participants’ (re)positionings in relation to what ‘kind of space’ they are in.

Repurposing settings involves the (re)configuration of interactional spaces, defined by Mondada (2013: 248) as the “material surroundings in which embodied talk-in-interaction, and
more generally social action, takes place” (see also e.g. 2009; 2019; Auer et al. 2013). Participants in talk incorporate a range of multimodal resources to organise and orient to interactional space, a process that has been described as ‘doing space’ (Jucker et al. 2018) and ‘communicatively constructing space’ (Christmann et al. 2022). At the same time, the unfolding interaction adjusts itself to transformations within the space, which is therefore both “action-shaping and action-shaped” (Mondada 2013: 250, emphasis in original). This concept draws from Goodwin and Goodwin’s (2004) seminal work on participation, defined as “actions demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within existing structures of talk” (222). The authors foreground the role of gesture, body orientation, use of objects and the material structure of the environment in either facilitating or constraining participation.

At the level of discourse, the configuration of participants in mutual orientation are conceptualised as a participation framework, by which “all who happen to be in perceptual range of the event will have some sort of participant status relative to it” (Goffman 1981: 3), which is constantly in flux during a ‘strip’ of talk (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004; Kádár & Haugh 2013; see further Ch.3). There is therefore a reflexive relationship between interactional positioning, (embodied) participation and space, recalling the positioning triad outlined earlier (Figure 2). Within this model, the setting and its spaces constitute lived storylines, which both shape and are shaped by speakers’ positioning and participation practices. Chapter 4 will examine the micro-level discursive mechanisms of these processes, which involves expanding on foundational positioning theory to encompass both verbal and spatial dimensions of spatial positioning (cf. Harré 2015).

2.4.5 Positioning and domestic abuse

Owing to its focus on personhood, positioning theory has generated a body of research on identity construction in narratives (e.g. Bamberg 2004; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; Wortham 2000; Moita-Lopes 2009; Lucius-Hoene & Depermann 2000; Schrauf 2000). Indeed, Bucholtz and Hall (2010: 18) define identity as “the positioning of self and other”. Much of this work centres on moral positioning vis-à-vis identity claims, and thus feeds into the analytic strand of AVs’ accountability and responsibility positionings during FRCs (Chapter 6). For instance, Talbot and colleagues (1996) studied the sense-making function of ‘at risk’ pregnant women’s positioning of themselves and others relative to master narratives of ‘normal’ pregnancy experiences. Wortham and Gadsden (2009) trace the narrative construction of an urban father’s self-positioning as a responsible partner and father. Blix, Hamran and Normann (2015) explore elderly people’s self-positioning in reflections about missed opportunities in their
past as a means of constructing their present identities. These studies demonstrate how we “position ourselves in relation to our sense of responsibility to others and in relation to (different voices in) discourses about responsibility” (Solin & Östman 2015: 288).

Reflecting the interpersonal conflict at the heart of experiences of DA (outlined in 2.3.3), there is a body of literature to demonstrate the suitability of positioning as an analytic lens. In a key example, Hydén (2005) applies the concept to examine the relationship between agency, responsibility and resistance in victims’ accounts of leaving their abusers. Hydén conducted interviews at a women’s shelter and found that victims variously cast themselves as ‘wounded’, having had their lives destroyed, ‘self-blaming’ for tolerating the abuse, or ‘bridge-building’, the minority who sought to reconcile their past, present and future selves. The author points to the value of the latter position and emphasises the police role in realising it: a victim’s "acknowledgment of strength as well as weakness enables her to take up a negotiating position in reaching out to other people and asking for help", which involves measuring what she can do for herself and what the police can do to help (2005: 185). Towns and Adams (2016) draw from positioning theory to examine the role of linguistic ambiguity in women’s constructions of themselves as responsible for abuse perpetrated against them. The authors highlight that victims’ interpretations of responsibility can be a barrier to seeking help, but that their self-positionings shift over time and are dependent on the given interactional context. Accordingly, the study is oriented to early intervention and prevention, and the authors highlight the role of professionals such as counsellors in helping women reassess their role in the abuse to facilitate positive change, given the key role of personal narratives in resolving traumatic experiences (Pennebaker et al. 1988). Jarnkvist and Brännström (2019) examined constructions of gender in victims’ self-positioning in relation to the ‘ideal victim’ (Christie 1986). In narratives describing the abusive relationship, the separation and the time since passed, the fluidity of positions realised different aspects of the victim’s identities. Venäläinen (2019) looked at the positioning strategies of male victims of female abusers in online discussion forums. The study focuses on men’s negotiation of the perceived contradiction between victimhood and hegemonic masculinity (Durfee 2011). The men either accounted for women’s counter-accusations of violence on the basis of their superior strength as men, or accounted for not retaliating by citing their powers of self-restraint. A key theme emerging from each study cited is the tension between passivity and empowerment in DA victims’ self-positionings.

A salient study is Andrus’ (2019) analysis of identity positioning in victims’ and officers’ narratives about DA callouts in the US context, based on research interview data. Her analysis of narrators’ positionings in relation to or ‘against’ story world characters, including the “storied
version of themselves” (2019: 639), maps onto AVs’ (self-)positioning in relation to past others during FRCs (see Chapter 6). Andrus’ findings also relate to the analysis of police expertise in Chapter 5, because she found that the officers’ narratives positioned them (then and now) as ‘effective police officers’ based on their superior procedural knowledge and ability to assess DA crimes more so than the victims. This epistemic K+ positioning was somewhat undercut by officers’ reliance on victims to facilitate their expertise:

Police officer identities such as ‘good at their jobs’ are dependent on a victim/survivor who behaves correctly, calls the police, but only when she or he should, and generally cooperates with police wishes. ... This construction of the victim/survivor allows identities of ‘fluent in the law and legal procedure’, ‘effective police officer’ and ‘authority as law enforcement’ to emerge. (Andrus 2019: 646)

Some victims’ narratives echoed the positioning of officers as possessing the knowledge and power to help them, but elsewhere officers were described as victim-blamers who worsened victims’ situations. Andrus’ study thus demonstrates the mutually determining nature of victim and officer positionings and their consequentiality in the FRC context, correlating with the DA research themes discussed earlier in this chapter (e.g. Lagdon et al. 2015; Horwitz et al. 2011; Wolf et al. 2003). However, Andrus’ analytic focus is narrative representations of past FRCs, as opposed to contemporaneous FRC interaction, and she makes the important point that the research interview method involves participants’ (self-)positioning in relation to her and the project (2019: 640).

Also of relevance is a small concentration of positioning studies on the relationship between DA victims and social workers (e.g. Piippo et al. 2022; Nikupeteri 2017, Øverlien 2014). In an interesting demonstration of how victims’ positionings can generate complex power relationships with organisations, Jarnkvist (2019) examines how victims who are parents position themselves, social services and their ex-partners (the perpetrators). She discovered a relationship between these positionings and the victims’ responses to social service interventions, which fluctuated between positioning the authorities as either the enemy or as a means of targeting the perpetrator to achieve empowerment. The shift towards aligning with social services was partly attributed to victims’ learning "the rules" of "how to act" to make official procedure work in their favour (2019: 179).
Although previous positioning research on DA is dominated by themes of responsibility and blame, it provides a point of departure for examining both AVs’ and officers’ positionings across all three analytic strands of this thesis: setting and space, police expertise and AV responsibility. Because previous work centres on victims’ retrospective positionings relative to a period of abuse that has ended, a key contribution of the present study inheres in the fact that the reported abuse is ongoing, with two AVs having recently left the AP and one still cohabiting. The study is therefore an opportunity to observe contemporaneous positionings which orient not only to the past but also to the ‘here and now’ as a means of determining what happens next. Furthermore, DA positioning research so far has relied on research interviews and other reflective methods, and, to the best of the author’s knowledge, there are no studies of victim and/or police language which take a close discourse-analytical approach to analysing real interactions between the positioning/positioned participants. The literature discussed in this section demonstrates the value of the construct of positioning in relation to both institutional and DA discourses, so the thesis expands on this knowledge with a fine-grained conversation-analytic approach to positioning that has been applied fruitfully in other contexts (e.g. Anderson 2009; Wilkinson & Kitzinger 1995; Brickley 2015; Shalaby 2019). Finally, the present research builds on previous applications of positioning theory to examine spatial and embodied positioning in the setting and its interactional spaces.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has contextualised the study relative to a rich variety of research traditions and developments. The first section outlined two areas of contention which lay bare some of the complexities characterising DA as a sociolegal issue and which in turn shape FRC power dynamics. The second section then situated FRC interaction as a genre of institutional discourse. This was achieved by first demonstrating that institutional status assigns first response officers with both spatial and interactional authority, bolstered by the AVs’ appeal for emergency institutional assistance. However, it was then established that the distributions of power, knowledge and speaking rights which inform other high-stakes legal-lay interactions are less clearly inscribed in the FRC context, allowing more leeway for participants to negotiate these dynamics through talk and an analytical opportunity to discover how this is done. The complexities of the officers’ role in police-victim encounters were then explored in terms of the institutional, professional and relational dimensions, leading to the key theme of expertise-in-interaction. The third section built on those previous by considering the police-victim interactions in light of the complexity of DA as a lived experience, leading to the key research
theme of responsibility. Finally, the fourth section reviewed the fundamental tenets of positioning theory and the relevant research, demonstrating the conceptual potential of interactional positioning as a fluid, relational and sense-making process. Along the way, gaps in the research background have been identified as opportunities for this study to address. At the forefront is the fact that no previous empirical research has been conducted with authentic spoken data from the FRC context. The next chapter details the methodology by which this study will shed new light on these crucial encounters.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter lays out the research design and methodological approach taken in this study. Firstly, the data collection and transcription processes are described, with a focus on the ethical responsibilities involved, before the details of the dataset are described. The second half of the chapter introduces the critical analytic framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and the methodological approach of Conversation Analysis, culminating in the analytic procedure. Finally, the focus group which was conducted in the early stages of this project is described briefly, before the chapter concludes by setting up the analysis to follow.

3.1 Data for analysis

As outlined in the introductory chapter, this study is motivated by the need to find out what happens during police first response call-outs (FRCs) to reported domestic abuse (DA) incidents, with a view to improving future interactions and expanding our theoretical knowledge of this speech context. A fundamental requirement of the project, therefore, is that the analytic data represent authentic FRC interaction. The understandable difficulty of securing access to authentic data from FRCs and similarly high-pressure contexts is demonstrated by the lack of empirical research in this vein. Owing to these constraints, some studies have gleaned insights from analysis of simulated interactions (e.g. Linde 1998; Deppermann 2014; Tsuchiya et al. 2022) and reality TV footage (Kidwell 2006; 2009). The historical challenges around researcher access to live face-to-face interactions are also borne out in the disparity between the lack of FRC research and the wealth of research on telephone emergency call discourse (outlined in Ch.2), for which authentic audio data are readily available. As was the case with this project, safety and ethical barriers preclude the possibility of observing and recording the FRC interactions in person. However, as detailed in Section 3.1.4, opportunities are evolving as first response officers now wear body-worn video (BWV) cameras, generating footage which researchers can hope to access following appropriate ethical consent and clearance. BWV footage is the data source for this research. In recent years, increasingly, police forces such as the one participating in this research possess a databank of footage of authentic FRC interactions, stored on a cloud-based evidence portal. Naturally, the highly sensitive nature of the focal interactions entails numerous ethical challenges for any researcher wishing to access the data. Achieving ethical clearance and appropriate consent has been a primary focus since the project’s inception and has informed each stage of the research design. Owing to its
importance, this section addresses the research ethics first, as the bases for describing the data access and collection processes which stemmed from the ethical considerations.

3.1.1 Ethical considerations

At each stage, this research has been guided by the core ethical principles of *respect for persons*, *beneficence*, and *justice*, which entail taking every necessary measure to protect participants from risk, produce substantial benefits with minimum harm, and benefit all parties as equally as possible (Kubanyiova 2008: 505). As established in the previous chapter (2.1.2), DA victims are legally classified as *Victims of the most serious crime* and, depending on individual circumstances, *Intimidated witnesses* (Ministry of Justice 2020: 10-II). This classification is mirrored in Cardiff University’s School of English, Communication and Philosophy (ENCAP) Ethics Procedure, which identifies victims of crime as *vulnerable participants*. Therefore, this study required full clearance from the ENCAP Ethics Committee before data collection commenced, and the relevant documentation is provided in App.III10. The research was also required to adhere to the UKRI (2022) ESRC Research Ethics Framework, and further reference was made to the British Association for Applied Linguistics’ standards for good practice in applied linguistic research (BAAL 2016/2021). Finally, adherence to the Data Protection Act (1998) was ensured by the data sharing agreement signed with the police force (see 3.1.1.2). Together, these formal ethical and legal procedures provided a robust framework for preserving the rights of research participants, from data collection through to release into the public domain.

In addition to what Guillemin and Gillam (2004) term the ‘procedural ethics’ of institutional frameworks, the study has presented a series of micro-ethical concerns in the form of “ethically important moments”, requiring a situated approach throughout (Guillemin & Gillam 2004; see also e.g. Dornyei 2007, Kubanyiova 2008, Heggen & Guillemin 2012). The use of BWV footage, which shows the alleged victims (AVs) in private settings discussing potentially traumatic personal experiences, has required careful consideration in relation to the ethical principles of beneficence and respect. Kubanyiova emphasises that researchers should strive for “usefulness to communities that participate in our research and to which its results are supposed to serve” (2008: 505), reflecting this study’s aim of informing first response officer training to help improve AVs’ experiences during FRCs. Nonetheless, the need to “minimise risk

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10 The details of the police and AV consent processes were adapted from those listed in App.III paperwork, following advice from the police research team (on practical and security bases) and approval from the ENCAP Ethics Officer.
and harm” (UKRI 2022) brings to the fore the overarching concerns of participant consent and privacy, with the latter comprising both data protection and anonymity.

### 3.1.1.1 Participant consent

Informed consent is a cornerstone of the core principle of respect for participants’ rights (Christians 2000), so a crucial first step was to achieve AVs’ and officers’ informed permission to view and analyse footage in which they were shown. Officers’ consent was requested on a blanket basis, with a debriefing and consent form (App.III) emailed to all first responders in the participating force, along with the researcher’s contact details for any questions. Permission was requested to view any BWV footage of FRCs either recorded by them or in which they were shown. Because BWV had only recently been rolled out by this force, the ‘blanket’ request covered a timespan of three months. The overwhelming majority of officer responses were positive, with two getting in touch directly to confirm that their names would not be used in the study.

The most complex ethical issue to be addressed while conducting this research was the possibility of achieving AVs’ informed consent. Guided by advice from the ENCAP Ethics Office, it was decided that making on-site consent requests during FRCs would be inappropriate, based on AVs’ heightened vulnerability and the necessary urgency of the interactions. Making such requests might divert officers’ time and attention from the AV’s needs and risk further traumatisation. AVs may not be able to comprehend the necessary information about the study, thus reducing the consent request to a ‘tick-box’ exercise (Rock 2016). Moreover, AVs could feel obliged to comply with a request from officers (bearing the highly visible markers of institutionality discussed in Ch.2.2.1) upon whom they were relying for assistance. In this vein, it would have been preferable to make the AV consent requests independently from the police force. However, because the force was not licensed by the Data Protection Act (1998) to share AVs’ contact details externally, an in-house solution was sought with the aim of minimising any sense of obligation on the AVs. After considerable deliberation, the consent requests were made after the event, via an existing telephone survey carried out regularly by police research staff, as now described.

During FRCs, officers in the participating force ask AVs for a safe number, safe time and permission to use these for future contact. Six to nine weeks after the FRC, police researchers contact these AVs by telephone to get their feedback on the police response to the reported incident in question. The researchers are not police officers but are contracted by the police force for such quality monitoring purposes. The survey calls are audio-recorded and typically
last around one hour, with AVs’ responses logged in a database. The callers use a scripted series of questions, which include a section specifically about the service provided by first response officers. For the purpose of the consent request, the force permitted the amendment of the relevant survey script section to include a brief overview of the study, followed by a request for the AV’s permission to view the BWV footage from their FRC. Drafting this text was a process of negotiation which sought to reconcile ethical concerns with practicability. This entailed including enough informational detail while keeping the additional script sufficiently brief to be feasible in terms of the police research team’s resources, as well as the AVs’ time. The resulting text provided a brief overview of the study, along with contact details, should the AV wish to discuss it directly before making a decision. Appendix III shows the consent request along with an isolated page from the wider survey call script, which shows the request’s embedded context within a series of questions about the AV’s experience of the FRC. The AV consent requests yielded mixed responses, with over half of the respondees refusing, primarily on grounds of privacy. This result was encouraging in demonstrating that AVs’ participation was “voluntary and appropriately informed” (UKRI 2022). It is important to acknowledge that this was not an expectable request for the AVs to receive during the survey call, and that this unexpected element is likely to have elicited more refusals. Nonetheless, the refusals underscore the importance of the many privacy measures that have been implemented throughout the process of data collection, transcription, and analysis, as will be detailed below.

The centrality of informed consent presented another challenge: a substantial proportion of the police force’s evidence database includes footage which shows APs and children. It was deemed neither necessary nor appropriate to include either group in the study, so once the above consent processes identified the footage for analysis, police technicians first silenced and blurred any portions which showed non-consenting participants. From an analytic perspective, this had minimal impact on the amount of usable data produced: the first response policy of immediately separating the AP and AV requires one BWV-wearer to remain with the AV, so there should be little overlap in police interactions with both. However, the technicians’ process proved more time-consuming than anticipated, so the scope of the study had to be adjusted according to how many recordings they were able to edit within the given timeframe.

The length of time it took to ensure an ethical consent process which was feasible from the police force’s perspective thus restricted the size of the dataset considerably. The force formally agreed to participate in the project in October 2017, subject to the researcher’s security vetting (completed November 2017) and the finalisation of the data sharing agreement (January 2019). The BWV footage of the three focal incidents was provided in February 2019. Following
further delays, exacerbated by national and regional lockdowns in 2020, a further eleven recordings were provided in December 2021, too late for integration into the present analysis - although these are the focus of ongoing research.

### 3.1.1.2 Data protection

The use of BWV as a data source raises an overarching question about privacy. Officers in England and Wales have the legal right to use BWV at their discretion, and domestic incidents are excluded from the stipulation that no recording should be conducted in ‘private dwellings’ (CoP 2014a: 20). Indeed, many forces, including the one participating in this study, specifically instruct officers to record all FRCs to DA incidents (CoP 2022; App.1). The body-worn camera, an ‘overt recording medium’, is prominent in its chest-mounted position, with active recording signalled by a swirling red light around the lens\(^\text{11}\). Furthermore, AVs are meant to be informed about the recording (although consent is not mentioned), and officers are instructed to gauge whether “the subject could be reasonably expected to understand that BWV was in use in the circumstances” (CoP 2014a: 7). There is one example in the data of the AV being informed about the BWV recording (see App.R3 lines 236-9). Nonetheless, AVs’ awareness of being recorded in the first place is of ethical concern and, either way, they could not have known about the potential use of the footage for academic research. For the purposes of the present study, the AV consent process ensured that all participants were aware of the BWV recording, at least at the point of giving consent. The use of BWV also generated some practical considerations, to be discussed in Section 3.1.4.

Another key privacy concern was that of data security, and the approach in this regard was guided by institutional requirements. As mentioned in Section 3.1.1, the police force carried out security vetting and implemented a data sharing agreement, which was developed with legal advice from Cardiff University. The agreement constitutes a legal obligation to take specific data protection measures laid out by the Data Protection Act (1998), which are also dictated by the ENCAP Ethics Procedure. In the first place, the decision was made to retain audio and transcribed data only, due to the additional privacy concerns around sharing video footage. The police force provided access to the selected footage on their cloud database via a time-sensitive login, which expired after twenty-four hours. The researcher then used an encrypted university laptop to view the BWV footage and extract only the audio using Audacity 2.2.2 software, having been trained in the use of this software and gained substantial prior experience.

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\(^{11}\) This assessment is based on the other officers’ cameras that were visible in the footage provided.
This was one aspect where the prolonged data access proved valuable: the researcher had ample opportunity to fine-tune the procedures for what came next, beginning with anonymisation.

### 3.1.1.3 Anonymisation

The primary, ongoing consideration in terms of privacy has been participant anonymity. In the first place, the geographical region and any other information that could identify the participating force have been withheld from the thesis. The process of anonymising the audio data using Audacity was designed to remove all identifying details comprehensively and permanently from the data collected. This involved replacing all identifying and potentially identifying details in the audio track with brown noise (which was less disruptive to the flow of talk, for future listening purposes). The redacted segments were marked in Audacity with generic descriptive labels (such as street name) to ensure coherence and facilitate the written transcription process (detailed in Section 3.1.2). Not only names and locations were redacted, but less obviously sensitive information, such as details about specific household objects. The audio anonymisation stage presented several dilemmas in terms of what to remove while preserving the data’s value (Rock 2001: 9; 2015: 124). For example, one AV describes the alleged perpetrator’s (AP) behaviour as being influenced by a previous event. Retaining information about this event in the data risked compromising the anonymity of both AP and AV, but removing it obscured a central narrative element in the account constructed by the AV, whose voice the study has an ethical imperative to respect (Creese 2015: 66). This instance is just one illustration of the complexity of ethics in practice (Guillemin & Gillam 2004). On balance, any information that raised doubt about anonymity was removed from the audio, in line with the overriding importance of protecting participants’ identities. The details redacted from the audio either remain redacted in the transcripts (which are detailed below) or have been altered, where appropriate, if deemed necessary to retain sense and/or for ease of reading. The three AVs represented in the data were assigned pseudonyms¹² and the multiple officers labelled with numbers (e.g. POI), as listed in the data description later in this chapter (3.1.3).

### 3.1.2 Transcription

The first stage of written transcription occurred synchronously with the viewing of the BWV footage during the twenty-four hour window of access on the force’s cloud database. Working within the restricted viewpoint of the BWV (see further Section 3.1.4), all available visual

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¹² The AV pseudonyms were randomly selected from an historical database of British baby names, using a timespan sufficiently broad so that their age cannot be determined.
information was gleaned from the footage, to allow for an inductive analysis with no predetermined focal features. Therefore, once the audio data were extracted from the footage, the remaining time was spent making detailed written notes on the visual information. This information encompassed communicative features, such as gestures, facial expressions, body movements, participants’ positions and stance, and non-communicative information such as the degree of lighting, avoiding any potentially identifying aspects of the settings. The attention to detail at this stage had an additional purpose of aiding memory of the footage.

After the audio anonymisation process described above, the audio recordings were transcribed manually into a Microsoft Word 16.25 document on the encrypted laptop, using a foot pedal to control the playback via Audacity. The conversation-analytic approach adopted (see further Section 3.3) regards the detailed transcription of naturally-occurring talk as fundamental to the analysis. Although some interactional minutiae were inevitably lost, a fine-grained transcription captured a substantial amount of detail, according to the requirements of the research. The practice of transcription is therefore an inherently subjective ‘social act’ (Roberts 1997: 167), as the analyst makes a series of decisions about what to include (e.g. Bucholtz 2000). Furthermore, the bottom-up approach requires comprehensive transcription, to avoid omitting features which could prove salient as analysis progresses (Schiffrin 1994). These considerations have been addressed by returning to review the audio recordings in comparison with the transcripts at regular intervals, to capture as much information as accurately as possible. Comprehensive transcription also entails addressing the ‘politics of representation’ (Mehan 1993), which involved reconciling accuracy, readability and anonymity. The transcript has adopted a moderate approach to orthographic representation, preserving contractions such as ‘gunna’ and ‘d’you’ which diverge markedly from their standard written form in terms of prominence within the flow of talk.

The set of transcription conventions, listed on page (iv), has been adapted from the Jeffersonian system (Jefferson 1984) to suit the characteristics of the present data. The choice of conventions required careful consideration to ensure that even the more complex passages of talk remained readable. Factors such as urgency and emotion generated a high frequency of overlap and much variation in prosodic features such as speed and volume. The process of transcription posed two key challenges in relation to readability. Firstly, crying is a prominent and complex feature which fluctuates throughout the course of two of the FRCs (App.R1 & App.R2). Transcription adapted Hepburn’s (2004) recommendations for integrating nuanced representations of crying-related voice quality, bursts of sobbing, and the “bodily elements of crying” (2004: 257) such as wiping eyes. In the present data, speakers’ fluctuations between
'sobbing' and 'wobbly' voice, accompanied by frequent bursts of sobbing, results in some passages in which the flow of talk is more difficult to follow. This difficulty reflects the effect of these features in the audio recordings, and as such represents the nature of the interaction as faithfully as possible.

The communicative potential of crying brings to light the other main transcription challenge. Upon listening to the audio recordings after viewing the footage, the need to include non-verbal information was evident. Along with the gestures that accompanied AVs’ narratives, the unstructured speech context generated a considerable amount of movement, body repositioning, adjustments to material features of the settings, and other non-verbal behaviour, with varying degrees of communicative potential. The prominence of non-verbal information is reflected in the emergence of the setting and interactional space as an analytic theme (Chapter 4). The three analytic themes (setting and space, police expertise-in-interaction and AV responsibility) which are analysed respectively in Chapters 4-6 intersect in various ways throughout the thesis, so it is deemed essential to present examples from the same transcripts throughout the write-up. However, incorporating non-verbal information throughout has required a compromise in terms of illustrating the line-by-line flow of talk in the transcripts.

The adopted approach represents non-verbal information between lines of talk, with brief occurrences of communicative features such as nodding and generic pointing included in-line, to aid readability. The intralinear transcription method has been demonstrated in previous multimodal studies, sometimes with accompanying screenshots or sketches where there is a high degree of movement to describe (Johnson 2020; Matoesian & Enola Gilbert 2021; De Stefani & Mondada 2018). In the present context, screenshots were not permitted, and comprehensive sketches could not be created within the twenty-four hour window for viewing the footage. Furthermore, as with crying, non-verbal features such as movement fluctuates throughout the FRCs and are concentrated in certain passages, with others showing stretches of talk with little or no movement. Any visual representation, such as screenshots, would therefore have placed disproportionate focus on the selected multimodal moments, at the expense of spoken interactional features. The intralinear approach thus provides more consistency of representation in line with the present research focus.

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13 More comprehensive visual information has been captured from the second batch of data, to allow for future research with a multimodal dimension.
3.1.3 Description of the data

The data represent three separate FRCs (Table 2). Five pieces of footage were provided, with three of these from different BWV recordings of the same FRC. (The three synchronous recordings show distinct but overlapping viewpoints, which have been integrated into one transcript.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRC</th>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRC1</td>
<td>Night-time; AV’s house</td>
<td>AV ‘Amy’ (female); POI (male); PO2 (female); PO3 (male); PO4 (male); PO5 (male)</td>
<td>Recording 1: 12m 43s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(App.R1)</td>
<td>999 calls made by AV and neighbour</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recording 2: 13m 55s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AP does not live there and has left before officers arrive</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recording 3: 12m 03s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Officers remove AP (redacted in footage) from house and retain in police van parked outside, then question AV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 officers perform different tasks inside and outside house; AV interaction mainly with POI and PO2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Officers indicate plan to arrest AP just before recording ends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AV and AP’s young child present upstairs, not in footage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRC2</td>
<td>Night-time; AV’s house</td>
<td>AV ‘Julia’ (female); POI (female); PO2 (male)</td>
<td>20m 25s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(App.R2)</td>
<td>999 call made by AV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AP lives there but has left before officers arrive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AV provides account; interaction mainly with POI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Officers begin taking statement (at scene) before BWV is switched off</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AV’s children present upstairs, not in footage except one (redacted in footage).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRC3</td>
<td>Daytime; AV’s place of business</td>
<td>AV ‘Neil’ (male); POI (male)</td>
<td>16m 06s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(App.R3)</td>
<td>(barbershop, closed for the FRC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>999 call made by AV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AP has left before officers arrive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Officer questions AV, takes injury photos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They prepare to leave for the police station together to take statement, when BWV is switched off</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second officer visible at times in the doorway; third officer heard at one stage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data overview demonstrates that there is considerable variety between the three FRCs in terms of the participants and settings. The most obvious differences are that Neil (FRC3) is the
only male AV and that his is the only encounter that occurs outside a private home and during daylight hours. There are five officers attending Amy’s house and the AP is still in the house, upstairs, when the officers arrive. In Julia’s FRC there are two officers involved in the interaction, whereas in Neil’s just one officer speaks to him and the others remain outside the shop. The officers are numbered according to the extent to which they interact with the AV. This was a straightforward task because in each instance there is a clear primary interlocutor (POI), with the other officers’ involvement similarly gradable. These and further differences between the FRCs will be elaborated throughout analysis as required.

A key issue to address is the fact that the dataset falls short of the amount of FRC recordings anticipated for analysis. As outlined in Section 3.1.1.1, the study’s ethical responsibilities required the participating force to allocate resources for making the AV consent requests, developing the data sharing agreement and editing the footage. These processes delayed progress to the extent that a decision was made to proceed with analysis based on the first batch of footage, provided in February 2019. The provision of more data, though regularly promised, was delayed indefinitely by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a further eleven recordings provided too late for the present project. In the preparation stage of this research, all forty-three territorial forces in England and Wales were contacted, seventeen of which expressed an interest in the study and engaged in initial discussions about data access. The amount of data obtained is therefore indicative of the many complexities associated with sharing this type of data. Nonetheless, the proliferation of BWV usage throughout the United Kingdom and other regions has been accompanied by a rise in BWV-based research which should facilitate police processes for providing researcher access.

3.1.4 Body-worn video as a data source

Finally in this section, it is important to address the affordances and limitations of BWV as the data source. BWV is a relatively new policing technology that is promoted to help officers “achieve their core purpose” (CoP 2014a: 3), and had just been implemented by the participating force as this study began. FRC guidelines highlight the accuracy and effectiveness (“significant dramatic impact”) of the evidence created by BWV, which captures details of the scene, participants’ demeanours, and any “significant comments” made (CoP 2022). In England and Wales, BWV wearers are specifically instructed to activate their cameras in any situation which would normally require them to make a written record. Although the video is intended to “corroborate, not replace” this record (CoP 2014a: 6, 8), BWV increases the objectivity of the record, particularly if there is more than one wearer present (Phillips 2018: 93), and produces a
more immediate and comprehensive account from the AV for evidential purposes. BWV is also intended to increase transparency and accountability around both police and community members’ behaviour, and therefore has the potential to improve relations (e.g. Miller et al. 2014).

The use of BWV as a data source in the present study has entailed several affordances. First and foremost, this technology has opened up an otherwise invisible research site. As summarised earlier, access is a “stumbling block” for researchers in most policing contexts (Perkins 2018: 122) and it would have been impossible in this context without BWV: ethical and safeguarding responsibilities precluded first-hand recording of the interactions. Furthermore, the BWV system has proven well-suited to the research focus. Firstly, officers are instructed to record DA FRCs from beginning to end, to produce a comprehensive record which includes witnesses’ first accounts (CoP 2014a: 19), so the BWV footage provided captures the focal interactions in their entirety. Secondly, the high-quality audio and video playback clearly captured the talk and related visual information. Finally, as illustrated earlier in this chapter, the digital format of the footage was useful for practical and ethical purposes. The ability to share footage via the cloud-based database precluded the need to copy files, speeding up the data collection process and reducing the risk to data security. The digital format also enabled the force’s technicians to edit the footage in line with the study’s ethical obligations.

There are also several analytic considerations around the use of BWV. The first relates to the affordances outlined above: the sense of immediacy generated by the clarity and comprehensiveness of the footage invites the belief that it shows exactly what happened (see also D’Hondt 2022; D’Hondt & May 2022). In reality, however, this restricted viewpoint from the wearer’s perspective entails a perception bias (Boivin et al. 2017) that is inherent in any video recording system. BWV is primarily intended to produce evidence, and accordingly “the encounters make the individual, the person being searched or questioned, visible and accountable to those reviewing the material” (Rowe et al. 2018: 89). This imbalance of visual information of the AV rather than the officers has been taken into consideration throughout the analysis, as any contextual cues provided by the officers’ facial expressions and body language are largely hidden, unless captured by other cameras. Another consideration is the potential influence of the cameras on participants’ behaviour. The use of BWV resolves the observer’s paradox (Labov 1972) which would result from the presence of a researcher, but as established in Chapter 2, interactional complexities are generated by the presence of an ‘overhearing audience’ in recorded police-witness interactions (e.g. Haworth 2013). For instance, the potential influence on officer behaviour is indicated in guidelines which warn that
“any unnecessary or leading questions captured on BWV could be detrimental to a future prosecution case” (CoP 2014a: 37). Therefore, because BWV is increasingly obligatory for DA incidents, the role of the camera is treated in this study as a characteristic of FRC interaction (see further Pfitzner et al. 2022), as opposed to an analytic limitation.

Having introduced the data for analysis, the following three sections are dedicated to the methodological approach and procedure, beginning with the fundamental principles and framework for critical analysis.

3.2 Framework for analysis: Critical Discourse Analysis

A review of the research background (Ch.2) highlighted that institutions are a crucial site for analysing power because they "have considerable control over the shaping of our routine experiences of the world and the way we classify that world" (Mayr 2008: 3). During FRCs, the many undetermined aspects render the discursive processes of reality construction all the more consequential. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), an approach developed by Fairclough and colleagues (see Fairclough 1993; 1995; 2005; Fairclough et al. 2011) views language in use (discourse) as a form of social practice whereby ‘discursive events’ are inextricable from their socio-cultural and historical context. The result is a dialectical relationship by which language use is both socially shaped and socially shaping:

Discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or ‘constitute’ them; different discourses constitute key entities ... in different ways, and position people in different ways as social subjects. (Fairclough 1992: 3-4)

As an explicitly ‘socially committed’ paradigm, CDA was founded on the domination model of power. From the perspective that discourse does ideological work (Fairclough et al. 2011), analysis aims to expose the means by which unequal power relations are naturalised, reinforced and reproduced through discourse (van Dijk 2008). However, as established in the introductory chapter (Ch1.2), an inductive approach to analysing FRC discourse must accommodate both the ‘domination’ and ‘productive’ views of power (Iedema 1998) to account for the asymmetries inherent in the FRC context as well as aspects which may be open for negotiation (see Chapter 2.2). Therefore, CDA’s fundamental concern with the dialectical relationship between discourse and social context also invites an exploration of how the status quo may be resisted, challenged, negotiated and ultimately transformed by discourse (Fairclough et al. 2011: 2). To this end, the
findings will be considered in light of Tew’s categories of both limiting (oppressive; collusive) and productive (protective; cooperative) power (Tew 2006; see Ch.1).

The CDA tenets that discourse is both historical and mediated (Fairclough et al. 2011; Fairclough & Wodak 1997) underscore the intertextuality that characterises FRC interaction. What happens during FRCs is influenced by earlier discourses, including the emergency call, the call-handler’s communications with the officers, the speakers’ prior experiences of FRC interactions, and the discourses of the relationship and criminal history. FRC interaction is also informed by discourses occurring synchronously (such as the risk assessment questionnaire and officers’ talk between themselves at the scene) and in the future, such as the official reports, statements, police interviews and other discourses which form the legal process. This intertextuality brings to light the mediating role of the first response officers in the FRC context. While they are immediately involved with the AV in the production of talk, they are also responsible for reproducing this spoken text according to institutional processes and frameworks.

Applying CDA in a given context involves questioning the extent to which ideological work is evident and exploring the nature of the processes which mediate between discourse and social practice. Such questions are probed with an approach that is interpretative and explanatory, involving “not only a detailed analysis of the linguistic features of texts, but also of the ways in which it is embedded in its social conditions and linked to other texts and social practices, to ideologies and power relations” (Fairclough et al. 2011: 12). To this end, Fairclough developed a three-dimensional model of discourse analysis which draws together the social-theoretical and linguistic conceptualisations of ‘discourse’. He proposes that every instance of language use has three simultaneous dimensions: “it is a spoken or written language text; it is an interaction between people involving processes of producing and interpreting the text; and it is a piece of social practice” (Fairclough 1992: 10). This discourse model entails three corresponding layers of analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of discourse</th>
<th>Layers of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Description of the linguistic features of the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse practice</td>
<td>Interpretation of the text in relation to the processes of production, reception and (re)distribution to which it is subjected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social practice</td>
<td>Explanation of the text in relation to the social power relations that are reproduced, resisted and transformed during these processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: CDA model of discourse analysis (adapted from Fairclough 1992)*
In other words, close analysis of the text (the police-victim interaction) must be interpreted in light of the institutional procedures which govern FRC interaction, and these interpretations must then be embedded within the wider social context. The study does not presuppose ideological representations, but with reference to the macro-structures identified for the purposes of positioning analysis (Ch.2.4.1), there are several overlapping dimensions in which ideological work may be consequential. These include:

- The police-victim relationship (both interpersonal and institutional)
- The evidential function of the AV’s initial account (captured on video)
- The AV’s understanding (and future representations) of the reported incident
- The trajectory of the investigative and legal processes
- The AP’s relationship with the AP (and others)

Janks (1997: 330) draws attention to the challenge of applying Fairclough’s three-tiered model to spoken language: “words cannot be presented as a gestalt: words march in rows one after the other, structured into a meaningful order”, whereas the simultaneity of the model means that a CDA approach “is not always as tidily linear”. Nonetheless, CDA does not dictate technique and thereby affords flexibility to adapt the approach according to the research questions at hand (Fairclough 2013: 121). The inductive impetus of this study requires a staged approach, anchored in detailed textual analysis (description), from which derives the interpretation and explanation of the text. The analytic procedure will be laid out in Section 3.4, after the methodological approach to the textual analysis is introduced below.

3.3 Methodological approach: Conversation Analysis

This study’s inductive approach is motivated by the understanding that analysis of institutional discourse must address how, or if, participants specifically orient to and (re)construct power relations on a moment-by-moment basis (Drew & Heritage 1992: 53). This section begins with an overview of the methodological principles of Conversation Analysis (CA), before introducing the characteristics of talk which form the bases of the CA approach taken in this study. The analysis will then be situated in relation to the CA and CDA views of context, as a means of demonstrating the value of positioning as a ‘middle-ground’ conceptual tool for analysis.

Developed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (e.g. Sacks et al. 1974), Conversation Analysis (CA) takes an inductive, microanalytical approach to reveal how speakers “continuously engage in making sense of the world and, in so doing, methodically display their
understandings of it” (Benwell & Stokoe 2006: 36). Interaction is thus understood as situated talk through which social action is both reinforced and constructed (Schegloff 1991: 46). Although CA has traditionally been associated with naturally occurring conversation, Heritage (2004: 233) cites Sacks’ early work on telephone calls to a suicide prevention centre to demonstrate that the method has from the outset been applied in institutional contexts, in which “the organization of persons dealing with one another in interaction is the vehicle through which those institutions get their work done” (Schegloff 1986: 112). There has since been a wealth of research to demonstrate the value of CA in a diverse range of institutional settings, including the courtroom (e.g. Atkinson & Drew 1979), emergency calls (e.g. Zimmerman 1992), news interviews (e.g. Greatbatch 1988), police interviews (e.g. Heydon 2005) radio phone-ins (Hutchby 1996), medical consultations (see Barnes 2019) and crisis negotiations (Stokoe & Sikveland 2019). A CA approach is guided by certain fundamental phenomena by which speakers construct meaning in interaction: turn-taking organisation and adjacency pairs (Sacks et al. 1974; Drew & Heritage 1992), which are introduced below in relation to FRC interaction.

3.3.1 Turn-taking organisation

The CA model of communication is of a joint activity driven by the sequential organisation of talk, such that the meaning potential of each turn-at-talk is dependent on its position in relation to the surrounding turns. At the heart of CA, therefore, is the system of turn-taking, which operates according to several facts observed by Sacks and colleagues (1974: 700): speakers use turn allocation techniques to take turns to speak, usually one at a time, with very brief or no gaps between transitions. This system centres on the concepts of the turn-constructional unit (TCU) and transition-relevance place (TRP). TCUs are the fundamental ‘building blocks’ of speech. They may be any length so long as they are recognisable by speakers as meaningful units, based on being intonationally, grammatically or syntactically complete. The boundaries between TCUs are marked by TRPs, which can be signalled in various ways to make them projectable, thereby facilitating the transitions between turns. Three things may occur at TRPs. First, the current speaker may select the next, as in the below example from the data:

POI  (. ) has he threatened you at all or anything like that?
AV  ~yeah he's jus::t (. ) he does it all- he's (. ) he's done it (. ) but- the whole time we've been- but we're not together now
The officer’s use of a question selects the AV as the next speaker. If she had not taken up her turn, the officer would have had the choice of either continuing or allowing the interaction to lapse. If a TRP occurs with no next speaker selected, they may self-select. In this way, speakers manage turn-taking to “compose orderly sequences through which courses of action are developed” (Schegloff 2015: 346). Turn management is also a key aspect in which embodied action such as gaze direction and discursive gesturing is integrated with talk (Schegloff et al. 2002; Kendon 2004). As established in Chapter 2.2.3, there is a lack of predetermined structure to FRC interaction. Turn-taking behaviour is of interest throughout this analysis because it has the capacity to both "allow stories to be told" and "reset the interaction on its course" (Schegloff 2015: 346).

Particularly in less structured contexts, the sequential progression of talk is shaped by speakers’ use of interruption, overlapping and pausing (Drew 2003). Interruption occurs when a second speaker takes up their turn during the first speaker’s turn, especially where no TRP is projectable. This violation of turn-taking conventions is generally associated with impolite or face-threatening behaviour (e.g. Hutchby 2008). Overlapping is simultaneous speech by two or more participants that typically occurs around TRPs. In contrast to interruption, overlap typically derives from speakers’ close attention to the construction of each other’s turns (Jefferson 1986; Drew 2009). The following excerpts from the data demonstrate next-speaker interventions which can be interpreted as interruptive and non-interruptive, respectively:

AV   ~he-'s thinks [there's somebody here-]
PO1  [I- actually thinking] about it you
     may have just a mark j- just (.). there

PO1  em (0.2) [so-]
AV   [#I was] scared then for my life#

In the first example, the AV is clearly mid-turn when the officer (PO) starts speaking to shift the topic to her injuries. In the second, the AV appears to interpret the officer’s pause as a TRP, so she takes up her turn. However, the distinction between interruptive and non-interruptive behaviour is not always clear-cut, and the pragmatic implications of interruption and overlap in particular are highly context-dependent (e.g. Goldberg 1990; Spencer-Oatey 2000; Crawford et al. 2017). In the FRC context, the potential for factors such as urgency, disorientation and emotion to influence turn-taking organisation must also be taken into consideration. At the other end of the spectrum, types of pausing comprise brief gaps within utterances, short silences between turns or at potential completion, and longer lapses between turns (Sacks et al. 1974).
Delay or failure to take a turn following a TRP is an ‘attributable silence’, named as such because they transmit meaning, for example by displaying hesitation in response to a question (Levinson 1983).

Key devices used by speakers to structure utterances within TCUs and across turns are *discourse markers*, defined by Schiffrin (1987: 31) as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk”. Discourse markers thus fulfil a framing and editing function (Schiffrin 1987: 31) by creating cataphoric or anaphoric connections with the surrounding talk, sometimes both at once (Wales 2001: 115). Certain markers are multifunctional, providing implicit and explicit information and emphasis depending on the local context (Mooney 2014). For instance, *but* creates contrast between two propositions, whereas *well* and *okay* carry diverse meanings (e.g. Heritage 2015; Innes 2010; Gaines 2011). In institutional questioning contexts, *and*- and so-prefaced questions are associated with control over the flow of information (Johnson 2002; Heydon 2005).

3.3.2 Adjacency pairs: Questions and answers
To recap from Chapter 2, according to the defining characteristics of institutional talk (Drew & Heritage 1992: 22), participants’ turn-taking practices orient to, or are at least responsive to, goal-orientations, allowable contributions and inferential frameworks. As also established in Chapter 2, a predominant structural feature of institutional-lay interaction is the question-answer format, which reflects and reinforces asymmetrical speaker rights. CA describes this pattern in terms of *adjacency pairs*, which is defined as a pair of turns by different speakers in which the first pair part requires a second-part response (Sacks et al. 1974). First speakers typically design their first parts to elicit a ‘preferred’ second part, such as an expectable answer to a question. These paired action sequences provide a mechanism by which participants display their “ongoing understanding and sense-making of each other’s talk” (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998: 41). A second speaker’s failure to respond to the first pair part is therefore a ‘noticeable absence’, which can disrupt the successful progression of the interaction. The type of first-part question projects a preferred form onto the second-part response, as demonstrated by the prevalence of two types of question in legal and investigative contexts: information-seeking and confirmation-seeking (Gibbons 2003; see further Oxburgh et al. 2010). Newbury and Johnson (2006: 218) subcategorise these two ‘macro-functions’ according to the degree of constraint entailed by information-seeking questions and the degree of coercion imposed by confirmation-seeking questions. It is important to distinguish preference in talk from the psychological concept: a
preferred response to a question might not be the response the questioner would ‘prefer’ in the vernacular sense, as illustrated by this adjacency pair from the data:

PO1 =er:: how did she find out about that.
AV (1.7) told her
PO1 you told her >did you<=

Here, AV produces a preferred second-part response to the restrictive information-seeking question, even though the propositional content of the response was not expectable. The ‘micro-functions’ of specific question types will be elaborated as necessary throughout the analyses. As with turn management, the unstudied and unstructured nature of FRC interaction requires close attention to the “function of questions in context” (Harris 1984: 18-22). The power of institutional speakers to produce first-part questions also gives them control over topic organisation as the interaction unfolds (Sacks et al. 1974), including the authority to enact abrupt topic shifts (see e.g. Heydon 2003), although this is another feature of talk which might be influenced by the time pressure typical of FRCs.

3.3.3 Conversation Analysis and social context

Chapter 2.2.3 established that because of the lack of predetermined structure to FRC interaction, its position along the ‘continuum’ of institutionality remains undefined. The bottom-up CA approach outlined is therefore a valuable means of uncovering how contextual dimensions, institutional and otherwise, are made relevant by speakers on a moment-by-moment basis (Schegloff 1991). However, given the critical stance taken in this study, it is important to establish its position in relation to CA researchers’ differential views of context. Critics of the top-down approach taken in CDA refer to its ‘bucket theory’ of context, which presupposes that participants in interaction are contained within unalterable social structures (Heritage 2004: 245; 1987). By contrast, the ‘pure’ CA stance rejects the idea that speakers’ micro-interactional choices are intrinsically linked to the wider social context (e.g. Schegloff 1997), instead treating context as constituted on a turn-by-turn basis, so that talk is “(sequentially) context-shaped and context-renewing” (Heritage 1984: 242).

Yet an approach that “documents the processes by which social life is constituted” (Hammersley 2003: 755) through the local context of talk is ideal for revealing how power relations are realised, reinforced, contested and negotiated in practice. CDA’s stance that language can only be understood with reference to its social context remains compatible with a CA approach that is applied first, to unpack what happens on a moment-to-moment basis before stepping back to evaluate its wider implications (Drew & Heritage 1992: 53). This study’s
focus on a pivotal yet unresearched stage of the criminal justice process recalls Briggs’ (1997) work on a transcripted confession in an infanticide case. Briggs argues for harnessing the analytic potential of CA while considering the relevance and consequentiality of the meanings constructed at the micro-level of interaction. He further proposes that CA researchers who disregard the wider context are effectively blinkering themselves according to the inferential frameworks which advantage institutional speakers in the first place:

To assume that categories and modes of reference are “inherently locally produced” and can be adequately analyzed without making reference not simply to other contexts but especially to how talk circulates between settings would be particularly dangerous in this instance in that it would place researchers squarely within the frame of reference constructed by the judicial police and the court. (Briggs 1997: 522, emphasis in original)

Briggs’ emphasis here on talk circulating between settings is especially pertinent given the evidential function of FRC interaction, which is recorded for future recontextualisation in ways that may be maximally consequential for the AV and others involved. In the current study, critical evaluation of the findings will be anchored in the fine-grained analysis which ‘rules nothing out’ as irrelevant (Atkinson & Heritage 1984: 4). This is a crucial position to begin from, given the variety of scenarios and participants represented in the dataset.

### 3.3.4 Conversation Analysis and interactional positioning

As the conceptual tool for analysis, interactional positioning bridges the gap between top-down and bottom-up approaches to social context. CA has proven valuable for positioning studies because “the minute details it provides ... allow the researcher to see how a position is taken up and performed” (Shalaby 2019: 460, emphasis in original; see Wetherell 1998; Anderson 2009; Wilkinson & Kitzinger 1995). In turn, De Fina (2013) expands on the potential for positioning analysis to reveal the complexity of the reflexive relationship between wider social and local interactional processes. She proposes that positioning is “a middle ground construct that allows for linking local talk and identities with socio cultural processes and relations that surround and have an impact on the local interaction in more or less direct ways” (2013: 58; see also Bjerre 2021: 270). As such, positioning research bridges the gap between the macro-level ideological concerns of CDA and the micro-level “nose to data” focus of traditional CA (de Fina 2013: 41; see also Korobov 2001; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008).
Local acts of positioning the self and others are achieved by way of a range of discursive devices, which the CA approach will reveal through fine-grained analysis. The dynamic nature of positioning requires an approach which observes microinteractional features as they emerge and fluctuate at different analytic stages, rather than blinkering the analytic lens by projecting features of interest in advance. There are certain devices which recur as ‘footsoldiers’ (Sarangi 2017: 12) in interactional studies and can be associated with a speech context which centres on the officers’ elicitation of and/or the AVs’ provision of an account of abuse. These include: reported speech and thought, deixis and tense, pronominal reference, epistemic and deontic modality, naming strategies, formulations, lexical choice and metaphor. This list is intended to exemplify instead of indicate salient features, which will instead be identified and elaborated throughout the analysis (Ch.4-6).

There are, however, two meso-level positioning phenomena arising from the research background as inextricably embedded in certain aspects of the speech context: accounting (Ch.2.3.4) and participation frameworks (Ch.2.4.4). These are described here to enhance clarity in the analysis, but with no intention of assigning them more prominence than the other, unknown features presented by the data.

**Participation frameworks**

Goodwin and Goodwin (2004: 222) explain the concept of participation frameworks thus: “Within the scope of a single utterance, speakers can adapt to the kind of engagement or disengagement their hearers display through constant adjustments of their bodies and talk”. These adjustments are considered in the present analysis in terms of their function to realise (re)positionings. The embodied dimension of participation informs the analysis of positioning relative to the setting and space in Chapter 4, but the potential for participation to fluctuate during a ‘strip’ of talk (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004) renders it relevant across each strand of analysis. Various participation categorisation systems have been developed according to different research foci and data (e.g. Goffman 1981; Levinson 1988; Kádár & Haugh 2013). The analytic approach does not presuppose categories of interest (see also Irvine 1996) but will draw as needed from previous work to describe what the data reveal.

**Accounting**

Accounting is the means by which speakers are (self-)positioned relative to accountability, responsibility and blame (Buttny 1993; Scott & Lyman 1968). To avoid confusion with the AV’s initial account of the incident, discussion in this thesis follows Buttny’s (1993) nominalisation
of an accounting instead of the increasingly preferred an account. Accountings take the form of explanations, excuses and justifications, which involve orientations to self and other, attribution of causality, and temporal reference to past and future scenarios (Buttny 1993). A blame-account is produced in response to perceived blame from another (Buttny 2008; Goffman 1971; see also Ingrids 2014; Franzén & Aronsson 2018). As with participation frameworks, although accounting applies most obviously to one strand of analysis (AV responsibility), the notion of accountability infuses all three research themes.

This section’s overview of the conversation-analytic toolkit represents the point of departure for analysis. To elucidate this process and its value in relation to the overarching focus on power, the next section will outline the analytic procedure.

3.4 Procedure
3.4.1 Identifying focal themes
The process of analysis began with the first viewing of the BWV footage and intensified with the fine-grained transcription detailed in Section 3.3. This early engagement with the data presented the three broad analytic themes introduced in Chapter 1 and developed in Chapter 2. Although the three FRCs differ in many aspects, all speakers were found to make these themes relevant to the police-victim interactions in ways that suggested areas of similarity and difference, so they presented an opportunity to explore a variety of facets of positioning in the FRC context. The focus on the setting and interactional space was sharpened by the fact that the three FRC settings are markedly different. When viewed together, the ‘presence’ of each setting was detectable in various ways according to how participants drew attention to the space they were in, and the different ways in which the setting contained and directed the unfolding FRC. The focus on police expertise arose from the bird’s eye view, because the institutional-lay dynamics were overlaid in the data with a sense of all speakers orienting to the officers’ ability to carry out their work, with various contingencies involved. Finally, although the focus on AV responsibility might seem counter-intuitive, the prominence of this issue in both AVs’ and officers’ talk was striking precisely because the FRCs centred on the potentially criminal behaviour of the absent AP.

3.4.2 Analytic process
The CDA framework and CA methodology described in the previous two sections come together in the staged procedure for analysis as follows:
Firstly, the CA approach uncovers the micro-level interactional features which achieve local acts of positioning (description of the text).

Secondly, these positioning practices are synthesised across the dataset, considering questions such as: What procedures shape the text? How might this text be used, and how do these processes relate to speakers’ discursive choices? (interpretation of discourse practices)

Finally, the findings from all three strands of analysis are evaluated in terms of how the observed positioning practices reproduce, reinforce, resist, negotiate or transform social power relations during FRCs (explanation of social practices).

Although each strand of analysis follows the same fundamental procedure, there are certain analytic concepts and angles specific to each strand, as introduced in Chapter 2 (and see 3.3.4). These elements will be revisited briefly at the beginning of each analysis chapter to set up the analytic approach in relation to the subsidiary research question at hand. The data extracts for analysis are chosen from the dataset as a whole according to the focal themes, so examples from individual FRCs are not distributed equally across chapter sections. The limitations imposed on the dataset have precluded systematic comparison, although analysis will demonstrate that the focal themes have generated numerous points of similarity and contrast between the three FRCs. Each analysis chapter ends by synthesising the positioning practices revealed by the detailed textual analysis. At this stage, key comparisons between the three FRCs will be drawn. The critical evaluation is concentrated in Chapter 7 (Discussion), to assess the implications of the findings across the three analytic strands working in tandem.

3.5 The DAS focus group

Along with the primary analysis, an initial aim was to gain some emic insights into the research context. In the initial stages of the research, one focus group was conducted via a DA support organisation, with a group of women whose abuse was in the past (henceforth DAS focus group). Discussion centred on their past experiences of interacting with officers during FRCs, and related topics. The audio-recorded session was two-and-a-half hours in duration. The data have been transcribed broadly (App.R4), in line with this study’s attention to the content of the talk instead of micro-level interactional features. The focus group was conducted in adherence with the same ethical procedures detailed earlier in this section (with relevant documentation in App.III). The key ethical considerations were informed consent, anonymity, and the additional
dimension of the ‘ethics of participation’ (Sarangi 2019; Tusting and Maybin 2007). The DAS focus group was intended to be complemented with a first response officer focus group, but as with the dataset, this was impacted by “the unfolding context of the research situation” (Kincheloe 2005: 324). The police focus groups were arranged to take place after all BWV footage had been provided, to minimise the study’s demand on the police force’s resources. However, this arrangement was prohibited by Covid restrictions throughout 2020-21. Given the absence of corresponding police perspectives, the DAS focus group is incorporated into the thesis in a limited way, where pertinent to certain observations, and not drawn upon for the textual analysis.

3.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has detailed the considerations and steps involved in collecting data for this study, with a focus on the tensions to be resolved between ethical issues, practicability and analytic value. The second half of the chapter introduced the critical analytic framework of CDA and the inductive methodological principles of CA, culminating in the analytic procedure which focuses first on micro-level discursive practices in the three analysis chapters to follow, before panning out with a critical evaluation of the findings in the penultimate chapter. Analysis begins in Chapter 4 by exploring one of the most visually striking aspects of the FRC context: the setting and its interactional spaces.
Chapter 4: Positioning in the setting and interactional space

The focus of this first analysis chapter is the first response call-out (FRC) setting, a prominent and complex feature of these encounters, characterised by the interpolation of the institution into the private realm (see Ch.2). Each of the three FRCs takes place in the alleged victim’s (AV) familiar environment: Amy’s and Julia’s homes and Neil’s barbershop, which is closed at the time. Typically, ‘fixity’ in the setting affords its inhabitants the right to control entry and behaviour within the space (Giddens 1984), but in FRCs the police are endowed with the institutional right to control access and movement. This power is further licensed by the fact that all three AVs have summoned the officers themselves via the emergency number, thereby inviting them into their space. This chapter explores how participants manage the resultant redistribution of authority, with the ultimate aim of illuminating the role of the setting and its spaces in constituting power relations during FRCs (in Ch.7). Analysis therefore addresses the question: In what ways are participants positioned discursively in relation to the setting and its interactional spaces? The conversation-analytic approach identifies explicit and implicit discursive orientations to setting and space, with a focus on how ownership rights and control over the setting are (re)constructed through talk. Analysis considers the effects of spatial control on the AV’s narrative, where applicable, and considers the implications in relation to the AV’s potential vulnerability. Chapter 2 also established that there is no official guidance for officers in terms of managing FRC settings, in contrast to the attention paid to ‘physical context’ for vulnerable witness interviews, for which a specially designed location is preferred over a familiar locale due to the potential for traumatic memories to be triggered (ABE 2022: 67).

This chapter is informed by the analytic concepts of interactional space as “action-shaping and action-shaped” (Mondada 2013: 250, emphasis in original) and participation as “actions demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within evolving structures of talk” (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004: 222; see Ch.2; Ch.3). There is therefore a mutually constitutive relationship between interactional space, participation frameworks and talk, over which presides the setting as the architecture for interaction (Hausendorf & Schmitt 2016). Analysis has remained alert to the entextualising influence of police BWV, which “reflexively contributes to the shaping of the interactional space, inter alia by the way in which the camera delimits the visible and documentable frame of the publicly recorded actions” (Mondada 2013: 256). This phenomenon is considered in terms of the potential function of FRC interaction as evidence.

14 An overview of the three FRC settings is provided in Chapter 3.1.3.
The inductive approach has identified five key aspects in which setting and space are made relevant in talk and are consequential to talk, and these are analysed in turn here. The first three sections are concerned with movement into and within the setting, which involves (re)configuring interactional spaces and participation frameworks (see Ch.3). The opening section focuses on officers’ entry into the AV’s domain and the establishment of the narrative space. The second section examines instances in which participants disrupt these established interactional spaces. The third section looks at how officers control an AV’s movements within their own domain. The fourth section zones in to explore the relationship between the material structure of FRC settings and talk. The fifth and final analysis section examines the discursive dynamics of officers’ advancement into the AV’s personal space during the processes of inspecting and photographing injuries. The chapter therefore progressively narrows its focus, from entering the setting through to entering the AV’s immediate physical and personal space, incidentally reflecting the advancement of the institutional into the private that characterises FRCs.

4.1 Entering the victim’s territory

As detailed in Chapter 3, two of the FRCs include footage of officers approaching and entering the AVs’ homes, before the interactional space for hearing the initial account is established. The first extract, from Amy’s FRC, begins as four of the five officers approach her house at night-time (with one officer remaining at the police van for now). The alleged perpetrator (AP) is her ex-partner and does not live at the house but is upstairs when the officers arrive at the front door.

Example 4.1a: Amy

0008 AV opens front door, sobbing and clutching face
0009 PO2 [Alright?]
0011 AV Pointing frantically back into house
0012 PLEASE=#
0013 PO2 =what’s going on
0014 AV #he’s just assaul[ted me#]
0015 PO2 [where] is he
0016 AV Moving slightly past AV into house, facing stairs
0017 AV .HIH HUHHH (.) #he's upstairs# (1.2) [#my little]
0018 AV #my little girl's in bed as well so he needs to get [out of
0019 AV here quick#]
0020 PO2 [he's
0021 PO2 upstairs?] [yep (.)
0022 PO2 has he got] any weapons [or anything]
0023 AV On 'yep' turns to AV and raises palm
0024 AV [#I don't know-#]
0025 (3.4)
0026 PO2 and PO3 move past AV and go upstairs;
It was Amy (along with a neighbour) who placed the emergency call and thereby instigated the officers’ visit to her home. At the point of their entry, her attempt to send them upstairs progresses the goal of getting help that her call set into motion. She combines a verbal plea, emphasised by screaming in lines 10-12, with deictic gesturing while standing sideways against the doorframe, in a multimodal ensemble (Kendon 2009) that seeks to direct the officers’ movements according to her needs. However, the four officers remain on the doorstep in a dispreferred response to the embodied plea for action, signalling that Amy no longer has control over proceedings. Instead, PO1 initiates an insertion sequence with four questions to establish some further information in lines 13-22, punctuated by the demanding edge of ‘what’s going on’. The officers’ gradual movements into the house during this sequence (e.g. line 16) position Amy as responsible for progressing their action by answering their questions. The echo of policespeak in ‘assaulted’ indicates her alignment with the institutional procedure as a means of facilitating the officers’ progress. This question-answer sequence thus echoes the tight interactional structure of emergency calls, which is designed to facilitate the swift “working through of issues” according to the goal-orientation signalled by the caller’s act of calling (Zimmerman 1984: 211).
However, despite the significance attributed to Amy’s contributions here, PO2 orients to selected propositions without acknowledging others. The focus remains on the AP’s whereabouts and the potential weapon, and no officer addresses Amy’s claim of assault and concern about her child, the latter minimally acknowledged by PO2 with ‘yep’ (line 21). The subsequent shift to the topic of weapons overrides Amy’s reiterated plea for action - ‘he needs to get out of here quick’ (lines 18-19) - and PO2’s discursive control is embodied in the raising of her hand towards Amy’s face (line 23). This attention-getting gesture communicates wait/calm down and is therefore interpretable as an attempt to cut through Amy’s pronounced distress, but in doing so the gesture symbolises the power that licenses PO2 to silence the AV within her own domain (see further Ch.7). Related to this dominance is the inappropriateness of raising a hand to a reported DA victim who has just disclosed an assault. Nonetheless, Amy’s non-verbal behaviour during the question-answer sequence in lines lines 13-22 conveys some resistance to the participation framework sustained by the officers in the doorway. She retains the sideways body orientation she assumed earlier to let them move past her, and instead of directly addressing PO2 as her questioner she shifts her gaze between the officers when responding, positioning them collectively as her means of getting help. PO2 and PO3 align with this positioning when they move to the staircase, signalling that the question-answer sequence has produced sufficient information for them to proceed. However, as with the questioning, the departure is not managed verbally to display any sensitivity to Amy’s perspective, for example with thanks or reassurance. As the officers enter this setting, therefore, discursive control interacts with spatial control to establish the primacy of their institutional agenda over the AV’s authority within her domain.

In line 27, POI stays with Amy in the doorway to create a new participation framework of just the two of them. The transition marker ‘now’ signals the required shift in her attention away from the officers moving upstairs and towards POI as her new addressee. Similarly, his quiet tone contrasts sharply with the urgent, slightly combative exchange that has just taken place with PO2. The officer’s verbal strategies emphasise the demarcation of their present encounter from the volatile scene upstairs, progressing his goal of eliciting the AV’s first account of the incident, also evident in his attempt to establish a suitable interactional space by moving her ‘off-side’ into the kitchen adjoining the hallway. Although she cooperates verbally, Amy again conveys some non-verbal resistance to this attempt to redirect her attention, gazing over POI’s shoulder towards the stairs as they establish her name in lines 28-33 and shouting a plea which broadcasts her immediate emotional need to keep her focus on what is happening upstairs.
Nonetheless, POI’s subsequent move to the kitchen door in line 35 requires Amy to make a choice between maintaining her gaze upstairs, away from POI’s new position, or to remain facing him by shifting her gaze. As POI moves in line 34, ‘let’s come here’ reinforces the deictic shift introduced earlier by ‘now’ and discursively creates a new interactional space in the kitchen. The inclusive let’s softens the embedded directive by involving Amy in the process of moving into the new space. Combined with his request for narration in line 34 (‘what’s happened exactly’) (cf. Kidwell 2009), POI thus establishes both the physical setting for her account and their participation positions as speaker and recipient. These strategies are momentarily successful in drawing Amy in more fully, as she breaks her gaze from upstairs and starts moving to join POI in the kitchen in line 36. The move to the kitchen mirrors the use of dedicated spaces for sensitive conversations in medical contexts (General Medical Council 2022) and might therefore be interpreted as supportive. However, in this instance the move is counter to Amy’s displayed needs, because while the new space suits the institutional goal of hearing her account (and separating her from the AP), she loses visibility of what is happening with her child. This brief exchange reveals a key consideration in terms of domestic FRC settings, whereby the ‘right’ space for disclosure might create knowledge gaps and a related sense of losing control within their own realm. This disempowerment may echo the recent experience of abuse in the same setting, as is recognised in vulnerable witness interview guidelines which recommend a neutral space without such associations (MoJ 2022: 67; see further Ch.7).

The instability of the temporary interactional space is borne out when Amy’s sudden head movement in line 38 marks the refocusing of her attention on the escalating situation upstairs. As when she opened the front door earlier, the shouted plea in line 39-40 addresses the officers collectively, yet POI responds as the direct addressee with ‘I know’, creating a mismatch of positionings that seeks to preserve their present participation framework. Following this, although POI’s subsequent move upstairs aligns with Amy’s wishes more so than his taking her off-side, the fact that she is left alone again (when there are five officers in the vicinity) positions her as peripheral to the officers’ goal-orientations. The ephemerality of the would-be narrative space mirrors the instability of the police-victim positionings so far during this visit, with Amy’s physical isolation symbolising the lack of personal engagement from the people she has called for help.

In the final lines of (4.1a), POI’s return reconfigures the interactional space he dissolved by departing, assuming a face-to-face formation to facilitate the two-party interaction (Kendon 1990). The somewhat redundant explanation for his departure in lines 51-2 acknowledges the
transgression of leaving Amy alone mid-conversation, but his topicalisation of the spatial disruption also functions to reorient her to the topic of the unfinished interaction: ‘what’s happened exactly’. He does not offer an update as to the child’s safety, sustaining the gap in Amy’s knowledge about a topic she has emphasised as her priority concern. Nonetheless, she aligns with POI’s positioning, responding to the narrative cue with an interruption in line 55 which indicates her readiness to tell her story without any explicit elicitation. The re-establishment of the kitchen as the narrative space thereby illustrates how officers can actively shape interactional space within the AV’s domain to achieve communicative goals.

In this first example of the police entering the AV’s domain, the officers have established their authority within the setting, first by resisting her attempt to direct them upstairs, then by directing her movement within the house. However, clearly all participants are aligned in their primary goals of securing the child’s safety and removing the AP from the house. FRC guidelines advise separating the parties as quickly as possible to safeguard the AV and encourage their disclosure (CoP 2022), and the initial encounter in the doorway (4.1a) attends to this aim, with the urgency and unpredictability precluding the politeness conventions associated with entering a stranger’s house. Nonetheless, the unmitigated denial of the AV’s agency within her home during this opening exchange, combined with the number of officers, establishes the police-victim power positionings from which the remainder of the FRC unfolds (see further Ch.7.1).

The second example (4.1b) of police entry into an AV’s domain is from Julia’s FRC, at nighttime. The situation has de-escalated in urgency because the AP, her current partner, left their shared home after the reported attack.

Example 4.1b: Julia

0008  PO1  Knocks front door  
0009  AV  Opens door, crying; talking on mobile phone  
0010  {sniffs} {into phone:} ~yeah [. .] yeah {sniffs} [em  
0011  (1.2) yeah (. .) alright–  
0012  PO1  [°hiya. (0.9) >come  
0013  in?<°]  
0014  AV  (to P0s:) ~>I’m just gunna go and put some trousers  
0015  on<~  
0016  {into phone:} ~right the police are here– #here  
0017  On ’police’ starts running upstairs  
0018  now so I’m just gunna…# {speech becomes  
0019  indistinct}  
0020  (7.8)  
0021  
0022
POs move slightly into house; PO2 starts to close door but dog in doorway; PO2 pats thigh and whistles softly; dog still yapping

AV (shouting from upstairs:} ((NIPPER))

Dog stops barking; PO2 closes door

Moving to bottom of stairs

(calling upstairs:) is it just you in the house now?

(from upstairs:) ~it’s me and my kids [.hihih~]

[>oh-] okay.<

Walking downstairs

(4.3)

to ((child, blurred)) on stairs:} *and it’s your
dad who’s gone is it*

AV =~*sorry*~=

Walking downstairs

who’s gone?

Pauses at bottom of stairs

~my (.) partner-= {sniffs}

=°oh right..°

AV moves past POs; leads them down hall

so I- she was #lovely on the phone then#

{sniffs}-I was on the phone to the- the police lady-

{sniffs}

(7.2)

AV enters kitchen, PO1 & PO2 following; AV leans against counter and POs stand facing her

(right basically I just wanna- .hh >°can I just push

that*<#

Moving to door; closes door; turns back

(3.5)

~*basically* I’m em-- .hihih

Stops in middle of kitchen to catch breath; hand to chest; steadies herself on baby highchair

The AV’s ownership rights within the setting are recognised by all participants from the outset. Julia directs the officers’ entry into the house non-verbally, with deictic gesturing and stepping backwards that allocates their space to stand but does not immediately give them her full attention. Instead, she prioritises her phone addressee and positions the officers as side participants (Kádár & Haugh 2013) by addressing them briefly before referring to them in third person in line 16, then by taking the phone upstairs in an embodied display of sustained participation with the phone addressee. It is not yet clear that Julia is speaking to another police representative, and she does not otherwise mitigate her inattentiveness towards the officers until she comes downstairs, having completed the call. By prioritising an interaction which began before the officers entered her space and by going upstairs, Julia assumes the authority to designate the beginning of her main interaction with them. The officers’ alignment with their positioning as side participants is evidenced by POI’s quiet request to enter in lines 12-3, which displays her respect for Julia’s primary activity. The management of the officers’ entry therefore establishes a correlation between the AV’s fixity within the setting and the degree of discursive control she is afforded (cf. Ainsworth et al. 2009). The asymmetry of authority over the
environment is encapsulated in lines 21-5 in the contrast between PO2’s quiet attempts to placate the barking dog and Julia’s successful shouting from upstairs.

Nonetheless, unlike the controlled environment of a formal interview, the dynamic nature of this non-institutional setting creates an unpredictability that limits speakers’ control over who participates and when. On this occasion, Julia’s need to put on clothes leaves her child standing on the stairs in the officers’ line of vision¹⁵, leading to PO2’s query in line 31-2 about their relationship to the AP. FRC guidelines are somewhat contradictory in relation to interacting with children at the scene. One action on officers’ ‘quick reference’ checklist upon arrival is to “see [any] child and speak to them unless not in their best interest to do so” (CoP 2016). On the other hand, the detailed guidance dedicated to children stipulates that officers “should only ask sufficient questions to establish the safety of the child, crime scene location, AP identity and location, and to ensure the preservation of evidence” (CoP 2022). On balance, given the officers’ imminent access to information directly from the AV, PO2’s question is unnecessary and, moreover, displays a lack of sensitivity to the vulnerability of both child and mother. Julia overrides the officer-child participation framework by re-establishing herself as the officers’ interlocutor with ‘sorry’ in line 33. The upstairs-downstairs dichotomy in this opening passage illuminates the difficulty of delineating the police-victim interaction from other elements within the AV’s private sphere which they may prefer to keep off-limits. The officers need access to the space to carry out their work, as typified in (4.1a), but the politeness conventions for entering a stranger’s home create a tension between institutional authority and relational considerations in less urgent FRCs such as (4.1b). The officers’ initial presence in the house creates a liminal space in which the institutional and private bleed into each other with no fixed boundaries (cf. Węgorowski 2018), underscoring the importance of seeking a more stable environment for the AV’s disclosure.

In contrast to the officer manoeuvring Amy into the kitchen in (4.1a), Julia takes the lead here in establishing the narrative space. The officers position her with this authority by foregoing their right as first responders to move freely around the house, instead remaining in the open doorway while Julia is upstairs and until her movement past them in line 39 cues that they should follow. After designating the space, she then directs the officers’ movements within it by first selecting her own position against the counter, which dictates the officers’ arrangement of a circular formation conducive to hearing her story (Kendon 1990). Julia’s physical positioning combines with the verbal transition marker ‘right’ to cue her initiation of

¹⁵ As detailed in Ch.3, participants other than the POs and AVs were blurred and silenced in the footage provided, although in this instance only the video was distorted because the child does not speak.
the narrative in line 46. The strong modality of this incomplete utterance (‘I just wanna’) foregrounds her own goal-orientations, reflecting the reflexive relationship between spatial and discursive authority. This correlation comes to the fore when Julia moves to close the door and manages the break in both talk and formation with ‘can I just push that’, with the lack of ‘please’ indexing her right to move freely (cf. 4.1a). The action indicates her desire for a barrier between the narrative space and the rest of the house, highlighting the need for dedicated spaces for sensitive topics and further problematising PO2’s earlier question to the child, facilitated by the liminality of the doorway space. As she begins her story, Julia continues to reconfigure the participants’ formation according to her emotional needs, assuming a new position to lean on a highchair for support. Throughout this extract, therefore, the AV harnesses the affordances of the setting in an embodied display of the agency she assumes (and has been assigned) within her domain. The stop-start initiation of this interaction thus contrasts with a formal interview setting, in which the interviewer dictates the environmental conditions and the point at which the interview can begin.

Section 4.1 has analysed two diametrically different scenarios\(^\text{16}\) in which officers manage entry into the AV’s home and establish the narrative space. The next two sections examine movement within the setting after this point, with a focus on how movement is managed discursively and its impact on the account being produced.

### 4.2 Disrupting the narrative space

Guidelines for interviewing vulnerable and intimidated witnesses stipulate that the setting should be “free from interruptions, distractions, and fear and intimidation, so the interviewer and witness can concentrate fully on the task in hand – the interview” (MoJ 2022: 67). By contrast, the present data contain several instances in which the space that has been established for the AV’s narrative is disrupted. Disruptions occur in the form of officer’s departures from the space and, to a lesser extent, interventions from outsiders. In the first example, the officer leaves the kitchen just seconds after Amy has begun recounting the incident.

**Example 4.2a: Amy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0055</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td>#he just come here and .hih (.) hhh well- tonight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0056</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td>he found out his dad died#=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0057</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>he:'s found out his dad died?=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0058</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td>#=&gt;yeah#=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0059</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>what's his name=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0060</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td>#=&gt;((first name))#=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{16}\) The point of entry was not included in Neil’s FRC footage (see App.R3).
The passage begins with officer and AV standing facing each other in the kitchen (as per 4.1a). Having identified the need to report information related to the AP’s name to PO4, POI abruptly leaves the kitchen and then the house. His sudden turn away in line 66 breaks their face-to-face formation and reinforces his verbal interruption of Amy’s attempt to continue. The directive to ‘give me one second’ puts their exchange on hold, with no mitigation, leaving the AV alone with nobody to listen to the account she is trying to provide. Furthermore, the AP is positioned centrally as the reason for the departure. POI’s persistence in extracting the information (e.g. line 61) marks it as important enough to prevent Amy from continuing. At the same time, his deictic head nod towards the police van visible outside the window effectively draws the AP into their participation framework, upgrading his position from a story world character to a ratified presence lingering just beyond the interactional space. POI’s subsequent departure to relay the information confirms the AP as more central to police goals than Amy’s account of her experience. POI’s precise motivation for leaving is implied in sense of a ‘penny dropping’ created by the combination of pausing and emphasis punctuating the response tokens in line 63. His subsequent exchange with PO4 outside confirms their familiarity with the AP’s name (see App.RI FRCIb), but Amy remains inside with no elaboration on ‘ah right’ to help her understand POI’s pressing need to relay this information.

This epistemic gap combines with the disruption of the narrative space to reveal an asymmetry of access to spaces within the setting. Whereas the officers are free to operate across the inside-outside divide, Amy’s restriction to the space they have designated for her reflects her restricted access to the policework being performed elsewhere. The officers’ divided focus entails an imbalance of attentiveness, as epitomised in (4.2a) when Amy follows the departing officer with her gaze while retaining her body positioning from their now-dissolved speaking formation. Her suspension in the narrative space constitutes an embodied display of powerlessness as POI invokes his right to disrupt the space without explanation. Furthermore, he retains discursive control with the placeholding device ‘give me one second’, which effectively pauses their interaction while preserving his participant position. In this extract, therefore, the officer treats the narrative space in a way that undermines the AV’s authority as both narrator and resident and minimises the significance of her version of events.
The next example of disruption occurs further into Amy’s narrative, several minutes later. She is in the kitchen with a different officer, PO2, and POI has just re-entered after leaving in the extract above.

Example 4.2b: Amy

```
0111 AV  #well I came down here and he's got knives and stuff
0112     and he's he was see in his face he was off his face
0113     On ‘see' frames face with hands, eyes wide
0114     on drugs or s- I dunno what he's taken but-#
0115 PO1 => yea::h it looks like he has been [taking]
0116 something< is his dad ((first name))?
0117 AV  [#yeah#] #yeah#= (sniffs)
0118 =yeah= (sniffs)
0119 PO1 =yeah .) right.=
0120 AV  =and he's checking every room-#
0121 ‘ransacking’ action; PO1 moves to doorway
0122 PO1 =*PO3*?
0123 On ‘PO3’ AV turns head sharply;
0124 PO1 exits through front door; PO2’s gaze follows him
0125 AV  #checking every room saying that he was-#
0126 Turning to follow PO2’s gaze
0127 (2.7)
0128 PO2 {to POs outside:} ((AP FIRST NAME)) (.) ((AP FULL
0129     NAME))
```

This extract provides further evidence that the officers’ reconfigurations of the narrative space are disorienting for the AV and detrimental to the coherence of her account. According to his earlier ‘give me one second’, POI’s re-entry at the start of this passage expands the participation framework to include both officers as Amy’s addressees, as borne out by his affiliative interruption in line II5. Yet the speed of delivery infuses this utterance with a cursory note, an effect reinforced by POI’s switch to normal speed for the disjunctive topic-shifting question about the AP’s father. The shift communicates to Amy that POI has re-entered the kitchen solely to retrieve this information (as is confirmed with reference to his prior discussion outside with PO3; see App.RI Transcript FRCib). Furthermore, because the interruption in line II5 pertains to a narrative detail, namely the AP’s inebriation, the abrupt topic shift to police matters is particularly jarring. It would have been less disruptive to clearly signal his intention to re-enter the kitchen to confirm this detail, instead of momentarily resuming his recipient role as a means of steering the talk in the desired direction.

Indeed, Amy displays some confusion about her positioning relative to POI during this exchange. In line II9, he combines response markers with a full-stop tone to signal a transition relevance place, which Amy treats as the end of an insertion sequence and her cue to continue her narrative (see also 4.2a line 63-4). There ensues some misalignment in lines I20-5, with Amy attempting to continue while first POI and then PO2 abruptly turn their attention away from
her. Again, POI offers no mitigation when he interrupts the narrative in line 122 by shouting outside and then walking to the door. Amy’s sharp head movement displays surprise and indicates that she had interpreted his return to the kitchen as a resumption of their interaction. Nonetheless, she continues to adapt to the shifting participation framework, turning to address PO2 in line 125 and repeating the utterance that was cut off: ‘checking every room’. Goodwin and Goodwin note that “restarts function as requests to the hearer” to secure their attention after they look away (2004: 230-1). However, in this instance PO2’s gaze has followed POI out of the door, prompting Amy to abandon her attempt at holding the floor and turn her own attention to what is happening between the officers. PO2’s shouted clarification in line 128 reveals that the source of distraction is the officers’ ongoing focus on the AP’s identity, once again positioning the AV as peripheral to their goals. Compounding this effect, PO2 does not mitigate POI’s departure by keeping her own attention on Amy or even acknowledging her attempts to continue. Furthermore, even though she has no visibility of what is happening outside, the officers’ movements leave Amy no option but to direct her attention towards a space she cannot access.

This extract, therefore, illuminates how the inside-outside divide creates shifting audience roles which amplify the AV’s vulnerability. Furthermore, in both (4.2a) and (4.2b), the officers’ communication across the divide creates an epistemic asymmetry that highlights Amy’s powerlessness (see Ch.7.1; 7.2). Goffman’s (1981) concept of the ‘laminated speaker’, by which a message can be produced by a composition of different entities, illustrates the tension whereby Amy is positioned as the Principal of information that is valuable to the officers, but as Author and Animator they recontextualise and use her information in ways that are unknown to her. At the same time, a closer look at what Amy is trying to say in this passage reveals another knowledge gap opened by the officers’ disruptive treatment of the space. Her animated description in lines III-4 of the AP’s frenzied behaviour while holding knives contributes to her overarching representation of feeling threatened by him, and it is this fact that ultimately leads to the officers’ decision to arrest him (App.RI lines 554-66) However, in the above extract, the officers’ disruption of the interactional space obscures this narrative detail, demonstrating how the lack of consistency in who is listening to Amy leads to a partial understanding of what happened to her, as borne out in the officers’ later struggle to diagnose the incident (Chapter 5.1).

The following examples of narrative space disruption are from Julia’s FRC. On two occasions towards the end of the FRC, one officer attempts to leave the kitchen to get statement-taking
paperwork from the police car. Up to this point, the AV and the two officers have remained in this narrative space, in which Julia has been freely producing her version of events, with extended narrative turns and minimal contribution from the officers (App.R2). The first extract begins following the completion of Julia’s longest narrative turn (which has spanned 135 lines).

**Example 4.2c: Julia**

0318 PO1 ="okay. (1.2) okay. no problem" (.)"okay." (0.3)  
0319 he’ll obviously be arrested (0.1) for assaulting you  
0320 (0.2) and for damaging your phone (0.5) okay? (. ) em  
0321 (0.9) are you willing to give us a statement=  
0322 AV (nods) ="*yes.*"=  
0323 PO1 =now (.) okay. right. I’ll nip back to the car and  
0324 get some paper (. ) em we’ll be as quick as we can  
0325 then we’ll go look for him then  
0326 AV #will this affect my sort of- (.)#  
0327 PO1 n- y- no (.) not at all (.) you haven’t done  
0328 anything wrong have you (.) so [(.) y’know- (.)]  
0329 you’re a victim of something at the e- (.) >well<  
0330 he’s- he’s going to well- (.) yeah- well-]  
0331 AV [#no I haven’t done  
0332 PO1 =On ‘hav’ clutches both hands to chest  
0333 anything wrong and that’s what he keeps on telling  
0334 me he’s like if you do this you are gunna lose this  
0335 On ‘like’ squares shoulders aggressively  
0336 and I] ##just can’t##= [.huh.huh]  
0337 PO2 =social services will- help you (.) [support you]  
0338 AV #but I work  
0339 PO1 =for the community {cont.}  

POI has been Julia’s primary addressee so far, with PO2 providing more practical support (see 4.4), so the proposed departure represents a marked shift in the participation structure. Furthermore, Julia’s evident distress, having fluctuated throughout the interaction, is pronounced here. The officer mitigates the departure by framing it within the wider activity of statement-taking, which is in turn framed as a supportive next step towards arresting the AP (see further Ch.5.3). The choice of ‘nip’ in line 323 further minimises the potential disruption caused by her absence, which could have been avoided had she brought the necessary equipment with her. However, despite Julia’s emphatic confirmation about the statement in line 322, she does not acknowledge the officer’s intention to go to the car for paper, instead shifting topic in line 326. This gives POI the choice of delaying her departure or leaving anyway, the latter of which would entail the two face-threatening actions of disrupting the participation framework mid-sequence and disregarding Julia’s question. The overlapping speech in lines 328-36 displays POI’s effort to regain control of the interaction, but she ultimately yields the floor. (The implications of the officer’s assertion that ‘you haven’t done anything wrong’ are discussed in relation to victim responsibility in Chapter 6.)
PO2’s contribution in line 337 is notable because he has so far been a side participant (Kádár & Haugh 2013) during the account of abuse. His interjection does some transitional work in adjusting the participation framework slightly to position him more centrally as Julia’s addressee, thereby laying the groundwork for PO1’s departure by sustaining the thread of attentiveness. Julia marks the shift by pausing mid-turn and glancing at PO2 when he speaks in line 337, having had her gaze fixed on PO1 so far during this passage, but PO1 nonetheless remains throughout her subsequent extended turn before attempting to leave for a second time (in the below extract). Therefore, when Julia does not orient to PO1’s intended action of going to the car, the officer responds to the misalignment by adjusting her own behaviour. By preserving the narrative space according to the AV’s displayed goal-orientation of continuing her account, PO1 not only facilitates the production of more verbal evidence, but also communicates that Julia’s immediate needs take priority over institutional tasks. The overarching effect is to display respect for Julia’s ownership of the setting by affording her some control over participants’ movement within it.

The officer’s second attempt to depart, shortly afterwards, is successful:

Example 4.2d: Julia

0375 AV   #{cont.} I was like that (.) you were just
0376   On ‘that’, incredulous expression
0377   strangling me on the floor two minutes ago (.) now
0378   you wanna go up to bed#
0379   PO1 "yeah. ridiculous." (.) scuse me a second I’ll go to
0380   the car [and get some statement paper (.) and I’ll
0381   come back and I’ll come back and get a st- (.) to
0382   PO2: ] >"can I have the keys*<
0383   AV [~I’m so sorry I’ve calmed down now I can
0384   actually breathe]
0385   (2.3)
0386   hand on chest
0387   whoo!~
0388   PO1 walks towards kitchen door
0389   PO2 where (.). where exactly...
0390
0391   (speech becomes inaudible as PO1 leaves kitchen)

POI now takes more decisive action by shifting the topic in line 379 back to her intended departure, although she waits until a transition-relevance place to do so and mitigates the shift with an affiliative evaluation of the AP’s behaviour as ‘ridiculous’. (The implications of such affiliations in terms of police impartiality are addressed in Chapters 7 and 8.) This strategy bears some similarity to (4.2b), from Amy’s FRC, in which an officer uses affiliation as a tool to enact a disorienting topic shift, but here the shift is less disorienting because of the groundwork POI
has laid in (4.2c). She further mitigates her departure with the politeness marker ‘scuse me’ in line 379 and an elaborated reiteration of her reason, thereby foregrounding her own accountability for disrupting the space. Julia’s talk in lines 383-4 overlaps much of POI’s accounting, indicating no resistance to the proposed departure, and the apology about her emotional state functions metadiscursively to signal alignment with the shift in focus away from her story, following the conclusion of her description in line 378. The cooperation here demonstrates the value of signposting and transition work in reducing the disruptive and disorienting effect of moving around the AV’s house.

Also emerging from this episode is the correlation between the communicative functions assigned to spaces during FRCs and the officers’ positionings within them. POI’s departure alters the participation framework so that PO2 is now Julia’s sole interlocutor, and he enacts a shift in discourse type from narration to questioning in line 389 that retains a distinction between the two officers’ positions relative to the AV. POI’s position as listener to the story remains intact, while PO2 assumes the position of institutional questioner. In this way, although movements in and out of the narrative space should ideally be avoided, they may be mitigated somewhat by maintaining consistency in officers’ participation positions vis-à-vis the narrative. The timing of disruption is another crucial factor illustrated by the above extracts. POI leaves the narrative space only after Julia has delivered an extensive account of the incident and relationship background, as compared with the maximally disruptive officer departures in the early stages of Amy’s account in (4.2a) and (4.2b).

So far, this section has dealt with disruptions in domestic FRC settings whereby officers move in and out of designated narrative spaces within AVs’ homes. Analysis has shown how this inherently disruptive activity can be managed in such a way as to either override or recognise the AV’s ownership rights within their domain. The following examples, from Neil’s FRC, shift focus to examine speakers’ management of external disruptions which emerge from the semi-public nature of this non-domestic setting. It is morning, and he and one of the attending officers are sitting alone in his barbershop, which is closed for business during the FRC. The below extracts illustrate two occasions on which they are interrupted by an outsider calling in.

*Example 4.2c: Neil*

```
0040  AV  (.){sniffs} I’d say so when she’s like- (.)
0041  cause- (.)} it used t- I’d never been in a
0042  relationship-
0043
0044  (indistinct speech from unseen male calling in the
0045  door)
```
(to unseen person:) *no it’s okay ((first name))
(..) >see you in a bit<*
(to PO1:) (0.5) I’d never been in a relationship
like this so I used to get arrested all the time
because of her (..)

Example 4.2f: Neil

=quarter to eight and what happens.
(3.4) she’s coming in the d- well she’s in the car
pointing (.) and shouting for a [half-]
Knock at door; AV cuts off and cocks head, looks
past PO1’s shoulder to doorway
[is she] with
anybody?=
=no. she’s just stormed in and started screaming
and shouting (.), punching me andند (.), like-
On ‘punch’ punches the air
lashing out (0.4) um (.), she’s come in here-
Knock at door; PO3 calls in, indistinct;
PO1 turns 180 in his seat to face shop door
(PO3 not visible)
(to PO3:) *well they’ll have to wait lovely (.)
I’ll be there now*
Turning back to AV
(6.3)
(smiling) some people eh?
(laughing gently) they can’t get the bus through
(0.5) [I was-]
[e?] (.), you were on the side=
(5.3) er where were we {laughs gently}
(sniffs)
(0.9) y- d- (.), she’s huhh (.), >"alright."< (0.8)
she’s come in (.), she::’s threatened you sh- she’s
(stabbing motion) pointing out the win[dow]
(0.9) y- d- (.), ‘s threatened you sh- she’s
(pointing (.))

Despite the shop being closed, with lights off, the public location invites intrusions which are not only disruptive but also at odds with the private topics being discussed. In both instances above, the people outside (not immediately identifiable from the footage) verbally interrupt Neil mid-turn (lines 42, 78, 86). The first occasion, although brief, foregrounds his ownership of this space, as compared with a police station in which only interruptions by police staff would typically be licensed. Giddens (1984: 135) conceptualises formal institutional settings as ‘containers’ with clear boundaries that shut out day-to-day interaction to generate “disciplinary power”. Example 4.2e illustrates how the permeable boundaries of this moderately structured setting (Jucker et al. 2018) dilute the officer’s control over the interaction. The outsider
addresses only Neil, and it can be deduced from later talk that he has some association with the business and/or the property (as Neil arranges to give him the keys in App.R3 line 544-5). The AV’s authority within the setting is also expressed in his response in line 48, which delineates the timeframe of his present interaction (‘in a bit’) and does not mitigate the disruption by either dismissing the outsider or offering POI an apology or explanation. Instead, Neil manages the exchange with the outsider as a brief insertion sequence, after which he resumes his narrative from the same point. Throughout this, POI displays his attention to their existing participation framework by keeping his body oriented towards Neil instead of the voice that is coming from behind him. The officer’s sustained focus here echoes that of Amy in (T.<a & T.<b) when the officers left her in the kitchen, highlighting the fact that because the present disruption does not stem from the police agenda, POI is positioned along with Neil as being impacted by it.

Unlike the first disruption, the officer in (4.2f) knocks. While this politeness token attends to Neil’s ownership of the space and right to privacy within it, the knock is disruptive not only by interrupting him mid-turn, but also by projecting an extra next turn. The first knock therefore functions as a pre-beginning (Schegloff 1979; Zimmerman 1992) but one that does not identify a next speaker or reveal the purpose of the intrusion. Mondada (2009) found that non-verbal pre-beginnings entail a mutual (re-)orientation of participants’ bodies and gaze, and the first knock here is unsuccessful in eliciting a shift in focus beyond Neil’s brief hesitation in lines 79-80. However, the follow-up knock in line 87 enacts an embodied shift in the police-victim participation framework to accommodate the new participant. POI’s longer exchange with PO3 (who cannot be seen from the BWV’s viewpoint) disrupts the narrative more so than (4.2e) because it triggers a second insertion sequence in lines 94-99, which sustains the shift in topic away from the incident while POI and Neil evaluate the present situation outside. The officer’s assertion in line 90 that ‘they’ll have to wait’ signals that Neil’s account is his priority, and his subsequent silence (line 93) invites its continuation. Yet Neil instead initiates a rapport-oriented exchange (Spencer-Oatey 2000) in which his evaluation in line 99-8 offsets POI’s potential transgression of blocking the road and they collaboratively neutralise POI’s responsibility for the intrusion.

The insertion sequence functions on a relational level to smooth over the face-threatening potential of the disruption, but the drift in focus away from the narrative requires some transitional work to refocus on the task at hand, beginning with POI’s reorienting right in line 99. However, an interactional incongruity has emerged: the levity of the bus-related sequence in lines 94-9 contrasts sharply with Neil’s prior description of the AP’s aggressive behaviour. This tension is expressed in his slight laugh in line 100, which conveys some
awkwardness in resuming his story after the interruption. The explicit attempt at reorientation (‘where were we’) points to the limitations of the narrative space, as borne out when POI gets a detail wrong in his formulation (lines 102-4) of where Neil had left off. The officer’s false starts and exhalation express some frustration in retrieving the information and, indeed, Neil originally said that the AP was pointing into the window from the car (line 78), not pointing out from inside the shop. Nonetheless, he resumes his account in line 105 without correcting POI. Although a minor narrative detail, this transformation of information demonstrates the potential consequences of spatial instability for the quality of the evidence produced. This potential increases in semi-public settings with permeable boundaries creating unpredictability in terms of who participates and when, differentiating them from domestic settings which are typically buffered by privacy conventions. At the other end of the scale is the police station, with strict systems in place to control access, as invoked by POI later (see Ch5.3) to justify moving to the station where they will not be ‘disturbed’ during statement-taking.

Section 4.2 has demonstrated that participants’ management of spatial disruption is consequential in shaping the AV’s narrative, displaying police goal-orientations and assuming freedom of movement within the setting. In each instance, the AV has remained in the narrative space, subject to disruptions caused by others. The next section examines what happens when officers specifically seek to control the AV’s movements within the domain.

### 4.3 Controlling the victim’s movements

This section focuses on data from Amy’s FRC, which is characterised by much more flow of movement than the other FRCs, as there are five officers attending and the AP is now locked in a police van outside. This degree of flow facilitates an evaluation of how officers’ control of the AV’s movements shapes FRC interaction and its outcomes.

In example 4.3a, having already emphasised her concern about the baby upstairs (4.1a), Amy requests permission to check on her. The extract begins with the departure of POI, who has positioned himself as Amy’s addressee up to this point.

*Example 4.3a: Amy*

```
PO1 walks out front door;
PO2 enters kitchen
0073  AV  #er (.) can I go up and check on the [baby?]#
0074  PO2  ["I just
0075  AV  checked on her] she's okay°
0076  AV  #yeah- (.) she's still asleep?#=
```
This is PO2’s first appearance in the kitchen, and Amy’s request indicates that she has interpreted the departure of PO1 as a cue to put her narrative on hold. From this perspective, the kitchen is now a liminal space whose function as the setting for disclosure has been suspended. Amy’s request to check on her child is noteworthy because she has not been instructed to remain in the kitchen or avoid going upstairs and the AP is no longer at large. The AV is standing closer to the stairs than PO2, a spatial configuration that emphasises her presupposition, indexed by the request, that she is not free to move around her house without the officers’ permission. PO2 confirms this presupposition with a subtle refusal embedded in a reassurance, addressing Amy’s concern about the baby’s welfare while dismissing her stated desire to check for herself. The refusal stands in stark contrast to the freedom afforded by different officers in the case of Julia, who went upstairs to change without asking permission (4.1b).

The motivation for PO2’s refusal is implied in her abrupt topic shift to elicit Amy’s narrative in line 79. The contrastive ‘but’ marks the primacy of this activity over checking the baby and combines with the emphasis on ‘happened’ to infuse the question with an insistence that foregrounds the AV’s role-responsibility. This moment foreshadows the ‘responsibility talk’ (Matarese 2015) that will come to the fore later in this interaction when the officers pressurise Amy to fill gaps in their knowledge (see Ch.5.1). The coercive edge in PO2’s question here is problematic because Amy has just been prohibited from producing a free narrative due to POI’s disruptive behaviour (4.2a). Furthermore, the question positions PO2 as Amy’s new audience without any transitional work to signpost this shift following POI’s departure, even though Amy’s request to go upstairs indicates her belief that the narrative is on hold. Nonetheless, she cooperates in line 80 by attempting to return to the start of her narrative for PO2’s benefit. This moment reveals how the officers’ mismanagement of the setting creates knowledge gaps which they address by exerting pressure on the AV, overriding her right to move within her home and her emotional needs and responsibilities as a mother.

Amy later makes a second request to see her child. The extract begins with POI, PO2 and PO3 standing together outside the house, beyond Amy’s earshot:
Example 4.3b: Amy

This brief exchange differs from (4.3a) in that it does not take place within the narrative space, but across the inside-outside divide, whereby Amy is waiting in the house while the officers confer outside. Underscored by the fact that she is alone downstairs, the request displays that she still does not feel she has the autonomy to move around without permission. It is unclear if the cough in line 343 is intended to attract the officers’ attention, but Amy provides no verbal cue and instead waits until they notice her. She has moved to the kitchen doorway near the stairs, in an embodied echo of her desire to check on her child. This time, PO2 grants the request (line 346), reflecting the fact that Amy’s movement no longer hinders the officer’s present activity, which is tied to a different interactional space. PO2 signals the primacy of this participation framework by turning away from Amy mid-turn to face the other officers again, with the effect of dismissing the AV\(^7\). This also reinforces the division by which the outside space is the officers’ realm to conduct aspects of their work from which the AV is excluded (cf. Iedema et al. 2006), namely questioning her claim of assault (see Chapter 5.1). Amy’s two attempts to see her child underscore the officers’ tight control of movement while her home is repurposed as the FRC setting. The officers assumed this authority from the outset (4.1a) when they made it clear that their movements around the house would not be directed by the AV.

Having licensed her to go upstairs, the following example illustrates how Amy is restricted again according to the officers’ evolving goal-orientations. The extract begins as the officers re-enter the house while she is still upstairs.

Example 4.3c: Amy

\(^7\) This effect of downgrading the AV’s emotional needs is later reflected when PO2 tells another officer that “she’s just gone to check on the kid” (4.3c).
They walk to the staircase; PO1 stands at the foot of the stairs with PO2 to his right.

PO2: “Yeah it's a bit hard to (.) like I don't know whether there's been an actual::: "" (3.4)

On 1st pause, PO1 leans to bend his ear towards PO2

PO1: °°there's been any assault°=

AV appears at top of stairs and starts walking slowly down, wiping her face; PO1 straightens up

PO1: hi Amy (.). good news is (.). your: back gate is alright (.). (AV: yep) it's just of- (.)

{gestures} gone off over the (.) latch y'know (.). (3.7) .hh right so- (.)

On ‘right’ AV stops on bottom step; looks at PO1

> I-< sorry to keep asking you to repeat yourself

PO1: but- (.) we need to identify what the correct (AV: "yeah") thing to arrest him for is or if- (AV: "right") if he even needs to be arres[ted but- (0.3)

so-]

PO3 and PO4 enter house during PO1’s turn and stand beside the other POs, audience formation

AV: [well (.) he just- he] come through my back (.) door and

obviously he's kicking screaming and shouting and

obviously the situation (.) ~if it was any other

normal day I wouldn't [let him in~-]

PO1: [so-] he- he's kicked the back gate o[pen (.) wh- where have you been]
and other visual markers of authority contrast strikingly with Amy’s casual clothing and the tears on her face, increasing the sense of exposure. Chapter 5 will focus in more detail on the officers’ coercive interactional behaviour here, but the above passage demonstrates how the spatial configuration works in tandem with their verbal behaviour to restrict the AV both physically and discursively.

Shortly thereafter, this intense pressure is suddenly released when the officers have obtained enough evidence and dissolve (Mondada 2013) the interactional space, filing out of the house:

*Example 4.3d: Amy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0535</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td>and then that’s b-- (.). #like where he’s {points to arm} grabbing me and that# {sniffs} &gt;.hih.hih&lt; hhh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0536</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0537</td>
<td></td>
<td>{sniffs}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0538</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>&gt;&quot;okay&quot;&lt; (.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0539</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td><del>&quot;oh I dunno&quot;</del></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0540</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inspecting her arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0541</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>{to other POs:} &quot;right?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0542</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>(to AV:) right. (.). probably gonna- arrest him for assault (.). (AV: {nods}) will you provide- happy to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0543</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>provide a statement [about what’s] happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0544</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td>(nodding) [{&quot;yeah&quot;}] .hh hhh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0545</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td>Face crumples as crying increases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0546</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>&quot;okay.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0547</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>{to others:} &quot;okay. °</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0548</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>The officers turn and walk away in single file;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The officers’ simultaneous departure symbolises the release of their control over the AV’s space, but their lack of closure compounds her helplessness, as she is suddenly alone and crying on the bottom step. The effect of being left ‘hanging’ is increased by the disconcerting vagueness of *probably* (line 542), again illustrating the mutually determining nature of interactional space and talk. (It should be noted that because the footage ends while the officers are walking towards the police van, we know nothing about their interaction with Amy after this point.) The request to ‘provide a statement’ is also disconcerting because it conveys that the fraught process of describing what happened (e.g. Ch.5.1) is to be continued.

This section has explored a case in which the officers repeatedly exercise their authority to override the AV’s right to move around her home. The next section focuses on another aspect of FRC settings in which speakers exercise control: the diverse material structure of the environment.
4.4 Harnessing the material environment

Goodwin and Goodwin (2004: 227) identify the “material structure of the environment” as influential in shaping participation dynamics between speakers. The present data include several instances in which the structure of the setting is made relevant, primarily when participants appropriate the environment to suit their communicative needs. In the first three examples, from Julia’s FRC, the officers seek to alleviate her distress (and the effect this is having on her ability to speak). The first extract begins just after AV has led the officers into the kitchen and established it as the narrative space.

Example 4.4a: Julia

0050  AV  ~basically* I’m em-- .hihih
0051  AV  Stops in middle of kitchen to catch breath; hand to
0052    chest; steadies herself on baby highchair
0053  PO1  >*take your time*<
0054  AV  Deep breaths, looking down
0055  PO2  >*do you want to have a seat or something? (2.2)
0056    y’okay?*<
0057  PO1  Pulls a stool out from under the counter; AV looks
0058    at it; PO2 turns it to face direction AV is facing
0059  AV  #I never wanted it to get to this (PO1: *mm*) (1.2)
0060  AV  Moving to chair; stands behind it
0061  PO2  On ‘right’ sits in chair, wiping face
0062  AV  On ‘really’ rolls hands in wheeling motion

Example 4.4b: Julia

AV  {cont.}
0108  "*oh god I can’t breathe-**"#
0109  On ‘oh god’ crosses hands over chest, closes eyes,
0110    tilts head back, breathes out loudly
0111  PO1  >*d’you want a glass of water or anything?<
0112  AV    (4.5)
0113  (shakes head) #*I’m fine**#
0114  Same position, head tilted back

Example 4.4c: Julia

0122  AV  #*we split up a few weeks ago .huh (..) he came back
0123  "*oh god I can’t breathe**
0124  On ‘can’t’ puts hand on chest, closes eyes, breathes
0125    deeply; puts head down in hands near lap, sobbing
0126    (5.0)
0127  "*I’m so sorry**-#
0128  PO2  reaches out towards AV, waving hand gently
0129  PO1  ->*that’s al[right< d- don’t apologise]
These instances show how the variable material configurations of FRC settings differentiate them from the controlled environment of formal interviews, including those with arrangements for vulnerable witnesses, in which basic considerations like seating and water are established beforehand. However, the officers’ ad hoc approach here stems from the fact that they have empowered Julia (in 4.1b) with the authority to designate the space and initiate the narrative in her own way. They take a similarly victim-led approach in their efforts to manage the environment to help her speak, while backgrounding their institutional need to hear her account.

This approach is evidenced by how the officers act in response to Julia signalling that she is overwhelmed. Her cues become progressively more explicit in each example, beginning with non-verbal cues in (4.4a) and progressing to complex multimodal gestalts (Mondada 2014) in (4.4b) and (4.4c), which incorporate embodied attempts to compose herself (e.g. lines 124-125) along with verbal and paravocalic expressions of her difficulty breathing (e.g. lines 108-10). Julia thus foregrounds her struggle to speak, culminating with an apology (4.4c line 127) that orients to the officers’ institutional obligations. The officers’ actions attend specifically to the difficulties she displays, offering a seat after she leans on one for support (4.4a); offering water after she says she ‘can’t breathe’ (4.4b and 4.4c); and suggesting she take a break from speaking (4.4c), which addresses both her breathing and her concern about inconveniencing the officers. The latter strategy combines with PO2’s search for a glass to signal the officers’ prioritisation of Julia’s needs over their own.

Furthermore, the officers orient to the AV’s authority within the environment as both resident and narrator. They offer (instead of impose) the seat (4.4a line 55-6) and water (4.4b line III), with de-emphasised speech designed to support the narrative instead of intervening. In both instances, the inclusion of or something/anything acknowledges Julia’s familiarity with the setting and displays that they are guided by her needs. She is thus afforded the agency to control her own environment, as reflected in her refusal of water in (4.4b). Similarly, PO2 takes a staged approach when proffering the stool in (4.4a), responding to Julia’s indecision about sitting down (line 57-8) by positioning it more conveniently instead of pressing her verbally.
Her subsequent action of sitting is accompanied by the transition marker ‘right’, conveying a renewed determination to tell her story. In this instance, therefore, PO2 is successful in appropriating the environmental affordances to their mutual advantage, easing the AV’s distress (albeit briefly) and facilitating the production of evidence.

The officers assert some authority to manage Julia’s escalating distress in (4.4c lines 129-131), with directives to stop speaking, ‘chill out’ and ‘don’t apologise’. However, PO2’s efforts at practical assistance are counter-productive: his query about the water requires Julia to speak and his search in the cupboards prompts her to take matters into her own hands (lines 132-4). The officers’ outsider status within the setting is prominent here, highlighting the intrusiveness inherent to the situation, but their self-positioning as outsiders upholds Julia’s authority and mitigates the disempowering potential of their intrusion (see Ch.7.1). The notion of achieving a ‘suitable’ space for disclosure in FRCs is thus complicated by a tension between the AV’s right to control and the officers’ need to facilitate the production of verbal evidence. Also emerging from the last example is an issue highlighted in vulnerable witness interview guidelines, that the ‘physical context’ can trigger memories of the reported event that can cause victims distress and/or improve their recall (MoJ 2022: 204). This dual potential is realised in (4.4c) when Julia’s lament about the sink, although partially indistinct in the footage, bolsters her narrative by drawing the officers’ (and therefore the camera’s) attention to the damage the AP has caused. At the same time, this moment demonstrates how the material environment is woven into AVs’ experiences of abuse, underscoring officers’ need to manage the setting sensitively.

This issue can be probed further with a contrastive example, from Amy’s FRC, in which an officer takes a very different approach to adapting the narrative space of the kitchen.

**Example 4.4d: Amy**

```
0079 PO2 but what's happened then
0080 AV #well (.) .hh he (.) [his-#]
0081 PO2 [where]'s your light
0082 AV On 'light' switches on overhead light
0083 PO2 #his dad em (.) he found out-
0084 AV °>I'll put this one on cause I swear I'm going to be
0085 blinded now<° [sniffs] (.)
0086 PO2 On 'this' switches wall lights on & overhead off
0087 AV his dad died today (PO2: oh-) today#=
0088 PO2 =what's his name?
```

PO2’s opening turn was observed earlier (4.3a) as a coercive topic shift following the AV’s request to see her child, so the fact that PO2 immediately interrupts again in line 81 is doubly disorienting. The verbal interruption combines with the visually jarring effect of the overhead
light. Until now, the room (including Amy) has been clearly lit by streetlights outside the large window. She has been in the kitchen since the officers’ arrival, indicating that the lighting is to her preference. It is therefore not clear why PO2 switches the light on; she does not indicate any practical motivation such as note-taking. Instead, she signals her intention with a rhetorical question, ‘where’s your light’, which simultaneously indexes her outsider status and her right to nonetheless adjust the conditions to her suiting. There is a corresponding note of challenge in lines 84-6 when Amy makes her discomfort explicit, although she de-emphasises the utterance as if speaking under her breath rather than directing an objection at PO2. Furthermore, by providing an alternative light source, she orients to PO2’s authority to dictate the conditions for hearing her story. In this way, control of the environment reflects and reinforces control of the narrative, as is further evidenced by another interruptive topic shift from PO2 in line 88.

Material features of the setting can also be harnessed by AVs to suit their communicative needs. In the next example, from Neil’s FRC, he incorporates an object into his narrative to support his description of the AP’s behaviour.

**Example 4.4e: Neil**

0105 AV pointing (. ) she’s run across (. ) grabbed em (. )
0106 that- {points} is it alright to touch it
0108 On ‘that’ stands up; steps towards object
0109 PO1 yeah “eh~”
0110 AV (0.3) she’s grabbed that off (0.2) there (. )
0111 On ‘grabbed’ picks it up; sets it beside PO1
0112 throw that at me that’s hit me (. )
0113 On ‘hit’ steps back, gesturing to side of head
0114 PO1 “okay.”
0115 AV (sniffs) she’s gone back that way em (0.7) and
0116 screaming and shouting (. ) {cont.}

This ad hoc demonstration reveals a characteristic of FRC settings that is not typical in formal interviews: access to material evidence. Furthermore, the lack of formal structure allows more freedom to re-enact movements, as shown here when Neil breaks from their speaking formation and transitions into demonstrating mode by moving towards the object, physically echoing the AP running across the room. The embodied description is captured for future audiences because POI’s camera follows his body orientation, in contrast to static police interview recordings. Like Julia’s kitchen sink in (4.4c), this passage highlights the persuasive potential of FRC environments to foster more vivid accounts than uniform institutional settings. Nonetheless, Neil’s request for permission to retrieve his own item in line 107 recognises the limits to his freedom within the setting. By foregrounding the object’s evidential status, Neil acknowledges
the institution’s temporary ownership rights and the related need to observe procedure by not contaminating evidence. POI’s emphatic response in line 109 reassigns Neil the freedom to tell his story in his own way.

Whereas analysis so far has focused on the various ways in which participants are positioned while managing spaces within the setting, the final analysis section narrows the focus within the AV’s realm to the ‘personal’ space immediately surrounding them.

4.5 Entering the victim’s personal space

In two cases in the data, officers perform physical inspections by either visually examining the AV or photographing their injury. Both activities involve encroaching into the AV’s body-buffer zone (Horowitz et al. 1964), the space we need to have free around us to feel comfortable. Discussion in this section distinguishes between, in Hall’s (1966) terms, personal space (within 120cm of the body) and intimate space (within 45cm). The ABE guidelines for vulnerable witness interviews highlight the sensitivities around entering their ‘personal bubble’, warning that “an invasion of a person’s personal space, especially by a stranger, can be emotionally disturbing” (MoJ 2022: 205-6). This vulnerability is also recognised in a medical context by the NHS chaperone policy for intimate examinations (General Medical Council 2022). However, first response officers must document any evidence of physical harm as soon as possible at the scene (CoP 2022), requiring a more ad hoc approach than in institutional settings.

The first half of this section focuses on Amy’s FRC, in which the officers inspect her for injuries following her introduction of the topic during a narrative turn:

Example 4.5a: Amy

0164 AV [like] he’s in my face like
0165  >.hih.hih< screaming in my face grabbing me like (.)
0166  On ‘grabbing’ claws at face with hands
0167  if you wanna see any marks now I mean from [when he–#]
0168
0169  On ‘marks’ holds out left arm and swivels it slowly
0170  PO1 [can I]
0171  have] a look?
0172   (16.3)
0173  AV moves towards PO1 and holds up arms for
0174  inspection; both PO1 and PO2 shine torches on her
0175  face and arms; she turns face away from the light
0176  AV (sniffs) (3.7) #he’s like gr(h)abbing me everywhere
0177  Gesturing to lower face and neck
0178  >and you always know in my face and my (.). arms–<#=
In response to PO2’s request for detail about the AP’s behaviour, Amy initiates the inspection with a verbal cue (line 167) and a display of checking the relevant areas, in an embodied invitation for the officers to examine her. She continues to facilitate the activity by manoeuvring her arms and then her head in lines 173-89 according to PO1’s focus. Nonetheless, PO1 acknowledges the invasion of her intimate space and displays his efforts to complete the task as unobtrusively as possible. His quieter tone throughout this sequence contrasts with the officers’ insistent questioning throughout this FRC (see Ch.5.1) and he twice asks Amy’s permission to have a look (lines 171 & 179), although ‘please’ is notably absent in both instances. His specificity about moving her hair displays PO1’s awareness of the AV’s potential sensitivity to touch, and he touches her only briefly in line 186. This degree of delicacy is particularly appropriate considering Amy’s descriptions (lines 165-6; 176-8) of the AP grabbing her head, neck and arms. Nonetheless, the proximal intimacy of the inspection creates a temporary participation framework which excludes PO2, who becomes a side participant. Yet as the female officer, PO2 would be the more appropriate choice for a task that invades the AV’s intimate space. FRC guidelines address this issue in relation to injury photographs, for which “the victim’s preference for the gender of the person taking photographs should be respected” (Injury Photos, CoP 2022), but here Amy is given no choice.

In contrast to POI’s gentle approach to the haptic aspects of the inspection, the officers’ sudden direction of torchlight at Amy’s head in line 174 has a strikingly intrusive effect in the dimly lit kitchen, particularly as POI moves closer to her. Amy’s head movement in line 175 makes her discomfort explicit and contrasts with her cooperation in other aspects of the inspection. This reaction recalls her earlier explanation to PO2 that she would be ‘blinded’ by the overhead kitchen light (4.4d), reiterating her sensitivity in this regard. Yet the officers do not mitigate the torchlight intrusion by explaining their need for better light or requesting...
permission to shine it in her face. The contrastive management of touch and torchlight corresponds with the officers’ prioritisation of the tangible over intangible aspects of Amy’s experience, in line with their ongoing quest for clearer evidence of assault (e.g. Ch.5.1). The AV’s needs are thereby decontextualised according to what the officers have derived from training, instead of responding to her expressed needs in the moment (cf. Heffer 2005).

POI does mitigate the use of torchlight when he briefly resumes the inspection a few minutes later:

*Example 4.5b: Amy*

0233 AV  [[-no I think- (.) no]] (PO1: okay) he's- (.) cause
0234 he's off his head (.) (PO1: "yeah") on drugs he-'s
0235 thinks [there's somebody here-]
0236 On 'thinks’ PO1 shines torch directly at AV’s face
0237 PO1 [I- actually thinking] about it you may have
0238 just a mark j- just (.) there (.) (AV: ~uh huh~) I'm
0239 On 'there' shines torch on AV's forehead area
0240 trying not to shine the torch in your uh in your eye
0241 On 'trying' AV moves closer to him;
0242 PO2 moves closer to AV and shines torch at forehead
0243 AV (sniffs) ~oh sorry yeah I'm probably covered in
0244 [crap~]
0245 Angling eye area towards the torches
0246 PO1 [have] you- have you bumped (.) b'there? y-know (.)
0247 b'there? at all? or is it just-=
0248 On 'there' gestures to own face; AV looks into
0249 PO1 torchlight at his face
0250 AV ==I dunno "sorry"=-
0251 PO1 =it might just be- obviously y- you're sweating (AV:
0252 ~yeah (.)) @yeah@~ and you're teary it @might just-@
0253 (.) >might just be that.<=
0254 PO1 and PO2 turn off torches; all step back slightly
0255 to original formation
0256 PO2 =[^3 (2 syllables)*]
0257 AV [{coughs}]
0258 (5.2)
0259 PO1 you're saying he- he's [grabbed-] grabbed you (1.3)
0260 is that just- (0.9) [in- in what sort of context]
0261 On ‘context’ holds hands out palms up

With this second inspection, the officers advance further into the AV’s intimate space to focus on her eye area, which also involves shining the torches directly at her again. Although her rapid blinking suggests discomfort, Amy continues to cooperate by moving closer and angling her forehead to facilitate the activity. This time PO1 acknowledges the intrusion (line 240), although his subsequent question in lines 246-7 requires Amy to look at his face and therefore turn her gaze into the light. The officer’s claim that he is ‘trying not to’ shine the torch in her
eye deflects responsibility for the intrusion by framing it as an unavoidable task that he is trying to manage sensitively.

Interestingly, the physical proximity engenders a moment of rapport that is singular in this FRC. POI assumes a relational footing with his accounting in line 240 (‘trying not to’) and Amy reciprocates with an apology (lines 243-4) that displays her continuing orientation to the officers’ needs. Her use of slang to characterise the visible manifestations of distress (tears and eye makeup) on her face as ‘crap’ breaks frame and defuses the solemnity with which POI has conducted the inspection so far. The note of levity sets up the mutual orientation to humour in lines 251-3 which further mitigates the invasiveness of the activity. The fact that Amy has drawn attention to the ‘crap’ on her face licenses POI to cite her sweat and tears as ‘obviously’ a hindrance without the degree of face-threat this would otherwise entail. The laughter particles punctuating her agreement in line 252 frame the issue as a laughable, and POI takes this up with echoing particles in the same line as he closes off the activity (cf. Jefferson 1979).

The physical inspection in (4.5b) entails a series of face-threatening actions, beginning with POI’s interruption in line 237 and culminating in his inability to determine the presence of bruising due to the matter on the AV’s face. The participants cooperate in constructing a moment of rapport which provides some relief from the awkwardness of the situation, conveying the officer’s awareness of Amy’s potential sensitivities and her alignment with his efforts in this regard (see Maynard & Hudak 2008). This moment is striking because the wider interaction is devoid of such attention to relational work and rapport, despite the AV’s evident distress from start to finish (see App.R1). As a result, the physical inspection is singled out as the activity requiring the most sensitivity, again reflecting the overriding police prioritisation of physical violence over other forms of abuse. Correspondingly, the officers’ respect for Amy’s body space is at odds with their careless treatment of her wider domain.

Nonetheless, in both extracts above, the physical inspection disrupts the narrative. The activity is framed both times as an insertion sequence stemming from Amy’s account of the AP’s behaviour in (4.5a), but the spatial reconfiguration and primacy of action over talk shift the focus away from her story to a greater degree than would a verbal insertion sequence. In this context, however, the disruption seems unavoidable; Amy’s invitation to inspect her (4.5a line 167) creates an opportunity for the officers to document vital physical evidence in a way that gives her some control over the inherently invasive process. This practical consideration brings to the fore the ‘competing demands’ (CoP 2022) faced by first response officers, in that the shift to gathering physical evidence in both examples obscures the verbal evidence that is being produced.
In the first place (4.5a), when Amy introduces the topic of violence in lines 165-7, POI homes in on the opportunity and interrupts before she can finish specifying what the AP did to cause the marks (‘from when he—’). Yet later in the interaction, this detail is central to the officers’ increasingly coercive questioning (see Ch.5.1). Later in the extract, Amy produces more new information (lines 178), using continuous present tense and generic ‘you’ to depict an ongoing pattern of violence. (Familiarity with injury is also implied in her later characterisation of the physical marks as ‘nothing major’.) Neither officer acknowledges this information and POI again interrupts (line 179) with a question that refocuses Amy’s attention on the immediate inspection activity. While she persists in line 188 with an account of her thought process during the attack, POI’s overlapping ‘alright’ marks the end of the inspection and displays his inattention to what she is saying. The assessment that she is ‘alright’ is incongruous following her prior depiction of panic, again displaying a lack of sensitivity to the non-physical aspects of her experience. Yet the connection between the AP’s history of violence and Amy’s fear of him on this occasion will prove evidently salient later, when the officers shift their focus from assault to threat, with questions like ‘did you feel that ... he was gunna hurt you’ (App.RI lines 398-400). The officers’ practical need to examine the AV in (4.5a) obscures freely produced information that she will later have to reiterate under pressure, revealing the delicate relationship between managing interactional space, sustaining attentiveness, and producing a coherent account.

The second inspection sequence (4.5b) reinstates the spatial configuration of the first, with the same disruptive effect. As POI interrupts Amy in line 237 with an abrupt topic shift back to the potential for physical evidence, he simultaneously raises his torch and shines it in her face without warning. In Section 4.2 we noted the disruptive and disorienting effect of sudden departures from the narrative space and, in a deictic reversal, (4.5b) illustrates the reinforcement of verbal interruption with a sudden physical intrusion into Amy’s personal space, exacerbated by the bright light in her face. In both these scenarios, the disruptiveness of the police action correlates with the diversion of their attention away from what the AV is saying. Cumulatively, such disruptions foster an atmosphere of instability and unpredictability for the AV within the interactional space. In contrast to the previous inspection, during which Amy attempted to interject some narrative elements, in (4.5b) she aligns more fully with POI’s shift in focus and suspends her account while he performs the task at hand. When the end of this sequence is signalled by POI’s falling tone in line 253-4 and the participants’ corresponding step backwards, Amy does not resume her narrative until prompted. However, POI’s formulation in line 259 does not pick up where she left off in line 235, but redirects the narrative
to the topic of grabbing, again reinforcing the primacy of physical violence. The examples from Amy’s FRC therefore show that no matter how sensitively it is managed, the task of physical inspection creates a potentially disorienting clash of activity types within the interactional space that has been established for the AV’s disclosure.

The remainder of this section focuses on Neil’s FRC, in which the officer enters the AV’s personal space by taking an injury photograph, followed by a brief inspection. The first two extracts below show how the photograph activity is set up in advance. By this stage, Neil has already given his initial account of the incident (App.R3). The first extract begins as POI has just established the need to take Neil’s statement.

**Example 4.5c: Neil**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>PO1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0228</td>
<td>&quot;worry about it I just want it sorted&quot;</td>
<td>=&quot;alright then&quot; you’ve got a slight cut to your face (AV: yeah) (. ) I’m just going to take a quick photograph of that (AV: yeah) (. ) alright? you happy for me to do that?=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0235</td>
<td>=&gt;yeah yeah&lt;</td>
<td>I’ve had to record this because it’s a domestic incident we relate it to (AV: &gt;yeah yeah&lt;) (. ) alright? and that’s what we’ll be dealing with . hh just- one or two questions y- where’s your doctor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example 4.5d: Neil**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>PO1</th>
<th>AV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0287</td>
<td>righto. I’ll take a photograph of that injury (. )</td>
<td>&gt;yeah yeah&lt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these extracts, POI raises (4.5c) and revisits (4.5d) the topic of the upcoming photograph before shifting to different topics, thereby laying the groundwork for the new activity. The officer’s deliberateness here reflects FRC guidelines, which emphasise the importance of obtaining both injury photographs and the victims’ consent to do so (CoP 2022). In the first
instance (4.5c line 230), POI’s transitional marker with falling tone clearly demarcates the prior topic of the statement from the new topic of the photograph. He then produces a specific description of what he intends to do, minimising the negative face imposition with ‘quick’ and topicalising the injury in lines 230-2 as the motivation for the action proposed in the next line. The officer thus frames the photographic activity as supportive of Neil’s complaint against the AP. POI’s orientation to the AV’s emotional needs in lines 233-4 (‘happy’) acknowledges the invasiveness of the activity. This relational work also mitigates the coercive means of obtaining consent, with a tagged declarative statement of intent followed up with a polar request for confirmation (Newbury & Johnson 2006). Having successfully set up the activity, POI shifts topic to the BWV recording, with the lack of transitional marker creating the effect of subsuming the photograph within his wider institutional duties.

The officer employs similar strategies in (4.2d) to prepare the AV for the photograph, now incorporating non-verbal cues to progress his aim. With the transitional marker ‘righto’ in line 287, POI shifts position to orient his body more directly towards Neil, pre-empting the change in formation that will be required for the photograph. Similarly, his action of standing up combines with a final confirmation check in line 289-91 to steer the interaction in the desired direction. However, the officer eases the transition by initiating an insertion sequence which draws the focus back to Neil’s needs, marking his wellbeing as a priority with the contrastive ‘though’ (line 291-2). The shift here from institutional ‘we’ to the emphatic ‘you’ displays POI’s continued attentiveness as he reconfigures the interactional space to accommodate the new task. Although Neil signals his cooperation using nods and affirmative responses, he remains seated, indicating that he has not yet aligned with POI’s embodied transition into the photograph activity, in which talk will be secondary to action. Therefore, despite the care with which POI signposts the upcoming shift, Neil is afforded a degree of control over how and when it unfolds. The resulting effect of a ‘long run up’ to entering the AV’s personal space contrasts sharply with the disruptive effect of the inspections in (4.5a) and (4.5b). A comparison of the two FRCs also raises the question of the potential influence of AV gender on officers’ approach to such invasive activities (see also Ch.7.3).

Shortly afterwards, POI and Neil complete the photograph along with a further, brief physical inspection. We rejoin the transcript with POI still standing in preparation to take the photograph (as per 4.5d) and Neil continuing to elaborate on his response to the officer’s query about his wellbeing (‘you alright though?’).
Example 4.5: Neil

0308 AV  =responsibility to them like I’ve only just taken
0309 AV this over y’know?
0310 PO1  On ‘only’ PO1 starts tapping on phone continuously
0311 AV  ah (0.7) >well< that’s the last thing you want is
0312 AV  =that (AV: ‘yeah’ to be im- impacted isnit (AV:
0313 AV  yeah) so- (0.9) "okay." (6.3) okay.
0314 PO1  On ‘okay’ opens camera app on phone; steps back
0315 AV  thinking you should stand up
0316 AV raises phone slightly
0317 AV  yeah sure
0318 AV  Getting up quickly; stands in front of PO1 facing
0319 PO1  (4.1) what we’ll do we’re over in the light
0320 PO1  On ‘light’ points to window, moving sideways to
0321 PO1  face centre of room with side to window
0322 AV  here if you see- (.) that’s it
0323 PO1  On ‘here’ AV turns sideways, facing window; PO1
0324 PO1  points to ceiling; AV tilts head to side slightly
0325 AV  and closes eyes. A large cut is visible on his
0326 PO1  cheek
0327 AV  (.) perfect
0328 AV  (11.5) {loud camera click}
0329 PO1  PO1 holds up camera with both hands; AV stands
0329 AV  very still
0330 AV  (14.2) {loud camera click}
0331 PO1  PO1 moves around to face AV for different angle
0332 PO1  it’s only a tiny scratch I’ll show you it on the
0333 PO1  photograph
0334 AV  On ‘scratch’ moves phone closer to the cut
0335 PO1  (8.0) {loud camera click}
0336 AV  “okay.”
0337 AV  On ‘okay’ AV relaxes from ‘photo’ stance; both
0338 PO1  huddle over PO1’s phone screen for viewing.
0339 PO1  (PO2 is now visible, standing just inside doorway)
0340 AV  “yeah”=
0341 PO1  =there’s not much to it (AV: “yeah it’s-“) (.)
0342 PO1  =it’s a scratch (.) (AV: “yeah it’s-“) got no other
0343 PO1  injuries (.) on you?=
0344 AV  =no don’t think so=
0345 PO1  Holding out hands briefly to check
0346 PO1  =okay. d’you wanna have a- have a check! (.)
0347 PO1  AV exaggeratedly pats torso and shakes head,
0348 AV  smiling
0349 PO1  [(laughs) (.) @aw okay@]
0350 AV  [@yeah naw no I’m sound!]@
0351 PO1  AV returns to original sitting position; PO1 stays
0352 PO1  standing, turning to face AV as he sits
0353 PO1  okay. (2.1) ahm (1.8) what we’ll do >now< we’ll
0354 PO1  have a- quick look around to make sure she’s not
0355 PO1  in the area=

The passage begins as the AV, still seated while PO1 is standing, continues to describe some troubles in response to PO1’s prior enquiry about his wellbeing, sustaining the narrative function of the interactional space. PO1’s evident focus on preparing his phone to take the photograph while Neil speaks (lines 308-10) perpetuates the slight misalignment that
originated in (4.5d) whereby they are orienting to different activities. Despite POI’s expression of affiliation in lines 310-1, his split attention progresses the objective of taking the photograph by signalling the withdrawal of his attention away from Neil and towards the practicalities of the task. This sequence brings to light the complexities of managing different activities within the same space during FRCs, as compared with a police station with separate rooms for the collection of verbal and physical evidence.

When POI’s embodied effort to move things along is unsuccessful, he applies more pressure to draw Neil out of narrative mode in line 312-5. The officer does so non-verbally, by putting more distance between them to facilitate the photograph, while the repeated completion markers in line 312 hold the floor as he finishes preparing his phone. The subsequent directive to stand is softened by the singular first-person epistemic marker ‘thinking’, which foregrounds POI’s expertise and personal motivation to secure further evidence to support the AV’s version of events (see Ch.7.2). At this point, action assumes primacy over talk, as POI begins the activity by raising his phone and then directs Neil’s movements with deictic gesturing in lines 322-32. Neil displays cooperation by standing up quickly, positioning himself as requested and standing still. The extended silences during this sequence contrast with the flow of talk between them so far (see App.R3), but POI involves Neil in the activity with the positive appraisal ‘perfect’ (line 327) and characterisation of the injury (line 333-4). As with the ‘crap’ on Amy’s face in (4.5b), the verbal interjections here do relational work by diffusing the potential awkwardness of the silence and camera clicks. Both participants, therefore, collaborate in temporarily repurposing the interactional space for the collection of visual instead of verbal evidence. POI’s completion marker in line 337 prompts Neil to immediately relax his body from his rigid pose, displaying his alignment with the officer’s transition out of the photograph activity.

Whereas in Amy’s FRC, the physical inspection reduced the participation framework according to the proximal intimacy between participants, here the participation structure expands to include potential future viewers of the photograph. POI’s efforts to manoeuvre Neil’s head according to visibility in the camera frame amount to what Rock (2017) terms the frontstage entextualisation of evidence. This process displays the officer’s preservation of visual evidence and thus foregrounds the overarching influence of institutional procedure (and its associated actors) to direct movement within the AV’s realm during the FRC. In this way, the visual modality of evidence photographs constitutes a clear manifestation of the institutional

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8 In his sitting position on a fixed bench seat, Neil’s facial injury is in shadow and he cannot turn his face towards the light or turn his body without standing.
encroachment into the private sphere. Less clear is the preservation of visual evidence via the omnipresent BWV camera, which is framed in police guidelines as a frontstage ‘overt recording device’ (CoP 2014a: 5), but which officers can nonetheless choose to foreground or background discursively during FRCs (see further Ch.7.1).

POI’s management of the photograph activity so far has demonstrated some ways in which the intrusion of entering an AV’s personal space can be mitigated. Furthermore, by facilitating a joint viewing of the photograph (4.5e lines 333-4; 338-43), the officer includes Neil in the process of entextualising evidence and reduces the epistemic gradient by giving him access to what future viewers will see. This embodied display of collaboration goes some way towards bridging the gap between the private and institutional realms. As with ‘thinking’ earlier, the informality of POI’s assessment that it is ‘only a tiny scratch’ personalises his engagement with the evidence and backgrounds the official categorisation process it will undergo (beginning with the officer’s report). The information-sharing formation entailed by the joint viewing (Tong et al. 2016) indexes their collaboration and provides relief from the objectification of the AV within the prior photography formation. POI thereby deemphasises the institutional nature of the evidence collection process, as is borne out in his subsequent proposal (line 343-4) that Neil check himself for further injuries.

Unlike the photograph, the inspection is not set up in advance and instead emerges from the topic of the facial injury. However, the levity with which the AV treats the self-inspection in lines 348-51 reflects the freedom he is afforded by the officer in this regard. As with Amy’s inspection in (4.5b), the exchange of laughter here offsets the awkwardness of their prolonged focus on Neil’s body. However, a comparison between the two cases reveals a crucial difference in the source of laughter:

*From example 4.5b (Amy)*

```
0251 POI =it might just be- obviously y- you're sweating (AV: 
0252 ~yeah (.)) @yeah~ and you're teary it @might just-@
0253 (.) >might just be that.<=
```

*From example 4.5e (Neil)*

```
0347 POI =okay. d’you wanna have a- have a check! (.)
0348 AV exaggeratedly pats torso and shakes head, 
0349 smiling
0350 [{laughs} (.)] @aw okay@]
0351 AV [@yeah naw no I’m sound!]`
```
Whereas in (4.5b), Amy treated the officer’s comment on her streaked face as laughable and reacted accordingly, in (4.5e) it is Neil who produces the laughable, with a pantomime that derives humour from POI’s suggestion to ‘have a check’. POI does not treat this as a transgression, instead joining in with laughter particles in line 350 which emphasise his acceptance (‘aw okay’) of Neil’s mock assessment. Glenn (2010: 1497) observes that the “move to bring participants together through shared laughter may also be a move that marks asymmetry” and that this asymmetry inheres in the direction of the laughter either “at or with an interlocutor”. Amy’s direction of laughter towards herself in (4.5b) defuses the tense situation but does so at her own expense, amplifying the objectification of the physical inspection. While the officer’s responding laughter in line 252 further relieves the tension, he could have combined this with reassurance instead of continuing his evaluation of her face. A reassurance would counter the self-deprecation underpinning Amy’s laugh by validating her right to freely express emotion and, by extension, would acknowledge the emotional impact of the AP’s behaviour. By contrast, in (4.5e) Neil directs his laughter towards POI’s suggestion, in line with the negotiation of spatial control that has characterised the photograph activity. Participants’ organisation of laughter during these sequences therefore reflects their “ongoing understandings of the constraints and obligations of their roles” (Glenn 2010: 1497).

The demarcation of the photograph from their prior talk necessitates a transition out of the activity in (4.5e). POI does so by signalling his intention to depart, remaining standing while Neil sits back down and reverting from laughing to normal voice for the completion marker in line 354. The preparation evident in (4.5c) and (4.5d) indicate that POI planned the photograph as a final on-site task prior to departing, a sequential positioning that causes minimal disruption to the AV’s narrative. The relative disruptiveness of Amy’s physical inspection in the first half of this section and Neil’s photograph in the second recalls Ten Have’s (1989) ‘ideal sequence’ of medical encounters, wherein physical examination comes after the verbal complaint and before diagnosis. However, as acknowledged earlier, in Amy’s FRC the officers took advantage of an appropriate opportunity to collect physical evidence, demonstrating how the ad hoc nature of FRCs necessitates some spatially incompatible activities.

Finally, as observed earlier in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, the dynamic nature of FRC settings affords (some) parties more freedom of movement within the AV’s domain. During (4.5e), POI’s shifting positions reveal another officer standing inside the doorframe at the other side of the room. It is not clear from the footage when this officer appeared, although he was not visible earlier when POI turned to face the doorway briefly (4.2f). The external doorway in which the officer now stands would be in Neil’s line of vision from his seated position in their narrative
formation. Therefore, in an interesting parallel to the role of the body camera, this officer is a silent yet ratified ‘listener-in’ (Kádár & Haugh 2013) during their interaction. Whereas the multiparty dynamic in Amy’s FRC creates spatial reconfigurations which disrupt her narrative (e.g. 4.2a and 4.2b), the silent presence of this officer in Neil’s shop brings to light the highly restricted view available to future audiences who may evaluate the situation based on selected portions of the BWV footage. Any nuances of participation which are not captured on camera cannot be taken into consideration in terms of their potential influence on victims’ narratives.

4.6 Synthesis: Positioning in setting and space

Jucker and colleagues (2018: 86) conceptualise space as “an interactive and performative achievement rather than a contextual given”. This chapter has unpacked the discursive behaviour at the micro-level of interaction to demonstrate that in the process of appropriating the AV’s realm and its spaces, participants are positioned in various ways in relation to each other, the setting itself, and the overarching storylines of the reported abuse and investigation. These discourse practices are consolidated in this section, to inform Chapter 7’s critical interpretation of the role of the setting and its spaces in constituting power relations during FRCs.

Analysis in this chapter first explored two contrastive scenarios in which officers entered the AV’s home. Managing the point of entry and designating the narrative space established participants’ positions of control within the domain. In Amy’s FRC, the officers assumed authority from the outset. In a process of embodied reflexive positioning, they used verbal and non-verbal means of resistance and control to override the AV’s attempts to direct their movement. Their entry repositioned her home as the temporary setting for institutional action, as confirmed when the officer manoeuvred her into a narrative space chosen by him. This forced repositioning removed Amy from involvement in the action of protecting her child, and assigned her the task of narration, in which she is a storyworld character. This is the only FRC in the data in which the AP is still on site when the officers arrive, so it illustrates the point at which they realise their reflexive positioning as Amy’s protectors, as projected by her emergency call. However, analysis found that the officers enforced these repositioning processes in ways that backgrounded Amy’s displayed emotional needs.

By contrast, in Julia’s FRC, the officers oriented to her ownership rights within the setting from the point of entry, upon which she dictates their movement and designates the narrative space. This positioning of authority vis-à-vis the space correlated with the AV’s freedom in initiating the narrative. Nonetheless, her sense of control was offset to an extent by
the inherent invasiveness of the officers’ entry, as indexed by her efforts to demarcate certain spaces as off-limits. The two private homes in the data are therefore positioned differently according to the officers’ approach to entering them, with one assuming a wholly institutional function and the other compartmented. Although it must be acknowledged that the police goal-orientations differ in the two cases according to urgency, the relative control afforded to AVs in this opening stage establishes a more or less empowered position from which to begin their narrative.

The second analysis section demonstrated that the management of spatial disruption is consequential in positioning participants in relation to the AV’s narrative, police goal-orientations and authority within the setting. When officers depart the narrative space, the AV’s lived experience is overridden by more pressing police objectives, which in Amy’s FRC involved repeatedly centralising the AP’s position. In this way, disruptions position the officers as the AV’s audience in ways that display varying degrees of engagement. In Julia’s and Neil’s FRCs, the officers mitigated disruptions with relational and transitional work to sustain the thread of attentiveness on the AV. These episodes nonetheless revealed interactional difficulties created by the ad hoc appropriation of FRC spaces, exacerbated by officers’ lack of preparation (Julia) and the potential for external disturbances (Neil). The permeable boundaries of FRC settings therefore position them as unstable and potentially disorienting spaces for disclosure. An interesting comparison emerging from the data is the differential positioning of officers attending FRCs in private versus semi-public settings. Neil’s FRC highlighted the increased potential for the police agenda to be impacted by unforeseen disruptions in semi-public settings, as compared with private settings in which officers have more control and disruption impacts only the AV.

The third section focused on one case in which the officers repeatedly restricted an AV’s freedom of movement around her home. The officers’ restriction of Amy contrasted with their own freedom of movement, cementing their relative positions of authority and the primacy of institutional objectives over the AV’s emotional needs. These instances amounted to the most coercive instances of spatial control in the data, compounding the vulnerability of someone who has just reportedly been attacked in the same setting. Underpinning this effect is the differential positioning of the setting from police and AV perspectives. As observed earlier, when the officers assumed control at their point of entry, from their perspective the position of the house in the storyworld of the reported incident merged into its present position as the FRC setting. By restricting Amy’s movements, the officers fail to acknowledge the inextricable link between the space and her reported experience of abuse.
Analysis in the fourth section examined ways in which both police and AVs sought to appropriate the diverse material structure of the setting. In managing these junctures, participants were positioned in relation to ownership of the space and to institutional goals. Examples variously demonstrated instances in which officers assigned the AV control (Julia), the AV relinquished control (Amy), and control was negotiated (Neil). In each case, environmental control correlated with discursive control, with the participants who were positioned in charge of the narrative also afforded the freedom to adapt conditions to their suiting. Analysis also illustrated how AVs can incorporate environmental features to enrich their account, although the potential to evoke distressing memories again highlights the conflict inherent in the setting’s dual association with abuse and disclosure.

The final analysis section narrowed the focus to officers’ advancement into AVs’ ‘bubble’ of personal space (ABE 2022: 205) to inspect and photograph injuries. Both these activities place the AV in an exposed position as a ‘body of evidence’. Whereas the physical inspection brought the officer into Amy’s intimate space, the photograph had the objectifying effect of foregrounding Neil’s position relative to future viewers of the photograph. In both cases, the officers displayed awareness of the AV’s potential sensitivity to proximity and touch and mitigated this with interactional work to assign the AV a sense of control. In Amy’s FRC, the officers’ delicacy with her body space contrasted with their disruptive treatment of her wider domain and her narrative – a contrast that presents implications for police training (see Ch.8). Finally, it was found that the action-focused activities of inspection and photography involved reconfiguring the interactional space in a way that was maximally disruptive to talk. The sequencing of such activities therefore establishes the status of the AV’s verbal evidence relative to the officers’ quest for physical evidence.

This first analysis chapter has indicated various ways in which participants’ (re)positionings within the setting and its spaces intersect with power, as will be discussed in full in Chapter 7. As such, the overarching influence of setting and space will continue to be evident throughout the remaining analysis chapters. Emerging from this chapter is the fact that officers’ variable approaches to spatial dynamics index their professional experience and know-how. The relationship between positioning and police expertise now comes to the fore as the focus of the next analytic strand.
Chapter 5: Positioning and police expertise-in-interaction

This chapter explores how officers’ strategies for accomplishing their objectives exhibit their expertise by “showing knowing how to do things” in interaction (Arminen & Simonen 2021: 592). As established in Chapter 2, expertise inheres in excellence in practice, which entails specialist knowledge and professional judgement accumulated over time. By calling the emergency number, each alleged victim (AV) in the data has made an explicit appeal to police expertise. During police first response call-outs (FRCs), therefore, the AVs are pre-positioned as having the know-that about the reported incident and police officers as having the know-how to help (Ryle 1949). At the same time, these participants are split according to their expert status, creating gradients of knowledge and expertise that are mutually determining. The two strands of expertise-in-interaction comprise that which is ascribed by institutional status and that which is achieved through the performance of actions. First response officers’ (displayed) ability to carry out their “complex and sensitive” professional responsibilities (HMIC 2014: 11) shapes not only local power relations but also domestic abuse (DA) victims’ ongoing perceptions of police legitimacy and confidence in the criminal justice process (e.g. Lagdon et al. 2015). Therefore, to serve the ultimate aim of evaluating how the construction of police expertise during FRCs constitutes power relations, this chapter addresses the question: In what ways are participants positioned through officers’ expertise-in-interaction?

Central to this analytic focus is the concept of task positioning, defined by Hirvonen (2016: 12) as “positioning the joint aims and ways of working together”. Officers’ task positioning is considered in terms of the distinction between institutional, professional and personal modes of interaction (Sarangi & Roberts 1999), and how these positionings contribute to the construction of expertise. Analysis encompasses instances in which participants orient to expertise either implicitly or explicitly, including AVs’ acquiescence or resistance to officers’ self-positioning in the performance of tasks, and instances in which officers’ know-how ‘surfaces’ in interaction (Arminen & Simonen 2021: 580). The three FRCs in the data include a variety of tasks, and this chapter centres on those which participants select for sustained interactional focus in each case. The first and longest section explores officers’ approaches to a difficult diagnosis, defined by Agar (1985: 149) as “that part of the discourse where the institutional representative fits the client’s ways of talking about the encounter to ways that fit the institution’s”. From this policing problem, the second section shifts focus to examine the officer’s approach to resolving two problems raised by the AV during the FRC. The third and final analysis section centres on how officers progress the interaction towards the formal activity
of statement-taking. It will become clear that there are stark differences between the officers’ approaches across chapter sections. It is therefore important to establish from the outset that this chapter’s aim is not to identify instances of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ practice, but rather to yield insights in relation to police positioning and expertise that inform our wider understanding of FRC discourse.

5.1 Pursuing a difficult diagnosis

As established in Chapter 1, first response officers are trained to identify if a crime has been committed according to the National Decision Model, by which “decision makers … structure a rationale of what they did during an incident and why” (Application, CoP 2014b). This section examines police positioning and expertise in their performance of a task that is central to their ‘decision-making storyline’ (Hirvonen 2016: 6). Focusing on Amy’s FRC, analysis centres on the issue of the alleged perpetrator (AP) grabbing her, which could constitute an assault offence (see App.II) but which represents an evidential “sticking point … that needs to be revisited and clarified” (Benneworth-Gray 2014: 265). Analysis traces the trajectory of the officers’ approach through a succession of strategies, beginning with their first question on the topic in the below extract. PO1’s opening question cites Amy’s earlier descriptions (Ex.4.5a & 4.5b) of the AP, her ex-partner, “screaming in [her] face” while grabbing her, and grabbing her “everywhere”.

Example 5.1a: Amy

0259  PO1  you’re saying he- he's [grabbed-] grabbed you (1.3)
0260    is that just- (0.9) [in- in what sort of context]  
0261    On ‘context’ holds hands out palms up  
0262    [-but-]  
0263    [well he's not- he's not- (0.4)]  
0264    he's not being normal he's just running in here he's  
0265    running out there saying- he's running out the back  
0266    garden saying >.hih.hih< {aggressive:} #I can .hh  
0267    h(h)ear you come down- (.) he thinks there's people  
0268    out there it's cause he's (.) obviously taken  
0269    something (.) (PO2: yeah) and he-#  
0270  PO1  =yeah he- he has and- yeah you can tell by looking  
0271    at him (.) "okay." (1.0) so (.) in the absence then  
0272    of him (0.3) grabbing you pushing you (.) or  
0273    otherwise assaulting you (1.1) sounds like it's (.)  
0274    a case of removing him from the property to prevent  
0275    the breach of peace.=  
0276  AV   =yeah he's (0.2) [#can't] come back here#  
0277    [.hih huhhh]  
0278    Wiping nose and eyes vigorously  
0279  PO1  =he definite- definitely hasn't hurt you or- or (.)  
0280    put his hands on you in a way [(.) to-]  
0282  AV   [#well yeah] he has  
0283    On ‘has’ gestures to left shoulder
he's been all- but he can't get away with that# (.>) hihi hihi< hhhh
what's- what's he [done]
[but-] yeah we need to know (AV: yeah but-) cause ob[viously we need to know-]
[we need to know spec-] the
specifics [y'know?]
[he's] come in here- he's come through the back way and the g(h)ate- he booted the
On 'booted' makes shoving motion with hand
On gate open (.) so my gate'd be open [now-# >.hihi hihi< hhh]
On 'gate' PO1 moves between AV and PO2 and walks to front door
[al- alright

PO1
Stops at front door sideways to AV, facing PO2
(to PO2:) I'll ah (0.3) go and see if the gate's uh
(damaged I'll-
(to AV:) just round by here is it?=

AV
="yeah"=

PO1 ="okay"

Leaving through front door

5.1.1 Questioning to probe for detail

POI's first question foregrounds their reliance on Amy to fill the gap in their knowledge, an epistemic gradient that is reflected in the move from a specific formulation 'you're saying' to the vaguely defined probe 'in what sort of context' (lines 259-60). At the same time, his choice of present progressive 'you're saying' imbues the formulation with a note of challenge by raising a subtle question mark over her claim (see Johnson 2020; Ahmad Sani 2021). There is a corresponding note of justification in Amy’s two attempted interruptions in line 262-3 (‘but...well’), both of which are overridden by POI, establishing the officers’ combative positioning in relation to the topic of her being attacked.

Despite POI’s insistence in holding the floor, his hedging in line 260 expresses some difficulty in phrasing the question, as reflected in its ineffectiveness. Firstly, the question form is ill-suited to the purpose of eliciting the desired detail. The wh-probe requires a specific 'blank' to be filled, but the resultant request for elaboration on the 'sort of context' provides little guidance as to the type of information Amy should provide. Primarily, it is unclear whether 'context' refers to the physical location or the nature of the grabbing. The scope of the question could be more clearly delineated with TED phrasing (Aldridge-Waddon 2021: 287; MoJ 2022: 86) which omits the wh-element, for example please tell us what happened. The latter phrasing would also mitigate the repetitive line of question with a politeness marker (please), a feature that is markedly absent from the officers’ questions throughout this FRC.
The confusing nature of the question is borne out in Amy’s response. Although she displays cooperation by yielding the floor after their simultaneous speech in lines 260-3, her subsequent turn does not address the grabbing and instead describes the broader context of the AP’s movements into and around the house. Her appeal to the officers’ understanding (‘but...well’) that the AP was ‘not being normal’ highlights the richness of her emic perspective on his behaviour, in contrast to the officers’ lack of knowledge, underscoring the need to let her speak. Yet POI uses her assessment that the AP was on drugs as an opportunity to interrupt (line 270) before she can finish her description. His affiliation here functions on a relational level, but the elaboration that ‘you can tell by looking at him’ also orients to his professional experience in dealing with intoxicated people. This allusion to status comes to the fore in his subsequent shift to an institutional footing in line 271 to present his assessment of the incident.

5.1.2 Voicing the institution

Having taken the floor in line 270 with his affiliation (‘yeah’), POI uses a falling-tone transitional marker ‘okay’, emphasised with pausing, to draw an audible line under the prior question-answer sequence. As he proceeds to code Amy’s account into the possible offence categories (lines 271-5), the institutional lexis and punctuating pauses generate a formal, deliberate tone that contrasts with the informality and hesitancy markers in lines 270-1. The ‘so’ summariser (Cotterill 2003) links back to the challenge presented by the ‘you’re saying’ formulation, framing Amy’s intervening turn as insufficient to prove her claim. The officer thereby foregrounds her failure to produce the knowledge and backgrounds police agency in making the decision. When “invoking the institutional criteria for eligibility” (Dall & Sarangi 2018: 108), POI points to what she has not said with ‘in the absence’, while ‘sounds like’ focuses on the quality of her account as opposed to the officers’ interpretation. This explicit process of diagnosis (Agar 1985) lacks any first-person pronouns or epistemic markers, such as I think/it sounds to me, which would more clearly index POI’s professional autonomy in arriving at this assessment. The depersonalisation continues with the legal framing of the potential course of action as ‘a case’ in which Amy’s house is ‘the property’ (line 274). By self-positioning as an institutional mouthpiece instead of a mediator, POI effectively deflects responsibility for downgrading the AV’s claim of assault.

The officer’s summary is highly problematic because so far, following Amy’s opening assertion that ‘he’s just assaulted me’ (App.R1, line 14), she has made two specific references to

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99 This officer used the same combination of interruption, affiliation and shift to his agenda earlier when he returned momentarily to the kitchen to ask the AP’s name (4.2b).
the AP grabbing her, including the potential that he left marks (see Ex.4.5a). Although she does not provide confirmation in her (interrupted) response in lines 263-9 above, nor does she deny it. It is therefore inaccurate to characterise grabbing as an 'absence' from her account. Rather, what is absent is the level of detail POI sought to elicit with the confusing ‘what sort of context’ probe. Ineffective questioning therefore combines with inadequate listening to create the cited absence of evidence, along with the attendant pressure on the AV. Furthermore, there is a troubling opacity as to the true purpose of POI’s assessment. It is formulated as a first pair part that projects Amy’s confirmation or agreement with the proposed plan of action (‘removing him from the property’). Yet beneath the surface is the potential for POI’s explicit downgrading of the offence to provoke a more detailed response from the AV, given her evident fear of the AP and the related assumption that she would prefer an arrest.

In line with the confusing mismatch between the form and function of POI’s turn, Amy’s response in lines 276-7 is propositionally contradictory, initiating a stretch of talk characterised by a struggle back and forth between her appeals for protection and the officers’ pursuit of more information. Her initial ‘yeah’ (line 276) seems to accept or at least acknowledge POI’s proposal of removing the AP, but ‘he can’t come back here’ appeals for more definitive action. Interestingly, Amy’s formulation of this appeal, as with the later ‘can’t get away with that’ (line 284), foregrounds the AP’s agency while deleting the officers from the process of protecting her, softening the sense of a demand conveyed by the emphatic ‘can’t’ (line 276). The indirectness of her appeal for police action thus aligns with POI’s deflection of personal responsibility. This moment of alignment is revealing because, as will be evaluated in Chapter 7, the officers’ positioning as passive conduits for institutional procedure, instead of experts at enacting it, shapes the AV’s evolving impression of their ability to help her.

5.1.3 Translating the offence

Amy’s escalating distress is underscored in (5.1a) by her intensified sobbing in line 277. POI responds by assuming a more central position in mediating between the institutional definition of assault and the AV’s stated practical needs (‘he can’t...’). In contrast to his previous ‘institutional’ turn, POI’s professional voice comes to the fore here, with the less formal tone and lexis orienting to the relational requirements of alleviating Amy’s distress. In eliciting her confirmation of a proposed scenario which depicts more specific detail of a potential assault (lines 280-1), the officer displays his effort to help Amy by signposting a means of securing an arrest. However, despite the ostensibly supportive nature of this scaffolding (cf. Pomerantz 1984), the strong modality and negative polarity of ‘definitely hasn’t’ reiterates his
presupposition of a gap in Amy’s account that disregards her repeated earlier claims of grabbing. Instead of mediating between two perspectives, therefore, the officer merely translates the institutional criteria for eligibility as a means of applying more pressure. POI’s strategy of activating his professional identity does not achieve the expertise it invokes, as he remains unsuccessful in eliciting the desired detail. Although Amy’s interruptive response (lines 282-4) begins with three affirmative elements, she provides no elaboration in her own words, instead relying on a gesture-speech ensemble (Kendon 2004) to confirm the scenario proposed by POI. As with ‘he can’t come back here’ in line 276, ‘he can’t get away with that’ (line 284) appeals to the criminal justice system’s duty of protecting her, again backgrounding the officers’ responsibility in taking the first step by arresting him. The officers allow a gap following her turn, which is interpretable as supportive in giving her space to elaborate, but at the same time the gap signals that elaboration is expected, despite the clear TRP signalled by ‘that’. The officers’ orientation to Amy’s perspective by briefly assuming a more personalised positioning in lines 280-1 is thus immediately undercut when they emphasise her onus of helping them reach a diagnosis. This assignment of responsibility is confirmed by what happens next.

5.1.4 Invoking institutional obligation

Amy has ostensibly produced a preferred response in the form of a confirmation of POI’s proposed scenario, but the officers’ overlapping follow-up turns (5.1a lines 286-90) express frustration with her performance. At this point, questioning about the ‘sticking point’ of the grabbing becomes strikingly coercive, despite the AV’s constant state of distress. In the first place, POI’s what-elicitation (line 286) frames Amy’s ‘that’ as an unknown and thereby suggests that she has not yet reported any behaviour that can be interpreted as ‘that’. The question yet again disregards her previous references to the AP grabbing her, even though the deictic gesture to her shoulder refers anaphorically to her earlier identification of this area as potentially marked by him (see Ch.4.5a). The incongruity between the broad scope of POI’s what-question and the fact that Amy has already provided relevant information is resolved when the officers’ subsequent turns (lines 287-90) reveal that the problem is rather that she has not yet provided the particular what-element they require for evidence of assault. Their explanations narrow the scope of the wh-probe to “the specifics”, which now more explicitly represent institutional goal-orientations. Yet despite the officers’ appeal to their own responsibilities here, the choice of wh-question (highlighting the ‘blank’ in the story) combines with the coercive language throughout this passage to foreground Amy’s responsibility in the task of diagnosis.
The insistence of the officers’ consecutive turns (lines 286-90) is achieved with a cluster of coercive devices. PO2’s contrastive ‘but’, the emphasis in ‘done’ and ‘know’, and the thrice-repeated deontic declarative ‘we need to know’ accumulate to frame Amy’s prior contribution as requiring urgent redress. The modality of ‘obviously’ assumes her knowledge of the procedure by which the officers can’t arrest the AP without the AV providing ‘the specifics’. The repetition of ‘we need to know’ and the ‘y’know’ tag (with rising intonation) further mitigate the officers’ personal responsibility by demonstrating that their hands are tied. Implicit here is an appeal for Amy to break from her lifeworld frame and recognise the professional problem they face. So far in (5.1a), therefore, the officers have repositioned from institutional to professional to relational mode, while pressurising the AV to comply with their needs. This phenomenon brings to the fore the fact that the police have privileged access to different positionings in relation to the AV, whereas she is confined to a highly personalised position.

The officers’ assertion that they ‘need to know the specifics’ presupposes that Amy understands what kind of information they need and, furthermore, allows no leeway for the possibility that she cannot articulate exactly what happened. The focus of her description in this passage (lines 263-9) is on the AP’s erratic behaviour, as opposed to physical contact, so clearly more interactional work is required to ensure all participants are aligned in terms of what information is locally relevant. Instead, the officers’ implicit assignment of blame to Amy for not providing information that only they are focusing on is potentially confusing and distressing. There are echoes here of the Reid-style interrogation used in the USA, recalling Ainsworth’s (2021) comparison of these interrogations with the dynamics of DA, in that victims’ heightened state of psychological vulnerability maximises the potential for questioning to echo abusive episodes. Ainsworth compares this effect with the process by which false confessions are extracted from APs (2021: 10), and this correlation is reflected in (5.1a) in the officers’ inappropriate use of coercive questioning to elicit information for their diagnosis.

The atmosphere of an interrogation is enhanced by the officers’ foregrounding of their in-group status during these turns. PO1 and PO2 echo each other’s discursive strategies, including emphasis (line 286 & 287), phrasing (‘we need to know’) and PO2’s affiliative ‘yeah’ in line 287, positioning themselves as a team collaborating to achieve a goal. This echoic effect is potentially overwhelming on a sensory level alone. Furthermore, the repeated “we” denotes both the officers and the institution, invoking their ascribed authority and professional solidarity in a way that is exclusionary and potentially intimidating for Amy. The two-questioner approach also creates an asymmetry of access to speaking space that is at odds with the asymmetry of knowledge about what happened to Amy and the pressure on her to produce this
knowledge. Her attempt to interrupt in line 288 with ‘yeah but’ signals some problem with POI & PO2’s assertions about what they need, but they override this cue and hold the floor. The imbalance of speaker rights is crystallised by the echo here of PO2’s prior ‘but yeah’ (line 287), which in the officer’s case prefaced a contrastive assertion that she, unlike Amy, was able to complete.

The coerciveness observed in this passage brings to light the unilateral nature of knowledge transfer, whereby the AV is pressed to supply information while the officers cite their institutional criteria without attempting to bring Amy into this frame of reference. This could be done, in the first place, by asking clear topic focused questions, then by offering a victim-centred explanation of their requirements to acknowledge their differing perspectives. This approach would both validate the AV’s role in the process and reach a more reliable diagnosis of the incident.

5.1.5 Releasing the pressure

When Amy manages to take the floor in example 5.1a (Appendix RI) line 291, her response provides a clearer indication that she is struggling in the face of the officers’ approach. The emphatic transitional marker ‘right’ expresses a combination of frustration and determination, signalling her cooperation with a renewed attempt to provide the requested information. In light of this framing, the subsequent absence of detail (lines 291-5) about physical contact is further evidence that from Amy’s perspective, his chaotic rampage around the house she shares with her child is what he ‘can’t get away with’. While not elaborating on the grabbing, her response does contribute to the ongoing construction of the fear his behaviour has caused, as reflected in the sob which cuts her short in line 294. It is unclear whether POI’s switch in activity from questioning to checking the gate is motivated by Amy’s pronounced distress or her lack of engagement with the grabbing. Either way, his interruptive topic shift in line 298 again marks the prioritisation of physical evidence (the gate) over her emotional experience. As with Amy’s previous description in this extract (lines 263-9), the officers’ lack of uptake here reveals the inequality in the speakers’ status. Whereas the officers appeal for her consideration of their perspective with ‘we need to know’, they are not attentive to her efforts to communicate what happened from her perspective.

Nonetheless, the shift provides relief from the officers’ questioning about the grabbing. In a striking contrast to the prior coerciveness, the negative politeness and hedging in POI’s enquiry about the gate (line 303) acknowledges Amy’s ownership of the setting and the officers’ status as visitors (cf. Ex.4.1a). Despite the relational footing, however, POI’s uptake of the
potential for criminal damage displays his continued prioritisation of the diagnostic function of Amy’s narrative over her need to tell her story. Amy refers to the gate being ‘open now’ as a means of supporting her account of the AP’s aggression, but ‘booted’ activates an institutional categorisation process that prompts POI to put the questioning on hold. By doing so, he draws attention to the fact that the interaction is driven by police needs: when they are unsuccessful in securing evidence of assault, they change tack to pursue other tangible evidence. This redirection of attention is embodied in POI’s sudden movement across the room when Amy mentions the gate, disrupting the interactional space during her turn (see Ch.4.2). She cuts off (line 294) just after he moves, raising the question of whether her narrative might have continued chronologically to include a description of the grabbing, had she been given the speaking space.

5.1.6 Conferring as a team

Analysis so far has shown how the officers position Amy centrally in their decision-making process. Yet they also use the ‘liminal’ outside space to confer (beyond Amy’s earshot) about her account, fleshing out their interpretations of Amy’s version (see also App.RI: FRCib & FRC1c). The following extract isolates an extended stretch of the officers’ outside talk that pertains specifically to the physical assault. The transcript begins with PO2 and PO3 standing approximately two metres outside the front door, beyond Amy’s earshot, between the house and the police van containing the AP.

Example 5.1b: Amy

0337 PO3 {to PO2:} °so (..) [what do you think°]
0338 PO2 °°ju- (..) It's just-°] °°well-
0339 *hh* it's a bit- it's a bit em thing whether he's
0340 actually assaulted her (0.7) or (.) um she says he's
0341 kicked the back gate in so PO1's going round just to
0342 see (..) for the damage aspect but otherwise I don't
0343 [know whether-**]

((26 lines omitted; they discuss a different detail))

0368 PO3 turns towards kitchen and takes few steps; turns
0369 back to PO2
0370 PO2 °°just trying- just trying to clari[fy-**]
0371 PO3 °°but is] she
0372 saying she hasn't been assaulted°=
0373 Moving closer to PO2
0374 PO2 °°she's saying that-**}
"cause the 999 operator says she can hear a hell of a lot of screaming back and forth.

°°It's- it's- I- d- PO1's going round there now to have a look because she's saying there's been like pushing and shoving but she hasn't said he's actually:

°°You ask her a bit more in depth a second [just see on 'depth', deictic head nod towards kitchen (.) like-°]

°°Yeah (.) I'm- I'm-] I can wait for PO1 to come back°°=

°°For the criminal damage side of stuff anyway°

The 3 POs walk towards each other and stop 3m from front door, standing close together (to PO1:) °yeah (.) it's- °°it's a bit [wissy washy-°°]=

(to PO1:) °cause the 999 operator said that-°=°°Just a bit wishy washy on whether he's actually assaulted her or not°°=

=°°Yeah that needs to be cleared up (.) 999 operator said that she'd- (.) well she thought the screaming was so loud she genuinely thought there was about three to four people involved in this

Arminen and Simonen (2021: 587) characterise talk between practitioners as 'expert activities', which in this passage include evaluating the AV's account and determining a strategy for clarifying it. This ad hoc meeting highlights the complexities of the officers' position as mediators between AV and institution. Their uncertainty about how to proceed is evident in the hesitancy markers throughout this passage (e.g. lines 338-9; 378; 350) and embodied in PO3's starting towards the front door before turning back in lines 369-9. His movements symbolise the struggle back and forth between Amy's version and what the officers are trying to achieve. Example (5.1b) lays bare the oppositional nature of the police-victim relationship in this FRC: their progress is stalled until she fills in their blanks according to their agenda.

Despite their mediating role, the officers orient only to their own requirements in this outside exchange, which is driven by the institutional categorisation process invoked by POI in (5.1a lines 271-5). PO3's hypothetical formulation in line 371-2 is revealing because it presupposes that Amy's account, most of which he has not heard, can be interpreted binarily in terms of assaulted or not assaulted, reflecting POI's identification of an 'absence' (5.1a). PO3's
emphasis on “hasn’t” points to a discrepancy between Amy’s earlier exclamation of ‘he’s just assaulted me’ when the officers arrived (App.RI line 14) and her subsequent lack of a description to match the offence of assault. This perceived discrepancy is also indexed by the repetition of “actually” (lines 340 & 381) and PO2’s formulation in lines 379-81, which contrasts what ‘she’s saying’ with what ‘she hasn’t said’. It is worth reiterating that so far, Amy has twice supported her initial claim of assault by stating that the AP grabbed her (e.g. Ex.4.5a & 4.5b), so the officers’ allusions to inconsistency are unfounded. Nonetheless, they conceptualise the AV’s account negatively in terms of messiness (‘needs to be cleared up’) and insipidness (‘wishy-washy’). These metaphors encapsulate the institutional drive for specificity (see further Aldridge & Steel 2022) while dismissing Amy’s vivid and specific descriptions of the AP’s rampage through her house.

The inside/outside divide reinforces the relational distance between officers and AV that was evident in the tension of (5.1a). While Amy cannot hear them, the fact that she can see the officers to perceive their whispering (as evidenced in Ch.4.3) intensifies the atmosphere of blame and exclusion generated by their earlier ‘team’ questioning. The contentiousness of raising doubt about the AV’s account is acknowledged by PO2’s self-repair with a quieter whisper in line 338, the frequent hedging (e.g. 378) and the repeated justification marker “just” (lines 370, 354) (Buttny 2008). PO2’s trailing off (line 381) and substituting an evaluative adjective with “thing” (line 339) indicate her reluctance to be explicit, with the emphasis on “thing” appealing for PO3’s understanding of its unspecified meaning. The presence of the body cameras might also influence the officers’ representational choices, particularly when raising doubt about evidence they still hope to secure.

The collaboration in this passage contrasts with the aggressive questioning of Amy in (5.1a), revealing the officers’ differential self-positioning vis-à-vis professionals of similar status (cf. Harms et al. 2021). Furthermore, the informality of their talk when conferring as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991) humanises this information-sharing process, as compared with POI’s stiff delivery of the institutionalised assessment in (5.1a). The outside discussion also includes the (absent) emergency call-handler as an in-group witness and co-contributor to the unfolding version of what happened. PO3’s emphasis on the “screaming” reported by the call-handler (lines 375-7; 356-9) supports Amy’s depiction of the chaotic situation, but only the former’s claims are made relevant here, reflecting the legitimacy ascribed by her institutional status.
The officers’ outside talk provides some context for the questioning strategies observed in the other examples in Section 5.1, revealing how professionals are “trained to use language as an instrument to maintain that role and to accomplish ends often known only to them in interchanges” (Heath 1979: 108). PO3’s encouragement to ‘ask her a bit more in depth’ (line 383) is borne out in the remaining two extracts, in which the officers enact their plan to ‘clear up’ the issue of assault.

### 5.1.7 Displaying doubt

Following POI’s checking of the gate and the officers’ discussion outside, the below extract resumes the police-victim interaction from the point it was put on hold at the end of (5.1a).

**Example 5.1c: Amy**

| 0378 | PO1  | hi Amy (.) good news is (.) your: back gate is  |
| 0379 |     | alright (.) (AV: yep) it's just sort of- (.)  |
| 0380 |     | {gestures} gone off over the (.) latch y'know (.) |
| 0381 |     | there's no damage to it. (3.7) .hh right so- (.) |
| 0382 |     | On ‘right’ AV stops on bottom step; looks at PO1 |
| 0383 |     | >I-< sorry to keep asking you to repeat yourself |
| 0384 |     | but- (.) we need to identify what the correct (AV: |
| 0385 |     | *yeah*) thing to arrest him for is or if- (AV: |
| 0386 |     | “right”) if he even needs to be arres[ted but- (0.3) |
| 0387 |     | so-) |
| 0388 | PO3 and PO4 enter house during PO1’s turn and stand |
| 0389 |     | beside the other POs, audience formation |
| 0390 | AV  | [well (.) he |
| 0391 |     | just- he] come through my back (. ) door and |
| 0392 |     | obviously he’s kicking screaming and shouting |
|       |     | {continues} |

The previous chapter (4.3c) examined this passage with a focus on the officers’ management of space, by which their audience formation and restriction of the AV’s movement heightened her vulnerability. Analysis now builds on these findings by considering the effect of the officers’ strategies for eliciting evidence of assault. POI resumes the exchange in relational mode (‘hi Amy’), displaying his orientation to her perspective with the lifeworld assumption that no damage is ‘good news’ for her. However, while conferring outside, the officers cited the gate as the ‘criminal damage side of stuff’ in their ongoing attempt to obtain evidence (5.1b line 388). There is therefore a duality in POI’s delivery of ‘good news’, which from the police perspective represents another evidential ‘absence’. The lack of criminal damage is reflected in the officer’s subsequent return to institutional mode to reinforce the question mark hovering over the AP’s arrest, as marked by the back-to-business ‘right so’ summariser in line 381.
Unlike in (5.1a), POI now mitigates the continued questioning with an apology that displays empathy with the AV’s experience. However, the apology is immediately undercut by the contrastive ‘but’ (line 384) which presupposes the overriding importance of institutional procedure. The deontic declarative ‘we need to’ echoes the officers’ earlier coerciveness (‘we need to know’) while deflecting personal responsibility for the imposition acknowledged by ‘sorry’. POI expresses the officers’ efforts to mediate between AV and institution (lines 384-7, but the formality of ‘identify’ and ‘correct’ has the depersonalising effect of reducing Amy’s lived experience to a binary coding process (Goodwin 1994). As with the epistemic distancing achieved by ‘we need’, ‘identify’ and ‘correct’ both obscure the officers’ process of evaluation and therefore their responsibility for closing the epistemic gap. Instead, ‘correct’ cites a higher institutional power that is monitoring the officers’ conduct (see further Ch.7.2), again appealing for Amy’s understanding of their position.

In (5.1a), it was surmised that POI implied doubt about the assault as a means of extracting more information. This strategy now comes to the fore in POI’s question of whether the AP “even needs to be arrested” (line 386), which explicates the police uncertainty about the severity of the behaviour described by Amy. Despite the interpersonal move of apologising, therefore, the officer resumes a combative position with a highly coercive fishing device (Pomerantz 1980) which maximises the pressure on the AV to prove her claims. Amy reacts accordingly: having signalled acceptance with continuers during PO’s turn, she interrupts at the point when his doubt about the arrest becomes clear. The emphatic ‘well’ prefaces what Heritage (2015) terms a my-side response, which conveys a justification in her attempt to reframe her story correctly. The repetition of ‘obviously’ draws attention to the fact that she has already described his behaviour and her reason for letting him into the house numerous times (see further Ch.6.3). The repetition furthers the impression that the officers and AV are concerned with different aspects of the AP’s behaviour, meaning that the officers’ approach is applying pressure without adequate guidance.

5.1.8 Questioning ‘a bit more in depth’

Shortly thereafter, POI seeks to address the need for police specificity:

Example 5.1d: Amy

0479  POI  no problem (.) alright you say he’s grabbed you as
0480  POI  well can you just talk me through (.) >how he’s
0481  AV   grabbed you where he’s grab[bed you what] he’s done<
0482  AV   [~well he’s~] (.) he’s
0483  AV   grabbed me and then obviously run uh- (.) got the~
0484  #phones#= (sniffs)
On 'grabbed' she grabs upper arm

PO1 =wh- where’s he- (.) which part of the house has he
grabbed you in um [(.) for- as far as you can tell]
P03 returns to the group; stands directly behind PO1

AV [#well he’s- (.) first thing he’s]
done he’s just run upstairs (.) and then (.) so I’ve
gone in the b(h)ed- (.) the b(h)edroom (.) like-
>the bedroom< and I said *what are you doing* he was
just searching round {sniffs} threw his money on the
(.) bed {sniffs} looking under the bed and stuff

((20 lines of narrative turn omitted))

we’re both just stood there and he’s: screaming his
eyes are massive in my face (.).>hih.hih< huhh so
he’s j- (PO1: >but-<) it happened really quick but
(.) it was like (0.2) (PO1: "yeah") he can’t get
away with that like-=#

PO1 =I know (.) you’re upset obviously (.) (AV: huhhh)
With 'hhh' AV cups her head with her hands
it’s- (.) all happened so fast >y- pro-<
ad[renaline’s probably up there] (1.2)
On 'there’ raises hand to brow level, palm down

AV [#and then the- (.) the-#= (.) hhh]
On ‘hhh’ closes eyes and runs hand over top of head

PO1 =which part of- (0.4) which p[art during that has
he- >yeah.<]

AV [~*he grabbed- he got
ton top of me* and he’s like (.) ho- like holding
ont- (.) onto me when I was trying to- (.) ring 999
On ‘onto’ wraps arms around upper body; hunches over
like I tried to do it twice (.)

PO1 {nodding} ""right."

AV and then that’s b-- (.) #like where he’s {points to
arm} grabbing me and that# {sniffs} >.hih.hih< hhh

{sniffs}

PO1 >>okay<< (.)

AV ~"oh I dunno~

Inspecting her arms

PO1 {to other POs:} "right?"*

_PO1 {to AV:} right. (.) probably gonna- arrest him for
assault (.) (AV: {nodds}) will you provide- happy to
provide a statement [about what’s] happened?

AV (nodding) [#*yeah*#] .hh hhh

In line with the strategy agreed by the officers outside in (5.1b line 383), the above passage constitutes the clearest attempt to question the AV in ‘a bit more in depth’, and as such it demonstrates that the officers' questioning strategies in fact restrict the information produced. POI’s opening formulation of Amy’s grabbing claim (lines 479-81) echoes his unsuccessful opening probe in (5.1a), demonstrating the repetitiveness of the officers’ approach, which increases the pressure on the AV with each iteration. This time, the formulation clearly identifies the grabbing as the ‘specifics’ to be clarified, a point driven home by the threefold repetition of ‘grabbed’. However, the question is potentially confusing. It invites elaboration
with ‘can you just talk me through’ before immediately narrowing the scope with an embedded multiple wh-question. POI delivers the three propositions quickly, framing them as the specific details Amy should address in her response. Although he is ostensibly providing guidance here, the question is overly specific for its purpose of inviting elaboration (in contrast to the vagueness of 5.1a’s ‘what sort of context’). A less restrictive alternative would be a TED probe asking Amy to tell, describe or explain what the AP did. Curiously, when the first proposition prompts Amy to respond in line 482 (‘well’), POI overrides her to continue formulating the increasingly restrictive question. The result reflects Griffiths and Milne’s (2006: 183) observation that the use of multiple questions “makes it difficult to ascertain which one the interviewee is meant to answer”. Furthermore, these sub-questions vary in constraint, with two wh-elements inviting more elaborative responses (‘how he’s grabbed you’ and ‘what he’s done’) and one that invites specificity (‘where he’s grabbed you’).

It is notable that despite the officers’ ongoing implications of gaps in her story, Amy’s response here (lines 482-5) orients to each element of POI’s question, indicating an effort to align with their cues. She reiterates that the AP grabbed her and physically demonstrates the how and where by gripping her arm, although the latter does not provide new information because Amy has twice previously indicated her arm as the affected area (see Ch.4.5). She then addresses “what he’s done” by continuing her narrative chronologically from the point of grabbing. The fact that she satisfies each element illuminates the ineffectiveness of the question. POI’s subsequent interruption (lines 486-7) reveals that his prior ‘where he’s grabbed you’ had referred to the location within the house, counter to her logical interpretation of ‘where’ on her body. He does not clarify why this detail is now more pressing than the nature of the physical contact, which was previously specified as the gap in her account with ‘in the absence of him grabbing you’ (5.1a). POI acknowledges the potential difficulty of retrieving the detail with ‘as far as you can tell’, but this allowance is not borne out in his reaction when Amy responds without addressing the grabbing but instead picking up on ‘where in the house’ with a chronological description of their movements (from line 489).

Despite the confusing questioning on the topic up to this point, POI’s final push to extract detail about the grabbing is infused with implicit criticism. The attempted interruption ‘but’ (line 517) signals a trouble source and thus sets up the insistence of the second, successful interruption in line 520. Acknowledging Amy’s distress is supportive in supplying a justification for her inability to produce the information, but in doing so the acknowledgement presupposes that the AV’s response is deficient and that her state of mind is the hindrance. The officer softens the face-threatening proposition by assuming a more personalised position, with the first
person singular epistemic claim ‘I know’ marking a departure from the institutional ‘we need’. However, the emphasis on ‘know’ sets up a contrastive construction whereby Amy being ‘upset’ is obscuring the information that POI must therefore ask for again in lines 527 (see also Antaki et al. 2015). There is an echo here of the ‘sorry…but’ apology in (5.1c), which functioned similarly to frame an implicit criticism, building the impression of strategically-placed relational nods rather than supportive efforts. POI reinforces this impression in line 527 with a reductive formulation of Amy’s prior turn as “that”. By honing in on what she has not said, he disregards her detailed description of the AP’s threatening behaviour and the danger she perceived. He similarly disregards the significance of her crying, which is “epistemically relevant in conveying the seriousness of the [...] story” (Hepburn & Potter 2007: 114), with the potential for BWV footage to be used as evidence that AVs were “put in fear of violence” (CoP 2014a: 30; see Ex.5.1e).

The question in line 527 therefore lays bare the speakers’ conflicting expectations. Amy’s assertion that ‘he can’t get away with that’ (lines 518-9) echoes her earlier appeals for police assistance and understanding in (5.1a), an effect amplified towards the end of the (5.1d) by her emphatic exhalations and gestures of distress (e.g. lines 520-1; 526). Yet POI’s backgrounding of her experience as ‘that’ to refocus on the grabbing draws Amy back to a more central position in the police process of making a decision about the arrest. Despite the focus on the AV’s immediate role-responsibility, the phrasing of POI’s wh-probe (line 527) sustains the pattern of confusing questioning. The constraining which-form is at odds with the vagueness of the blank represented by ‘part during that’. Nonetheless, it prompts a description from Amy (lines 529-33) that finally enables the officers to reach a decision, perhaps prompted by the frustration audible in her interruption with a raised voice in line 529. The additional contextual detail that attends to ‘which part’ is that the assault occurred while she was ‘trying to ring 999’ (line 531). This detail combines with the emergency call handler’s report of ‘screaming back and forth’ (5.1b) to create a clearer representation of what happened at that moment. Notably, however, Amy already made the connection between the AP grabbing her and preventing her from calling 999, in lines 483-4 of this extract, before she was interrupted by POI. If she had been able to complete this description, she might have been spared the evaluation of her distressed state and inability to answer properly. Instead, the interactional achievement of obtaining the ‘specifics’ has entailed disrupting and redirecting the AV’s narrative, assigning her the burden of resolving the epistemic gaps in the officers’ interpretation of a story they do not give her space to tell.

Furthermore, the officers give a distorted impression of the value of the information Amy does provide in the examples throughout this section. In (5.1d) above, she produces her
longest turn yet (see App.RI lines 489-519) with more detail about the threatening behaviour she has been describing from the beginning of the interaction. It is this behaviour that the officers, including PO1, ultimately cite as a basis for their decision to arrest. The following exchange occurs just after (5.1d), when the officers are walking out of the house:

**Example 5.1e: Amy**

0554 PO1 "yeah" (.) to be honest we probably would’ve done it
0555 PO1 anyway on the basis of him (.) >y’know< (.) "stand
0556 PO4 here stand here"
0557 PO4 ="yeah. (.) >she was put in fear of violence from
0558 PO1 him [isn’t she<]
0559 PO1 ["yeah >definitely] she is isn’t she<"
0560 PO3 "she’s- he’s- (.) well she’s saying he’s grabbed
0561 PO3 her"
0562 PO3 PO1 and PO2 walk towards PO1 and PO4 to stand at van
0563 PO1 "yeah" (.)
0564 PO3 "yeah."
0565 PO1 "yeah" (.) (PO3: "yeah.") aw it’s even better now
0566 PO1 that we’ve got that
0567 PO1 and PO4 walk to the police van with AP inside

It therefore transpires that Amy’s consistent descriptions of aggressive behaviour were squarely relevant to the case against AP, as reflected in PO4’s use of the offence terminology for harassment: *putting people in fear of violence* (Protection from Harassment Act 1997). PO1’s assessment of the grabbing claim as ‘even better’ (line 565) encapsulates the officers’ motivation in seeking to upgrade the proffered evidence of harassment by pursuing the more elusive evidence of assault. Clearly, a more robust case against the AP aligns with Amy’s desire to keep him away from her, but in the course of pursuing this upgrade in (5.1a) to (5.1d), the officers give Amy the misleading impression that her narrative is not yielding any useful information. If she feels that the threatening behaviour she is describing is not a police concern, she might not feel entitled to protection from such behaviour in future (see further Ch.7).

Section 5.1 has traced the officers’ pursuit of specific information in their task of diagnosing of the reported incident, an approach characterised by ineffective and inappropriate questioning, coerciveness and mounting interactional tension. It is important to contextualise this interactional behaviour in relation to the time pressure and unpredictability of the situation and the ad hoc nature of producing questions in this context. Nonetheless, while providing little guidance as to the information they seek, the officers apply considerable pressure on the AV to provide it. In doing so, they derail her narrative, displaying a lack of attentiveness and missing opportunities for additional verbal evidence. Although ultimately successful in securing the
required evidence, the officers’ approach undercuts their self-ascribed expertise and ultimately disadvantages both police and AV.

5.2 Addressing victim-initiated concerns

Whereas the previous section centred on a topic that was treated as a problem from the police perspective, this section centres on AV-initiated concerns. Analysis in this section focuses on data from Neil’s FRC, in which he describes the technology-facilitated abuse (see Rogers et al. 2022) perpetrated by his ex-partner via social media and text message. These appeals for the officer’s expertise represent an analytic opportunity to evaluate how officers’ responses to AVs’ concerns shape FRC interaction and the police-victim relationship.

5.2.1 Explicating an investigative ‘difficulty’

The problem of social media develops over two stages of the FRC. In the first instance, below, Neil raises the issue while providing his first account of the reported incident. The transcript begins towards the end of an extended narrative turn.

Example 5.2a: Neil

In this passage, POI manages topic movement in a way that progresses his goal of obtaining the AV’s account of the incident while closing off (for now) the problem he raises. The issue of the AP telling the health and safety authority about Neil’s medical condition constitutes a stepwise
topic shift within his narrative from her threat to ruin his business (lines 137). He elaborates on why this is such a problem for him (‘in a workplace’) and provides evidence of her history of social media behaviour that supports his concern about her vow to ‘ruin the business’. The concern is reinforced with reference to other instances during the interaction in which Neil mentions the potential impact of the abuse on his new business (e.g. Ch.6.2.2). It is likely that the relevant offence here is harassment or stalking involving serious alarm or distress, which includes “publishing any statement ... relating or purporting to relate to a person” resulting in “a substantial adverse effect” on their “usual day-to-day activities” (Crown Prosecution Service 2018a; 2018b; Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s.4A).

POI aligns with the topic shift away from the account of the incident, first by acknowledging the new information about the medical condition (line 140) and then by emphatically affiliating (‘yeah!’) with Neil’s assessment about his business. He thereby responds sensitively to Neil’s concerns by giving him space to elaborate, even though the subsequent shift back to the incident (line 154) marks this as the officer’s primary goal-orientation. He further displays understanding of Neil’s perspective by filling in the blank when he hesitates, with the evaluative ‘damage you’ mirroring the destructive identity constructed for the AP throughout the AV’s narrative (see App.R3). POI’s continuers throughout the following turn signal his attentiveness to Neil’s concerns about social media, culminating in the receipt token ‘okay’ (line 151) which has the potential to close off the topic. Despite this topic having emerged from his account of the incident, Neil does not return to his narrative in line 151 but instead allows a gap that projects POI’s elaboration on ‘okay’. POI takes the cue by introducing the statement, which is therefore sequentially positioned as the solution to the social media problem, with ‘then’ (line 151) explicating this causal relationship. POI’s frequent use of singular personal pronouns (as evidenced throughout Section 5.2.1) highlights his shift to institutional ‘we’ in line 151, emphasised through repetition. In this context, the depersonalisation has a supportive function: by invoking his institutional authority to entextualise the AV’s concerns into the official record, POI validates Neil’s entitlement to police assistance. The ‘we’ pronouns also position the police along with Neil as sharing both his concern and the responsibility for resolving it.

This is POI’s first mention of the statement so far, so his victim-centred framing here lays the groundwork for his transition to statement-taking, to be analysed in the next section. The social media problem thus provides POI with an opportunity to secure Neil’s agreement to give a statement (lines 153) while obscuring the coerciveness of the tagged declarative question form (see Newbury & Johnson 2006). Furthermore, the proposed future action functions as a placeholding device which enables POI to now close off the topic and reorient Neil to his
account of the incident, which he signposts with the transitional marker “now” (line 154). The officer retains tight control by progressing Neil’s account of the incident past the point at which the AV left off (in line 137) and then digressed (in 138-149), with the past-tense formulation “she’s done all these things” and closed question about what happened next on the incident under investigation (lines 154-5). Example (5.2a) therefore demonstrates how the officer deals with a peripheral concern raised by the AV in a way that displays supportiveness but remains compatible with his overarching institutional objectives.

However, the social media issue is revealed to be a more complex problem when the AV queries it further. The below extract illustrates how the officer negotiates his expert status when he is unable to offer an institutional solution. It should be noted that this passage occurs after (5.2a), despite Neil’s framing of the medical condition as new information. The transcript begins as POI is preparing to leave the barbershop to check the neighbourhood for the AP by car.

*Example 5.2b: Neil*

0358 PO1 =ahm (.) I’ve got your telephone number >haven’t
0359 I<=
0360 AV =can you put limits on:: like she’s not allowed to
0361 mention me on social media (.) [cause the] thing
0362 is (.) ""I actually have ((medical condition))"
0363 PO1 [.hhh we-]
0364 (.,) you do >yeah?<=
0365 AV ="mhm"=
0366 PO1 =okay. >alright then not a problem< (.) right the
0367 On ‘alright’ sits back down
0368 difficulty we’ve got (.). is:: (0.4) if she’s
0369 putting things on there to ha- (.) harass it’s
0370 causing >harassment alarm and distress< (.). then
0371 we can- (.). look at that as well (AV: yeah) that
0372 can- that can be an added (.). ahm (AV: >yeah
0373 yeah<) offence she’s committing there. (1.2) .hhh
disclosing personal information (.). again (0.6) we
0375 can look at that. (AV: “mhm”) (0.9) to actually
0376 stop her from doing it that’s gunna be the
0377 difficult part. (AV: >"yeah yeah<") (.). alright?
0378 umm (.). we’ve also got the difficulty on top of
0379 that >that< until we can grab hold of her (.). and
0380 then put those- (.). restraints on her (.). it’s
0381 On ‘restraints’ holds hands out, palms down
0382 gunna be difficult. (AV: "yeah". (.). thee:- (.).
0383 what we’ll be looking at though is- w- once we get
0384 a charge we can put bail conditions on her (.).
0385 (AV: >"yeah yeah<") that’d be part of it as well
0386 or- (.). y’know >"ah- ah- there’ll b-< once
0387 there’s- there’s a charge and a decision or even-
0388 a bail decision pending further enquiries (.). (AV:
0390 >"yeah yeah<") we can put it then. (1.1) but it’s
0391 gunna be difficult to enforce. (AV: "yeah.") I’ll
0392 be honest there. (AV: >"yeah yeah<")(.). ah-
Building on his previous mention of the social media problem (5.2a), Neil now explicitly asks for help (lines 360-2), with the first-person ‘you’ positioning POI as an institutional authority with control over what is ‘allowed’. The use of ‘limits’ invokes the potential for a restraining order to be imposed in a domestic abuse case where there is evidence of ongoing stalking and harassment (Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 s.12). However, prosecuting social media-related offences is complicated by myriad issues, including concerns about public interest and the right to freedom of expression (CPS 2018b). Correspondingly, POI’s extended explanation from line 366 amounts to what Herijgers and van Charldorp 2020 term an “explicative telling”, designed to manage professional accountability.

The sharp inhalation prefacing POI’s incomplete response in line 363 provides the first indication of a trouble source, with the institutional ‘we’ pre-emptively deflecting personal responsibility. The subsequent explanation of what the police force can and cannot do is POI’s longest turn in this interaction. His hesitation markers continue throughout, with intakes of breath, pauses, hedging and fillers (e.g. lines 382-3) reflecting the sensitivities around refusing a request which stems from the AV’s desire to keep his medical condition private. Having mentioned the condition earlier (in 5.2a) in terms of the AP spreading the information, Neil now discloses more explicitly to account for his request for help. POI attends to the face-threatening disclosure by supplying a personal reaction, ‘alright then not a problem’, which counters the implication behind the AP’s behaviour that the condition reflects badly on Neil. The action of sitting down signals that POI is giving the question due consideration and also resolves the intimidating potential of being on different physical levels while discussing a difficult topic. The point of departure marked by ‘right’ in line 366 demarcates POI’s lifeworld response to Neil’s problem from the institutional limitations he lays out in his subsequent explanation, establishing his position as mediator between the two worlds. The ‘right’-preface conveys his intention to clarify the situation, as echoed in the later ‘I’ll be honest there’ (line 391-2) to bookend his contribution with expressions of forthrightness.

During the ‘explicative telling’, POI employs a variety of strategies to mitigate the refusal of Neil’s request while minimising any negative evaluation of police capabilities. The officer topicalises his assessment of the situation as a ‘difficulty’ (line 368) from the police perspective (‘we’ve got’), with plural pronouns throughout this turn reinforcing police ownership of the problem. The four-fold repetition of difficult displays affiliation with Neil in evaluating the situation negatively and implies that the police have their ‘hands tied’, which in turn
presupposes that they are on Neil’s side and would take the requested action if they could. The ‘difficulty’ framing in line 368 also functions to prepare the listener for an unsatisfactory resolution, although in this vein the repetition has the potential to be demoralising for an AV requesting assistance. Nonetheless, the specificity with which POI details what the police can and cannot do conveys the care he is taking to help Neil understand. He does this by citing the overarching procedures which limit police action, using formal lexis for the offence elements of ‘harassment alarm and distress’ and ‘disclosing personal information’ (lines 370 & 374; see App.II) and stages of the justice process (lines 384; 387-8). Section 5.1 found that officers appealed to institutional procedure to exclude and coerce Amy (‘in the absence’), but here POI invokes ‘policespeak’ (Fox 1993) to include Neil in the officers’ experience of being restricted by procedure, which is ‘othered’ as something formal and “difficult”. Passivisation and nominalisation (e.g. lines 372; 387) establish POI’s distance from the higher institutional powers responsible for restricting the professional autonomy he exhibits elsewhere in this interaction (e.g. Section 5.2.2; see further Ch.7.2).

The officer also carefully manages Neil’s expectations in terms of the scope of the wider investigation. Its metaphorical depiction as parts of a whole that the police must assemble (‘the difficult part … on top of that … put restraints on her … get a charge … put bail conditions on her … part of it … put it then’) captures the complexity of the investigative process and the hard work required. The weak modality of propositions such as ‘we can look at that’ (line 374-5), ‘that can be an added … offence’ (line 372-3) and ‘until we can grab hold of her’ (line 379) represents investigative elements as potential instead of certain. The officer thereby displays supportiveness by addressing Neil’s concern in detail while retaining neutrality by avoiding a commitment to police action. With ‘but’ in line 390, he shifts focus from future procedure to their present interaction to assert that ‘it’s gunna be difficult to enforce’, offering Neil a response to his original request for ‘limits’ (line 360) which formulates the prior detailed explanation in lay terms. POI’s switch from positioning as ‘we’ the police to the personalised ‘I’ll be honest there’ (line 391-2) conveys that he is confiding in Neil about the limitations of his role. This moment encapsulates POI’s subtle repositioning throughout this extract, between aligning with Neil’s perspective and appealing for his understanding of the police perspective, with the open palm gesture in line 393 emphasising the appeal. Whereas the officers in (5.1a) demanded Amy’s understanding with we need to know, POI bases his appeal on a detailed explanation that draws the AV into his professional sphere, achieving expertise in his interactional conduct instead of relying on his ascribed authority. This appeal for AV’s understanding comes to the fore in line 394 with the final evaluation of the complex situation he has just described as ‘an absolute
nightmare'. The nightmare metaphor captures the tension between the officers’ inability to control social media usage and their requirement to impose order on every aspect of the investigative process. This vivid image closes off POI’s account of a mismatch between lay and institutional expectations, underscoring the difficulty of the police officers’ task of mediating between the two realms.

Throughout POI’s extended turn, Neil acknowledges the explanation and expresses his understanding with continuers and agreement tokens (e.g. lines 372; 375; 385; 392). The fact that he can position POI as accountable in the first place reflects the greater freedom afforded to AVs in FRCs to ask questions, as compared with formal police interviews – and also reflects a gendered power dynamic between these particular speakers (see Ch.7.3). This example thus also demonstrates the officer’s expertise in his ability to manage the AV’s problems on an ad hoc basis. The next subsection examines another concern of Neil’s that emerges during this FRC: the AP’s text messages.

5.2.2 Offering a victim-led solution
As with social media, the topic of the AP’s attempts to contact Neil and his friends via text message evolves over different interactional stages. The relevant offence is harassment, which includes “repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact”. Harassment also includes ‘stalking by proxy’, which is “harassing others connected with the individual, knowing that this behaviour will affect their victim as well as the other people” (CPS 2018; Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s.4A). The beginning of Neil’s account is not included in the body-worn video footage, but POI provides a formulation which identifies the issue of “phone calls coming into the shop asking for you, threats being made” (App.R3 lines 65-8). In the below extract, the officer raises this issue while arranging future contact.

Example 5.2c: Neil

```
0198  PO1 (cont.) what I’ll do (.) because I’m
0199    conscious that em- (. ) answering the phone for you
0200    is a little bit delicate (AV: yeah.) cause you’re
0201    often thinking there’s gunna be- (AV: >yeah yeah<)
0202    (. ) silly calls >being made to you< I’ll text you=
0203    AV =oh! alright=
0204    PO1 =alright? so at least then you know it’s me and
0205    you can get back to me then [(.) alright?]
0206    AV  >yeah yeah< that’s]
0207    cool
0208    PO1 what we need to do then I’ll- em--
0209    AV =so I’ve got text messages off her
0210    On ‘text’ pats left-hand trouser pocket
0211    PO1 y- you kee- you s- you saving all those?
```
During his first two turns (lines 198-208), POI progresses his aim of establishing a means of contacting Neil while foregrounding his effort to work around the problem of the AP’s unwanted calls. He signposts the process of accounting with ‘what I’ll do’ and ‘because’, conveying a deliberateness in spelling out his motivations to invite Neil’s trust and involve him in the professional process of arranging their future contact. The frequency of first and second pronouns here highlights the officer’s self-positioning between institution and AV and personalises their role-relationship, in a contrast to the collective ‘we’ associated with wider investigative processes in 5.2.1. POI exhibits his professional intuition with epistemic markers (‘I’m conscious’) and strong modality declaratives and hypothetical reported thought (lines 200-2) which capture Neil’s experience and display awareness of his needs. The explanation, culminating in ‘at least you know it’s me’ (line 204), presupposes that Neil will respond positively to the officer contacting him and will act accordingly, in turn assuming a degree of trust between them. Reflecting this cooperative positioning, POI backgrounds Neil’s responsibility for the proposed future action with the weak deontic modality of ‘you can get back to me’ (line 205). The victim-centred approach is borne out in Neil’s ‘oh’-prefaced agreement in line 203, which expresses some surprise at the proposed arrangement, and emphatic agreement and evaluation ‘that’s cool’ which underscore his appreciation in lines 206-7.

The officer’s positioning in this extract is less straightforward in relation to the AP and her problematic calls. POI displays alignment with Neil’s account by evaluating the situation as ‘a little bit delicate’ and the calls as ‘silly’, but falls short of directly assigning blame to the AP, who is referenced only metonymically with ‘silly calls’. It is also worth noting that both ‘delicate’ and ‘silly’ are reductive characterisations of the AP’s behaviour as represented by Neil, who has animated her (both in person and over the phone) with aggressive lexis such as ‘screaming and shouting’ (App.R3 lines 83-4; II6; 135-6). This recontextualisation again raises the question of whether POI’s characterisations are gendered: ‘silly’ would seem a less likely word choice for a male perpetrator (see further Ch.7.3). Either way, POI’s downgraded evaluation retains a degree of objectivity while displaying empathy with the AV, as reflected in Neil’s emphatic agreement tokens which positively appraise this representation of his experience. POI’s careful choice of words here bears similarities to (5.2b), in which the officer conveyed supportiveness without committing to an investigation.
Despite POI’s attempt to shift topic in line 208, Neil’s revelation about the text messages in the next line sustains both the topic of the AP’s unwanted contact and the theme of collaboration. The interruption itself indexes the work POI has done to reduce the power asymmetry between speakers, although the hedging in line 211 conveys that POI is taken off guard. He nonetheless produces a supportive response which involves Neil in the investigative task of preserving evidence, while minimising the obligation by choosing an interrogative over an imperative (line 211). In the insertion sequence in lines 209-13 both speakers orient to the officer’s expertise in terms of his professional interest in new evidence (‘lovely’) and his know-how in advising the AV what to do with it. The three falling-tone response tokens in this utterance (line 213) function to close off the topic of text messages and initiate the new topic of statement-taking. In this way, POI manages the progression of topics using affiliative actions which simultaneously address Neil’s concerns while achieving police objectives.

The next extract shows how the officer responds to the evolving problem, whereby it transpires that the AP has messaged one of the AV’s friends. The transcript begins as POI is walking away from Neil towards the door, having previously delayed his departure to address the social media issue in (5.2b).

**Example 5.2d: Neil**

0561 AV (calling after him:)
0562 [>alright<] (. ) here you go! (2.2)
0563 On ‘here’ POI stops suddenly, turns around
0564 one of my friends ( .) has just messaged me ( .)
0565 On ‘one’ POI walks back to stand beside AV
0566 ((AP first name))’s been messaging her {sniffs}
0567 (3.3) {phone pings} ( .) er:m
0568 On ‘erm’ hands phone to PO1; they both look at it;
0569 POI standing and AV sitting
0570 (9.6)
0571 AV you better put a stop to this little ((region))
0572 girl (4.3) y- er:
0573 On ‘y’ stops reading as PO1 starts scrolling down
0574 (17.6)
0575 AV that’s one of my friends she’s- ( .) she said she’d
0576 On ‘that’ points to phone
0577 been messaging her

((25 lines omitted; they discuss the friend))

0602 PO1 (cont.) ahm ( .) what I would- suggest is that
0603 On ‘suggest’ hands phone back to AV
0604 any friends you’ve got ( .) or that she has
0605 messaged with say look >y’know y-< I- I’m asking
0606 you now ( .) just block her (AV: yeah) ( .) cause
0607 On ‘yeah’ AV starts nodding until end of turn
0608 she’s gunna be causing no end of problems and she
0609 will ( .) tryna get co- ( .) tryna get in contact
with me (.) via you. (AV: °yeah°) the option is
you (0.9)
"just block her"
PO1 block her (.) I c- can only ask you that (.) to do
On ‘block’ raises palm towards AV
that for me (.) whether they do or not that’s down
to [them.]
AV °yeah yeah] yeah<=
PO1 =ah what I would say though anything that y’know
she’s tryna be (. ) nasty spiteful about (. ) to get
to you (AV: yeah) (.) tell em you don’t wanna-
don’t wanna hear about anything (AV: >"that’s it
On ‘don’t’ raises both palms towards AV
(. ) yeah"<) like that from them cause i- (.) all
that’ll do that’l just confuse you and it’ll just
make the matters worse (AV: >"yeah yeah"<) and
you- (.) they will start involving themselves then
( .) >"alright?"<
AV ="yeah."
PO1 I’ll go and turn the car on (. ) I’ll come and
[pick you up] >alright<=
AV stands up; PO1 turns and walks towards door

Throughout this extract, POI positions the various participants in ways that display supportiveness while managing how the future scenario unfolds. Neil does not explicitly ask for advice about the AP’s contact with his friends, but he appeals for POI’s attention to the issue by intervening in his departure with ‘here you go’ (line 562). Heritage and Sefi (1992: 376) found that “[d]escribing an untoward state of affairs is … an indirect means of soliciting advice”, requiring professionals to ascertain if they should give advice and thereby confirm the situation as a problem. In this instance, POI aligns with the appeal to his expertise with an explicit process of ‘doing’ advice from line 602, perhaps reflecting the fact that unlike the social media ‘nightmare’, this time he can offer a solution. The first-person framing devices ‘what I would suggest’ and ‘what I would say’ foreground his professional autonomy in tackling the issue from his experience of similar situations. The amount of detail in the advice in lines 602-27, and especially in the direct reported speech, convey POI’s in-depth engagement with Neil’s experiential sphere. The affiliation displayed by ‘nasty spiteful’ (line 619) echoes the ‘silly calls’ of (5.2c), but POI now more explicitly evaluates the AP’s behaviour, in line with the text messages he has just read on the AV’s phone.

These personalising strategies assign the officer some ownership of the future action, mitigating the fact that he is tasking Neil with managing this aspect of the AP’s behaviour. By supplying a suggested script which animates Neil in a hypothetical conversation with his friends, POI puts in place a strategy that does not involve the police. The reported talk creates a complex production format (Goffman 1981) whereby POI is the Author and Animator who projects Neil as Principal in this theoretical scenario. The officer thereby inhabits the AV’s first-
person perspective to display his understanding of and empathy with his situation. Furthermore, through the filter of hypothetical dialogue, he applies more pressure than with his initial ‘what I would suggest’ framing. Accessing Neil’s voice, the officer demonstrates a directive to his friends to ‘block her’, bolstered by an explanation (‘cause’) and bookended by the pleas: ‘I’m asking you now’ and ‘I can only ask you ... to do that for me’. This depiction of Neil reasoning with his friends, as indexed by ‘y’know’, does relational work by offering a positive appraisal of his nature. PO’s switch back to his own voice for ‘down to them’ in line 615-6 displaces the potential blame for the plan’s failure onto the absent friends, backgrounding Neil’s responsibility and enhancing the sense of collaboration between the two present participants. Nonetheless, by positioning the friends centrally, PO also distances himself from the problem with a double buffer of conditionality by which the resolution relies on both Neil’s and the friends’ actions.

PO takes a more prescriptive approach in advising Neil to shield himself from the content of the AP’s communications with his friends. This subtle contrast in responsibility positioning is marked by the emphasis on ‘would’ and the contrastive ‘though’, both of which demarcate the weak deontic modality around blocking the AP (‘down to them’) with the more pressing need to adhere to the subsequent advice. In this turn, PO switches to indirect speech to issue directives to Neil in the present to ‘tell them’ and to his friends with the future declarative, ‘you don’t wanna hear’. It is unclear in Neil’s FRC if the AP will be arrested, so PO’s increased insistence here might also address the practical police concern of managing the situation between the two parties to reduce the likelihood of future incidents. Nonetheless, the threefold explanation supplied in lines 623-7 foregrounds Neil’s personal circumstances without identifying any police objective: ‘that’ll just confuse you ... it’ll make the matters worse ... they’ll just involve themselves’. This explanation invokes Neil’s depiction of a complex situation (e.g. App.R3 lines 567-99) and preserves PO’s position as professional advice-giver who is set apart from the interpersonal dynamics. Throughout the officer’s contributions, Neil provides what Heritage and Sefi (1992) term ‘marked acknowledgements’, which indicate “full-fledged acceptance of advice as advice” (1992: 409). This is evident in his repetition of the directive to ‘just block her’ and frequency of continuers and emphatic agreement tokens, such as ‘that’s it yeah’ (line 621-3), which positively appraise PO’s representation of his experience.

The extract begins with PO turning back from his attempt to drive them to the police station and ends with the resumption of that action. As with (5.2c), therefore, the advice-giving functions to progress the key objective of taking the statement by closing off the issue Neil cites to put the plan on hold (line 562). At the same time, PO balances his goal of statement-taking
with the need to allow relevant information to emerge in real time, in the form of the new messages, and the associated opportunity to put a strategy in place. This example thus traces the co-construction of POI’s expertise in terms of his ability to produce a specific and relevant template for future action. His victim-centred approach functions dually to invite Neil’s confidence in the police and encourage his cooperation in defusing the situation with the AP. Given the question mark over the AP’s arrest, POI’s assignment of responsibility to the AV is presented as a means of empowerment rather than a deflection of police responsibility, reflecting Candlin and Candlin’s observation that “the expert’s discourse [is] recipient designed” (2002: 127). Nonetheless, analysis of the officer’s approach to both the text messages and social media problems show how he tacitly decentralises the police force’s position within the ongoing AP-AV relationship.

5.3 Progressing to statement-taking

The final analysis section in this chapter examines participants’ positionings while managing a key institutionally defined task: arranging to take the AV’s statement. As emphasised throughout FRC guidelines, the written statement that follows the main FRC is the “most desirable form of victim account” (CoP 2022; CPS 2018c). The force-specific procedure further emphasises that ‘complete evidence collation’ must ‘include the obtaining of a victim statement’ (App.I). The first example is from Neil’s FRC and occurs towards the end of the interaction. Having briefly mentioned the statement earlier (5.2a) and obtained the AV’s explicit agreement (App.R3 lines 221-9; 289-90), POI now enacts the transition from their present setting of Neil’s barbershop to the police station for the new activity.

Example 5.3a: Neil

0457 PO1 {cont.} .hh the intention
0458 is- I need to take a statement from you (.)(AV: yeah) as soon as possible [alright?]
0459 AV [{nods} >yeah yeah<] (.)
0461 PO1 even if it’s just a quick (.) holding statement
0462 (.)(AV: °yeah°) to know what’s happened today.
0463 .hh a:h- (.). take me between half an hour (.). to
0464 an hour (.)(AV: °yeah°) t- to take from you (.)
0465 (AV: °yeah°<) obviously the more you tell me
0466 the more detail I can have in there the more
0467 detail (.). the better it can be (AV: °yeah
0468 yeah°<) (.). s- the more de- we put in then the
0470 longer the statement will take. [(.). alright?]
0471 AV [{nods} yeah
0472 that’s cool. it] just needs to stop it’s like-=
0473 On ‘stop’, slices air

((9 lines omitted; AV elaborates on ‘stop’))
PO1 °yeah.° (.). hh it might be easier (.). ahm cause
we’re probably gunna be disturbed quite a bit down
here (AV: °mhm.°) so if you come to ((district))
police station
0486 AV (2.9) [right]
0487 PO1 [ah-] could y- are you able to drive to
((district)) police-
0488 AV [I hav’en’t got a car at the mo[ment]
0489 PO1 [i can] come
and pick you up?
0490 AV (2.0) oh right okay=
0491 PO1 =I’ll pick you up take y’up there (.). the reason
I’m saying that is I can type it out a lot quicker
than I can write it.=
0496 AV =>yeah yeah.<
0497 PO1 a:h- a::nd (.). if- we can type it out we can get a
bit more in there as well then- (AV: >°yeah
yeah"<) (.). ah- (.). i- also we wouldn’t be distur-
disturbed.
0500 AV °mhm°
0501 PO1 you’ll have some privacy >if there’s< anything you
need to tell me in that statement then as well.
(.). we’re less likely to be overheard.=
0505 AV =>yeah yeah.< (.). [yeah yeah.< (.). well-]
0506 PO1 al[right? (.). because] at the end
of the day it’s all about privacy as [well
alright?]
((21 lines omitted; comparing schedules))

0529 PO1 .hh ahm (.). >what< time is it now (0.9) .hhh it’s-
0530 On ‘time’ raises watch to face
0531 (.). nine o’clock ahm- (0.5) are you gunna be
closing shutting up for business today? or are you
gonna be- (.). staying open for a bit longer.
0533 AV I’ll be here till (.) well I was gunna leave at
eleven (0.4) to get to ((suburb)) and then come
0536 back (.). bu::t- I can come down now if you want
0537 PO1 (2.1) if you come with me now
0538 AV yeah.
0539 PO1 you able to do that? (AV: >yeah yeah< (.). let’s
get it done now because i- otherwise it’l’ll drag on
0541 and we won’t get a chance to do it [until
0542 tomorrow]

This extract demonstrates the officer’s staged approach in progressing his aim of bringing the
AV to the police station to give a statement. The move to an institutional setting builds on
Chapter 4’s findings, in that the more stable environment will give POI more control over the
interaction. Example (5.3a) also recalls Chapter 4 in that the authority assigned to Neil within
his own realm requires the officer to interactionally manage their movements out of the space.
In the first place, POI frames the statement dually as an obligation and a benefit to Neil. The
strong modality of ‘need’ and ‘intention’ (lines 457-8) preclude the question of the AV’s consent
and ‘as soon as possible’ adds a time constraint. However, after eliciting an emphatically positive
response (lines 460-1), POI proceeds to display his orientation to Neil’s needs and thereby softens the initial edge of obligation. The officer points to the tension between institutional and lay perspectives with the intensifier ‘even’ (line 462), which acknowledges the time imposition and frames the holding statement as a potential solution. However, without drawing an explicit contrast with the holding statement, POI uses persuasive means to lay the groundwork for a fuller statement in lines 466-70, inviting Neil’s future cooperation by highlighting as common sense (‘obviously’) the correlation between his time, the amount of detail and the benefit. With ‘better’, POI self-positions alongside Neil in his desire to resolve the situation, and the evaluative adjective is a compelling allusion to the successful legal proceedings which could stem from the statement. This personalisation of the justice process is also evident in the frequency of personal pronouns throughout lines 458-70, sustaining the thread of relationality by representing the future institutional activity in terms of joint action between the two of them. Neil’s assertion that ‘yeah it’s cool it just needs to stop’ (line 472) signals his alignment with both POI’s effort to mitigate the imposition and the function of the statement, with his gestural emphasis on ‘stop’ consolidating the solution implied by ‘better’. POI is therefore successful in laying the groundwork for a detailed statement.

The officer’s subsequent proposal to move to the station is therefore set up in advance as a means of facilitating an activity that will be beneficial to the AV. As with the lack of choice in providing a statement in the first place (App.R3 lines 221-9; 289-90), POI employs a variety of strategies throughout the remainder of (5.3a) to subtly restrict Neil’s freedom in terms of where and when it is taken. The central propositions ‘if you come to [the] station’ and ‘if you come with me now’ (lines 484-5; 537) are constructed as (incomplete) conditionals, obscuring their function as directives. Benneworth-Gray (2014: 260) notes that the institutional context licenses interviewing officers to “mimic” other forms when issuing directives, which nonetheless “[perform] the action of telling another to do something”. The conditional form gives the impression of proposing a means to an end, as indexed by the deductive ‘so’ prefacing both utterances. Yet the omission of the result element gives Neil less leeway to negotiate, for example by proposing an alternative means, such as giving the statement in their present setting (cf. 5.3b below).

However, the officer tempers the coerciveness by continuing to position himself centrally as accountable. He explicates the process of accounting with ‘the reason I’m saying that’ (line 493-4) and ‘because’ (line 506) to mark his justifications for choosing the station over their present location and for wanting to take the statement as soon as possible. The justifications refer to the limitations of the present setting in two aspects which orient to Neil’s
needs. In the first place, POI repeatedly refers to the potential for disruption, which is relevant given the two disturbances they have already experienced within the narrative space (see Ch.4.2). This key affordance of the station is then related to the concern of privacy (lines 502-8), which is relevant given Neil’s earlier mention of sensitive medical information. The second cited limitation of their current locale is the lack of statement-taking equipment. The advantages of typing over writing (lines 494-8) recall POI’s earlier characterisation of a longer statement as ‘better’ (line 468), linking the move to the station with a more robust case against the AP. The vision of constructing the statement (lines 494-500) repeats the inclusive we to subsume their individual perspectives (his typing and Neil’s information being heard) into one collaborative process. Similarly, POI displays his personal commitment in line 506-7 with ‘it’s all about privacy’ and when he foregrounds his own limited capacity to record enough information in writing. By accounting for the move on the sole basis of attending to the AV’s needs, the officer backgrounds the benefits to the police of gathering evidence in a more controlled setting and obscures the fact that he gives the AV no choice in the matter. Nonetheless, by positioning the barbershop setting as unsuitable for statement-taking, POI points to the primacy of the statement as evidence over the initial account that Neil has just provided. The references to being ‘disturbed’ negatively evaluate the prior narrative disruptions, but they do so retroactively; he did not respond at the time by giving Neil a choice earlier in the interaction about where he would prefer to tell his story.

POI punctuates his justifications for moving to the station with hesitation markers (e.g. lines 464-5; 469; 497) which convey the officer’s real-time formulation of a plan to suit the AV. These negative politeness strategies reflect the fact that Neil does indicate some hesitation about moving to the station, with turn-initial pauses in response to POI’s initial proposition to move (line 486) and his subsequent offer of a lift (line 492). POI’s responses pick up on Neil’s hesitation, demonstrating how the officer’s victim-centred approach facilitates his objective of moving. Firstly, by probing Neil’s pause in lines 487-8 to identify the transport issue, POI can offer a solution that still involves moving location. The continued hesitation in line 492 then prompts POI to elaborate on his motivations for proposing the move with the accounting strategies outlined above. Neil’s shift to enthusiastic agreement (from line 496) evidences that POI has successfully brought him into alignment with the plan, with the promise of privacy eliciting an especially emphatic agreement (line 505).

Similarly, in the final stretch of the extract, POI involves the AV in progressing the plan further. The gesture-speech ensemble in lines 529-30 communicates a desire to commit Neil to a specific time, although he mitigates the imposition through indirectness: the either-or
interrogative about his plans (line 531-3) projects Neil’s deductive elaboration on his response with the suggestion to ‘come down now’. Neil’s response here aligns with POI’s display of ‘doing thinking’ (Heller 2021), with elongated sounds signposting his process of cooperating with the officer, most notably the contrastive ‘bu::t’ which expresses his understanding that he should revise his existing plan. POI highlights their alignment on the issue with a reformulation in line 537 which echoes Neil’s emphasis on now, rendering the subsequent confirmation check in line 539 all the more restrictive. As with the justifications for preferring an institutional setting, here POI further mitigates the imposition by accounting for why they should go there now.

Throughout the above passage, therefore, POI manages Neil’s agency carefully by guiding him through the process of co-constructing their plan. This approach obscures the fact that ultimately, the officer takes control to move them to an institutional space with established rules that will give him more control over the new activity than he has in their present location. He thus positions himself as mediating between the institution and the AV, fulfilling his obligations while reducing the relational distance between them. The relational work not only facilitates the move itself, but also lays the groundwork for a future interaction in which Neil might be more inclined to cooperate and provide detail. It is notable that despite his affiliative stance, POI does not refer to the AP and instead centralises Neil’s role in resolving the issue. He thereby avoids self-positioning between AV and AP, retaining a degree of objectivity.

The final example in this chapter is from Julia’s FRC. The statement is taken at her house at the end of the FRC, in the final few minutes of BWV footage. She shares the home with her partner, the AP, who left the scene after the reported assault. The below extract illustrates how the officer manages the transition between hearing the AV’s narrative to the new activity, beginning as she re-enters the kitchen after getting statement paperwork from her car.

*Example 5.3b: Julia*

| 0396 | AV | ...~y’know (1.3) he wouldn’t even let me walk up the |
| 0397 |  | [s--] |
| 0398 |  | On ‘y’know’ PO1 enters kitchen; AV is standing |
| 0399 |  | against counter and PO2 standing against sink |
| 0400 | PO1 | [>d‘you] mind-< do you have a dining table? |
| 0401 | AV | (. ) ~er (. ) there is {points} round there ye[ah |
| 0402 |  | (3.3) there is yeah~] |
| 0403 | PO1 | [I’m- |
| 0404 |  | I’m quite happy to sit on- (. ) just sit down |
| 0405 |  | somewhere and- [(. ) press on this] it’s alright |
| 0406 |  | On ‘just’ AV walks between PO1 & PO2 towards dining |
| 0407 |  | area; PO1 hands PO2 the van keys |
| 0408 |  | (6.8) |
| 0409 | AV | Turns on dining area lights; clears space on table; |
leans against wall beside table, facing both POs
~you can sit there (points) it’s full of my- (2.1)
all my work stuff on there it’s only random stuff
that seat you’re fine to sit in-
PO2 takes seat at dining table; starts arranging
paperwork and continues through next turn
(3.1)
~but the thing is like I was just saying to ((PO2
first name)) then I can’t let him get away with this
any more (PO1: "no.") (. I really can’t (. like
I’ve had years of this years and years and years
(3.0) and the thing is there’s not any real physical
ba- marks but if you’ve slapped somebody (. is
there gunna be really a physical:~
PO1 (0.5) no. (. no. "no." not often (. but (. y’know
(. don’t worry about that (. just cause there’s no
On ‘that’clicks pen and starts writing continuously
marks he’s still not allowed t- to do it
AV ~well that’s what I said (. and I think that’s
another thing like- (. I’ve got that that that’s
(0.9) you know what you’re doing
I’m not gunna tell you what t--
(0.5)
PO1 what’s your full name please=
Writing
AV =-it’s ((first name)) ((surname)) it was ((full name
including middle)) ((spells first name))
(3.0)((spells surname))-
PO1 writing continuously
(4.2)
PO1 what was your surname sorry=
AV =-(surname) (. ((spells surname more slowly))
(0.4) I’m telling you I’m taking this all the way
(. I’m not letting this go-
(0.3)
PO1 (0.3)
your occupation was a ((trainee)) yeah?
AV ~yeah a ((trainee professional role))~

As with (5.3a), the officer here does interactional work to progress her objective of taking the statement, which involves moving the participants to the adjoining dining room and drawing the AV away from her narrative. Julia has already provided an extended account, after which she cooperated with the officers in shifting focus towards taking the statement (see Ch.4.2). As evidenced by lines 396-7, she has resumed describing the AP’s behaviour to PO2 while PO1 was outside. PO1’s interruption in line 400 corresponds with her re-entry into the kitchen, cuing her intention to transition to the new activity. However, she softens the proposal to move to a more suitable space with faster speech, negative politeness and an indirect construction (line 400). Even after Julia’s subsequent confirmation, PO1 reiterates that the dining table is an optional affordance (lines 403-5), minimising her own face needs (‘I’m quite happy’) and ad hoc approach (‘just’). PO1 thus displays her flexibility in relation to the necessary conditions for taking the AV’s statement, in contrast to the officer in (5.3a) who positioned the police station as the only appropriate option.
At the same time, POI’s flexible approach to the set-up foregrounds her desire to get started with the statement, whereas Julia displays her divided attention in lines 417-30 between physically facilitating the new activity while discursively remaining in narrative mode. Her leaning against the wall in line 410 positions both officers as her audience, instead of POI who is now seated in preparation for the statement. POI’s behaviour in lines 414-27 displays a similar division of attention, in that she physically orients to the statement by arranging the documentation but verbally orients to what Julia is saying. The supportive response token in line 419 affiliates with Julia’s expressed need to be free of the AP and the initial pause in line 424 allows for the completion of the prior incomplete utterance, conveying that the officer is still listening despite her visible shift in focus. Julia’s question about physical marks (lines 421-3) amounts to a justification that reflects her general orientation to account for her own behaviour and question her entitlement to police support (see Ch.6.2). The continuing intonation of ‘physical…’ and subsequent gap cue that this is not a rhetorical question, but rather an appeal to the officers as professionals who can support her assessment from their expert perspective. POI aligns with the appeal and picks up the thread of expertise ascription with the elaboration ‘not often’ (line 424), implicitly citing her experience with domestic abuse incidents. In this context, the subsequent reassurance (‘don’t worry...’) is imbued with the authority of POI’s expert status, so that the scope of ‘not allowed’ is interpretable as extending beyond lifeworld morality to include the criminality of the AP’s actions, which thus violate both common decency and the law. This dual connotation of ‘allowed’ echoes Neil’s question to the officer in (5.2b) about the AP being ‘allowed’ to mention him on social media.

During this affiliative turn, POI signposts the shift in discourse activity by clicking her pen and writing on the paperwork, the action effectively drawing a line under the narrative stage while neutralising POI’s responsibility for doing so by foregrounding the institutional obligation. This move prompts Julia to cut off mid-utterance in line 430 with an expression of confidence in POI. The deductive assertion, ‘you know what you’re doing [so] I’m not going to tell you what...’ explicitly ascribes know-how to POI, with the epistemic claim reinforcing the expert identity which both speakers indexed in lines 422-7. There is an indication here that the officer’s affiliative expressions (in this extract and throughout the interaction, see Ch.6) encourage the AV’s trust and inclination to cooperate. On the other hand, lack of neutrality impacts police legitimacy, particularly if it could damage the case against the AP, and thus can erode AVs’ trust in the longer-term. This extract therefore lays bare the complexity of balancing supportiveness and objectivity in FRCs, when the AV is making sense of their experience in real-time but the BWV camera preserves the talk for future evaluation. The question of neutrality
will emerge again in Chapter 6, in relation to responsibility and blame, and is interpreted more fully in Chapter 7.

Julia’s assertion in lines 430-1 has an explicit discursive function in handing over the floor to POI to begin taking the statement (‘what you’re doing’). The pause and deictic shift from the past storyworld to the present context marks her alignment with the transition to statement-taking. POI sustains their new focus from line 426 with her continuous writing, which effectively replaces her verbal continuers, and Julia facilitates this process of frontstage entextualisation (Rock 2017) with latched answers and mid-turn pauses to facilitate the writing (e.g. line 441). POI’s non-response to Julia’s assertion in line 442-3 contrasts with the verbal feedback she has provided up to this point, underscoring that they are now firmly within an institutional frame. She mitigates the questioning from line 433 with politeness markers and by supplying a response to ‘your occupation’, displaying her attentiveness to information from earlier in Julia’s narrative. Arminen and Simonen (2021: 588) found that professionals exhibit their expertise by pre-empting answers when form-filling, not only to save time but also to demonstrate “an evolved understanding between the parties” which in turn encourages the interviewee’s continued cooperation. In both Julia’s and Neil’s FRCs, therefore, the officers associate the formalities of statement-taking with efficiency in moving through the necessary steps towards arresting the AP, while orienting to the AVs’ needs to offset the depersonalising shift away from their first account of the incident.

5.4 Synthesis: Positioning and police expertise-in-interaction

This chapter has unpacked how the officers’ expertise-in-interaction while performing key tasks involves (re)positioning themselves and others relative to the tasks, interpersonal relationships, the policing institution, the criminal justice process, and the reported abuse. The construction of the officers as experts, in the sense of ‘showing knowing how to do things’, has involved both strands of expertise: exhibiting their aptitude and, to a lesser extent, invoking their ascribed expert status. These discourse practices are consolidated in this section to inform Chapter 7’s critical interpretation of the role of police expertise-in-interaction in constituting power relations during FRCs.

Analysis in the first section centred on the “problem-definition aspect” (Sarangi & Candlin 2011: 9) of FRCs by tracing the officers’ approach to clarifying a perceived ambiguity in the AV’s account. The issue of the grabbing emerged from a mismatch between Amy’s knowledge of her experience and the “object of knowledge” (Goodwin 2004) the officers needed to secure an arrest. To close this gap, the officers self-positioned ‘as’ the institution by invoking their authority, solidarity, and obligations in exerting pressure on Amy and deflecting personal
responsibility. They therefore located their own expertise primarily in their institutional status, a strategy that obscured their professional autonomy in the decision-making process and positioned them as conduits for procedure instead of experts at enacting it (cf. Peräkylä 2002; see further Ch.7.2). By contrast, the AV appealed to the officers’ ability to protect her in terms of extracting what they need from her account to act. She thus positioned the officers according to the assumption of their expert vision, by which

“...one of the central differences between propositional knowledge and expertise is that the latter implies not just seeing the facts but also comprehending their meaning. The ability to take into account implications of the facts and infer what to do ties expertise to practices and moral reasoning. (Arminen & Simonen 2021: 584)”

Instead, the officers positioned the AV centrally in the decision-making process, tasking her with moulding her experience to fit their institutional framework and implicitly assigning her blame for their inability to act. While communicative difficulties are to be expected in such a complex and high-pressure situation, the officers’ National Decision Model stipulates that in ‘fast-moving incidents’ in which procedure is hindered, “the main priority of decision makers is to keep in mind their overarching mission to act with integrity to protect and serve the public” (Application, CoP 2014b). In Amy’s FRC, the officers’ persistently coercive approach conveyed a lack of sensitivity to her emotional needs, including topicalising her distress to ‘excuse’ her performance. The resultant tension demonstrated how coerciveness in this emotionally charged context maximises the relational distance between AV and officers and, by extension, between AV and institution. Furthermore, evidentially salient information produced by Amy was obscured in the questioning process, demonstrating how “knowing-that and knowing-how may have different, even contradictory, implications for parties in interaction” (Arminen & Simonen 2021: 578). Although ultimately successful in securing the required evidence, the officers’ approach effectively undercut their self-ascribed expertise.

Yet a comparison between the questioning of Amy and the discussion outside the house reveals the officers’ differential positioning vis-à-vis the ‘sticking point’ of diagnosing a physical assault. It is only when alone together that they explicate their professional process of mediating between the AV’s account and their institutional requirements. This process amounts to third-order positioning, by which “one speaker may not have access to a conversation ... even though he or she contributes some of the sentences which serve as pegs for the speech acts the others create” (Davies & Harré 1990: 51). Instead, if the officers were to explain this process more clearly
to Amy to invite her into their sphere, they could reduce both the relational distance and the need for repetitive questioning.

By contrast, the remaining two sections, which focused on Neil’s and Amy’s FRCs, explored instances in which officers took a victim-centred approach that enabled them to accomplish institutionally-defined tasks while inviting the AV’s trust and confidence. The AVs’ cooperation and positive appraisal amounted to a co-construction of police expertise. These scenarios differed from Amy’s FRC in terms of both time-sensitivity and the relative lack of hindrance faced by the officers when addressing the AV’s concerns and arranging to take the statement. Nonetheless, analysis demonstrated a correlation between officers’ self-positioning and their success in these objectives which can be extrapolated to a range of FRC contexts. Recommendations in this regard are considered in Chapter 8.

In the second section, the officer attending Neil’s FRC exhibited expertise in various ways in the tasks of explication about social media and advice-giving about text messages. To these ends, the officer maintained a professional positioning which foregrounded his knowledge, experience, intuition and autonomy in reaching judgement about the situation (see Ch.7.2). It was also found that he used personalising strategies throughout these tasks to display attentiveness and sensitivity to Neil’s needs, but a distinction was observed between the officer’s self-positioning in relation to a problem for which he had a ready solution (the text messages) and one with no straightforward solution (social media). For the former, the officer used personalisation to self-position ‘with’ Neil as his expert advisor. On the other hand, when laying out the limits of police capabilities in relation to social media, the officer self-positioned as “we”, the investigative team caught between their impetus to help Neil and the complexities of institutional procedure. With regard to both problems, the officer also positioned the police, AV and AP in relation to the investigation in ways that retained some neutrality and downgraded police responsibility for the unfolding situation. In particular, by mediating between AV and institution rather than between AV and AP, the officer minimised the relational distance between interlocutors while preserving his impartiality during the first (recorded) account of the incident. The officer’s approach to Neil’s expressed concerns thus demonstrated how the strategic use of positioning can achieve not only supportive aims but also those which may not align with those of the AV.

The prioritisation of police objectives emerged more clearly in the third analysis section in relation to statement-taking, which involved physically and verbally drawing the AVs (Neil and Julia) away from their narrative space. The greater imposition in Neil’s FRC of moving to the police station was reflected in the degree to which the officer foregrounded his own
professional accountability by offering explanations and justifications. In both Neil’s and Julia’s FRCs, the officers managed the transition by blending lifeworld and institutional positionings, which simultaneously mitigated the imposition while foregrounding the connection between the formal activity and the potential prosecution case. The latter strategy framed the AVs’ expressed need to be free of the AP as a shared goal, contrasting with the way in which the officers in Amy’s FRC used the same expressed need as a tool of coercion, to raise doubt about her claims and the possibility of arrest. At the other end of the spectrum, Julia’s FRC illuminated the delicacy of managing positioning along the relational gradient, in relation to police impartiality. By labelling the AP’s behaviour as “not allowed” (5.3b), the officer drew AV and institutional perspectives together in a way that elicited Julia’s confidence in the officer’s ability to help her (see also e.g. Ford et al. 2019). This strategy reflects the emphasis on rapport in FRC guidelines, which thereby frame interpersonal work as a professional exercise as well as a relational one (Build Rapport, CoP 2022). At the same time, such subjective positioning bears potential implications for the prosecution case further along in the justice process, with associated perceptions of police competence. The relationship between positioning and police impartiality will be developed further in the analysis to follow (Ch.6) and critically evaluated in the Discussion chapter (Ch.7).

Throughout the examples in this chapter, the AVs made the officers’ expert status visible by appealing implicitly and directly for assistance, a fact that highlights the role of expertise in constructing police legitimacy. In turn, the achievement of police expertise was located in their ability to accomplish institutional objectives by blending personal, professional and, to a far lesser extent, institutional positionings. These dimensions of police expertise will remain squarely relevant throughout the next analysis chapter, which shifts focus to explore the delicate matter of AVs’ (self-)positioning in relation to responsibility for the reported abuse.
Chapter 6: Positioning and victim responsibility

The concept of responsibility is inextricably woven into the police first response call-out (FRC) context, which is engendered by the alleged victims’ (AV) report of criminal behaviour and driven by their subsequent description of it. Furthermore, the previous two chapters have illustrated certain aspects in which both officers and AVs are positioned as responsible relative to the setting, interactional space and police expertise. Building on these findings to inform Chapter 7’s interpretation of how AVs’ responsibility positionings constitute power relations, this final analysis chapter addresses the question: How are participants positioned while co-constructing the alleged victims’ responsibility in relation to the reported events? The events in question encompass the reported domestic abuse (DA) incident and wider relationship. The DA literature discussed in Chapter 2 demonstrated that vulnerable victims are often predisposed to self-blame stemming from perpetrators and cultural ideologies (e.g. Towns & Adams 2000; 2016; MacLeod 2016), indicating the potential complexities around positioning AVs as accountable in the FRC context. This chapter examines AVs’ responsibility (self-)positionings during the pivotal process of producing their first version of events, and how these constructions position the officers and others in turn. Responsibility positioning bears implications for the officers’ interpretation (and diagnosis) of the reported events, the version captured by the BWV for the record, and the AVs’ process of making sense of their own behaviour regarding the alleged perpetrator (AP).

To recap from the research background (Ch.2), Solin and Östman (2015: 289) propose that responsibility is a discursive phenomenon, which is “not perceived as predetermined and stable, but as construed and negotiated in discourse”. Central to this process are the overlapping dimensions of moral responsibility, which entails “rightness and respect for others”, and causal responsibility, which “conveys that a particular action has caused an outcome, but that something could have been done to avert it” (Sarangi 2015: 298; Baier 1991). Analysis in this chapter uncovers the discursive manifestations of responsibility on a moment-to-moment basis, both implicit and in the form of explicit responsibility talk and responsibility-implicative language (Matarese 2015). Participants deal with being positioned as responsible through the use of accountings, such as explanations and justifications, which “interactionally construct preferred meanings for problematic events” (Buttny 1993: 21; Scott & Lyman 1968; see Ch.3.3).

FRC guidelines (outlined in Ch.1) make several references to the issues of responsibility and blame. The ‘Build Rapport’ section on “why a victim might appear willing to engage” proposes aspects in which officers might be inclined to blame victims instead of empathise
(Build Rapport, CoP 2022). The guidelines also point to the ramifications of responsibility positionings on the police-victim relationship: “Where a victim feels unsupported or disbelieved themselves, they are less likely to support police action” (Build Rapport, CoP 2022). Two related points to establish from the outset are that officers are instructed to a) not assume that the complaining party is the actual (or only) victim and b) take into account any historical violence or abuse as a means of ascertaining either party’s guilt (Determining the Primary Perpetrator, CoP 2022). In the present dataset, each AV has contacted the police and, correspondingly, their narratives presuppose the APs’ culpability, both during the incident and in the wider relationship. It is important to reiterate that this chapter’s focus on the AV stems from the inductive finding that in each interaction, participants position not only the APs but the AVs as accountable and potentially responsible in aspects of the reported events.

The chapter is organised according to three main themes emerging from analysis, taking the most explicit responsibility orientations as the point of departure. The first section examines AVs’ representations of being blamed by others in the past. Victim blame is manifested in their narratives in two forms: counter-accusations from the AP during the incident and blame from other people regarding AVs’ involvement with the AP. The second section shifts focus from blame to the co-construction of responsibility, which in these data centres on the AVs’ present and future situation (‘what happens next’), with the officers taking a more active role in this process. The third and final section examines instances wherein AVs’ accountability is made relevant by officers’ questioning about the reported abuse. The chapter thus addresses responsibility orientations that derive from both AV and officer contributions, revealing the different facets of AVs’ experience that are deemed accountable by participants. Analysis considers the implications of these police and AV responsibility orientations interacting with and shaping each other during FRCs.

6.1 Reconstructing past blame
This section examines AVs’ responses to having been positioned as blameworthy by others in the past. A feature that is centrally relevant to this focus is the blame-account sequence, defined by Buttny as “an explanation offered to an accuser which attempts to change the potentially pejorative meanings of action” which “can transform what was initially seen as reproachable to something seen now as justifiable or at least understandable” (1990: 219; see also Ingrids 2014; Franzén & Aronsson 2018). Analysis begins with AVs’ representations of accusations made by the APs during the incident under investigation.
6.1.1 Blame from perpetrators during the incident

In line with the pattern of blame displacement observed in domestic abuse research (e.g. Pence & Paymar 1993; Anderson & Umberson 2001; LeCouteur & Oxlad 2011; Edin & Nilsson 2014, Pallatino et al. 2019), each AV in the data describes having been accused by the AP during the unfolding incident. Counter-allegations are a frequent feature of DA incidents (CoP 2022), so representations of AP blame not only contribute to participants’ immediate sense-making processes but are also evidentially salient in relation to potential future legal proceedings.

In the first two examples, from Amy’s FRC, the AV reconstructs the AP’s repeated assertions that she had people visiting her house on the evening in question. The AP is her ex-partner and throughout her narrative Amy cites drug-fuelled jealousy as his motivation for coming to her house, assigning her with both moral and causal responsibility. The extracts below occur at different points in the FRC, with the first near the beginning and the second near the end.

Example 6.1a: Amy

| 0149 | AV | ~huh "ok" so I- it took me ages then to call |
| 0150 | AV | On ‘ok’ sets phone on counter |
| 0151 | AV | because he was- #took both the phones .huh so I |
| 0152 | AV | couldn’t do anything and he was- he was even em .huh |
| 0153 | AV | huhhh (PO1: “yeah”) trying to get into the attic |
| 0154 | AV | >.huh.huh< saying there's people here and there's |
| 0155 | AV | not (. ) (PO2: “ok”) it's just been me and the baby |
| 0156 | AV | On ‘not’ shakes head vigorously |
| 0157 | AV | all night so .huh.huh< I dunno his head’s |
| 0158 | AV | [obviously gone] but-# |
| 0159 | PO2 | [you recent-] (2.4) you recently moved in here have |
| 0160 | AV | you or-= |
| 0161 | AV | =~”yeah”= (wipes eyes) >.huh.huh<~ |

Example 6.1b: Amy

| 0490 | AV | {cont.} so I’ve |
| 0491 | AV | gone in the b(h)ed- (. ) the b(h)edroom (. ) like- |
| 0492 | AV | >the bedroom< and I said *are you doing* he was |
| 0493 | AV | just searching round {sniffs} threw his money on the |
| 0494 | AV | (. ) bed {sniffs} looking under the bed and stuff and |
| 0495 | AV | there’s nothing here >like< you’d know if someone |
| 0496 | AV | was here straightaway >.huh< (PO1: “yeah”) {sniffs} |
| 0497 | AV | and then- (. ) he says stand in the corner you stand |
| 0498 | AV | On ‘stand’ she points aggressively |
| 0499 | AV | there (. ) and I’m gonna- (. ) look round the house |
| 0500 | AV | and I was like *what are you doing* >honestly< I’m- |
| 0501 | AV | (. ) just like shaking and I was just stood there |
| 0502 | AV | ‘cause >I was like< if I go- if I go anywhere near |
| 0503 | AV | him he’s gunna b- .huh hihhh like bomb into the |
| 0504 | AV | baby’s room and I- you know- I can’t have that |
| 0505 | AV | because my little girl’s asleep >like< (PO1: “yeah”) |
| 0506 | AV | I didn’t wanna get to that >.huh.huh< so I just |
| 0507 | AV | st(h)ood there and then he was like- (. ) then he’s: |
These extracts occur within extended narrative turns which, as illustrated here, describe the AP’s frenzied behaviour and Amy’s fear of him. Chapter 5 discussed the significance of her opening claim that he “took both the phones”, in relation to the emergency call-handler’s account of hearing “screaming back and forth” (Ex.5.1b). It is notable that Amy frames this information within an unprompted justification for having taken ‘ages to call’. More specifically, her depiction of the AP’s behaviour as irrational centres on his suspicion and resultant search of the house, expressed here in the acts of blaming in (6.1a line 154) and (6.1b line 510). As the ‘figure’ (Goffman 1981) in Amy’s narrative, the AP thereby positions her as the one responsible for the evening’s events, and she produces accountings in response to this blame.

Notably, however, footing shifts within both these blame-account sequences to create a deictic split between the AP’s acts of blaming in the past and Amy’s acts of accounting, which thereby orient more towards her present addressees, the officers. This split is evident in her switch from past tense narration, in which the reported accusation (6.1a line 154; 6.1b line 510) belongs, to present tense accounting with repeated denials (6.1a lines 154-5; 6.1b 495-6) including an elaborative explanation: ‘it’s just been me and the baby all night’. Amy elaborates further by appealing to her interlocutors’ sense of reason, first by proposing an explanation for the AP’s errant belief (‘his head’s obviously gone’) and then by highlighting how unnecessary his actions were (‘you’d know if someone was here straightaway’). She emphasises his illogicality in both examples, with ‘even’ framing his search of the attic as extreme (6.1a line 152) and the emphasis on ‘bed’ reinforcing this sentiment (6.1b line 494). Her incredulity is crystallised in the display of her own past confusion and surprise in the emphatic ‘what are you doing’ (6.1b line 492), reflecting the responsibility-framing function of direct reported speech (Johansen 2011; Hill & Irvine 1993). In these recontextualisations of a past blame-account sequence, the AV shifts footing to transport her past impetus to account for her actions in the face of the AP through to her present interaction with the police. The accounting thus functions dually to counter the act of blaming both in the storyworld and in the process of producing verbal evidence.

However, a related effect is to create an emphasis on the question of Amy’s own accountability and assign it relevance in the present context. Her elaborated accounting in the present can be considered in light of the AP’s refusal to believe her in the past, as indexed by her return to past-tense direct reported speech in (6.1b lines 497-500) to convey her
helplessness in the face of his determination to ‘look round the house’. The AV’s self-positioning as accountable in the present reflects the connection identified by Davies and Harré (1990: 44) between past and present positionings:

It is the actual conversations which have already occurred that are the archetypes of current conversations. We remember what we and others have said and done, what we believe or were told that they have said and done, where it was wrong and where it was right. (1990: 44)

Amy also displays an orientation to blame anticipation (cf. Atkinson and Drew 1979; MacLeod 2016) when she offers an extended explanation in (6.1b lines 501-5) as to why she ‘was just stood there’ because she did not want him to ‘bomb into the baby’s room’. These accountings, indexed by ‘cause’, ‘and’ and ‘so’, are marked because the AV’s fear for her child could not reasonably be expected to require explanation, given her framing of the AP’s threatening behaviour. He is depicted as maximally aggressive in this passage, pointing, screaming ‘in my face’ and directing a compliant target (‘he told me … so I’ve gone’). She appeals for the officers’ understanding by demonstrating her emotional reaction of ‘shaking’, and in lines 506-8 with an embodied reconstruction of her past sensation of being trapped in the small space. At this point it is enlightening to refer back to Chapter 4.3 to highlight the troubling parallels between the officers’ and the AP’s restriction of Amy’s movements within the same setting (see Ch.7.1). The conditional construction in lines 502-4 creates an image of her standing still to prevent the AP’s behaviour from escalating: *if I go anywhere near him he’s gunna bomb into the baby’s room.* The bomb metaphor frames his hypothetical action of entering the baby’s room as the inevitable consequence of Amy approaching him, positioning her as responsible for lighting his fuse (Aldridge & Steel 2022; see also Cotterill 1998). The AV’s accountings here echo the causal responsibility ascribed by the AP, by which her behaviour drove him to come and check the house.

The phenomenon of bidirectional orientation to blame is also evident in Julia’s FRC. In the following example, the AV reconstructs a blame-account sequence that was initiated during the incident by the AP, her current partner.
Example 6.1c: Julia

0250 AV {cont.} hh like I’ve put up with him still- and he went aw I didn’t do anything you hit me back I said that was retaliation (.). where you had me pinned to the fl(h)oor by my neck and I went- like I grabbed his face and he’s...

>so he’s got a scrab there< (PO1: °hm°) (.). I said look what do you expect I said ((AP first name)) you’re a man (.). I’m a lay- I’m a woman (.). I said my son is not prepared- whereas my- he came down he went mum I’m gunna phone the police (.). so as soon as he hears him say that he’s like aw he was like all thing and about to go (PO1: °mm°) (0.7) but I said the thing is (.). ((AP first name)) I said you’ve g- there’s not a court in the land that w- i- no man should ever put a hand on a woman! (PO1: °mm°) (.). ever (.). a woman should never put a- hand on a man you know it’s- it’s (.). but at the end of the day (.). when you’re coaxed into being in the principle position when you’re made to feel (.). like they’re gunning gunning gunning gunning and going On each ‘gunning’ makes stabbing finger motion red >go red go red go red< it only took aw- one more On ‘red’ holds hands to own neck

Whereas the previous examples showed the AV directing her accounting towards the officers, in this instance Julia produces a complex response to the act of blaming which encompasses her past response to the AP and her present elaboration of this for the officers’ benefit. To this end, she builds contrastive identities which foreground her vulnerability in the face of his physical and psychological attacks, using constructed dialogue by which “characters react to and thus position each other” (Depperman 2015: 378; see also Arribas-Ayllon et al. 2008; Franzén & Aronsson 2010). The AP’s reported act of blaming (line 251-2) is prefaced by the discourse marker ‘aw’, conveying a note of indignance at odds with the propositional contradiction it frames: his claim that he ‘didn’t do anything’ is immediately undercut by the acknowledgement that Julia hit him ‘back’. He thus combines a denial of action with a justification for that action to produce a nonsensical accusation, neutralising Julia’s causal responsibility. Depperman (2015: 376) highlights ventriloquation as a tool of positioning, by which “the speaker takes a stance on the intention attributed to the person quoted”. Here, Julia’s insertion of ‘aw’ imbues the reported accusation with her evaluation of it as unreasonable (as echoed in the indignation conveyed later (line 262) in his response to the threat of the police being called). Her own reported response contrasts with the AP’s speech in its appeal to the common sense understanding that she needed to defend herself in the face of an intense physical assault. Enhanced by her gestures, Julia’s use of reported speech in lines 251-5 functions as a
demonstration (Clark & Gerrig 1990) for the officers, not only of how the AP attacked her, but of the fact that this attack was mutually acknowledged immediately afterwards by both parties. In this way, the constructed exchange adds legitimacy to her present account of the abuse: “what is said presents what was done” (Johansen 2011: 2850).

The AV’s extended accounting for her ‘retaliation’ is centred on the imbalance of physical power between them, deflecting the moral responsibility the AP ascribed to her for hitting him. As compared with his claim, Julia constructs a very different image of self-defence, whereby she ‘grabbed his face’ while he ‘had’ her ‘pinned to the floor’ by her neck (lines 254-5). The pinning metaphor suggests a precision and deliberateness in his immobilisation of her, contrasting with her spontaneous, desperate action of grabbing. The vivid description of the altercation underscores Julia’s lack of agency and responsibility, amounting to a justification in itself for the officers’ benefit, embedded within her past justification to the AP. The man/woman dichotomy (lines 259 & 266) reinforces the characters’ oppositional positionings, and she drives home the common-sense nature of her perspective by demonstrating her past appeal to reason (‘look...what do you expect’; ‘the thing is’). Emphasis accumulates throughout these lines through deontic modality, extreme case formulation and the appeal to institutional authority (‘no man should ever’; ‘not a court in the land’).

The son’s appearance in lines 260-1 functions as an insertion sequence within Julia’s retelling of the exchange. It is unclear as to the actual sequential positioning of his contribution vis-à-vis Julia’s ongoing response to the AP, particularly because she makes the son relevant during her point about men’s treatment of women. Nonetheless, because the third character joins the participation framework but addresses only her (‘mum’), his intention to call the police is framed as aligning with her needs and thus provides further proof of who was to blame. Galatolo found that a witness “may accomplish moral work by using direct reported speech to represent someone else’s reaction to a fact or a person that the witness wants to depict as morally condemnable” (2007: 217), so that blame is allocated “by activating the voice of a person reacting to the person to blame” (219). In the same way, Julia’s account is bolstered by her demonstration of her son’s expressed intention to help her. Furthermore, although she does not explicate the AP’s response to the threat of police intervention in lines 262-3 (‘he was all thing’), the fact that he was (according to her) prepared to leave their shared home reinforces his position as culpable in comparison to her. The insertion of his voice with ‘aw’ echoes the indignation of his earlier accusation (line 251) and thereby imports the unreasonableness of that accusation into the new utterance.
The reported blame-account sequence in (6.1c) therefore provides a robust defence against the AP’s assignment of responsibility to the AV for their physical altercation. Nonetheless, as with the examples from Amy’s FRC (6.1a & 6.1b), Julia’s reported act of accounting to the AP is interspersed with instances of self-positioning towards her present addressees. In the first place, she breaks from her narrative in line 257 to relate the presence of a ‘scrab’ on the AP’s face to the powerful image of an assault she has just created. The use of present tense ‘he’s got’ orients to the status of the mark as physical evidence of her self-defence that might be relevant to the present investigation. The explanation about the scrab indicates her awareness that the AP might reiterate his strategy of blaming her when questioned by the police. Similarly, by acknowledging (in lines 267-8) that women should not hit men, Julia differentiates herself (‘but’) from other women who might do this without justification, as per the AP’s positioning of her. (Ch7.3 will evaluate gendered DA dynamics vis-à-vis AVs’ responsibility positionings.) She further justifies her own action with a series of metaphors (lines 269-74) which convey her powerlessness and echo her earlier description of being pinned to the floor. This time, she incorporates the oppressive effects of non-physical abuse, with the image of her being ‘coaxed into...the principle position’ expressing her lack of agency in the line of fire of his verbal ‘gunning’. The gesture-speech ensemble (Kendon 2004) in line 272 underscores the relentlessness of these verbal attacks, which she described earlier as preceding the physical assault: ‘you’re a slag; you’ve been cheating on me’ (App.R2 line 207). The sense of urgency reaches a crescendo with the follow-up ‘going red’ ensemble (lines 273-4), which demonstrates the immediate danger she found herself in, with no choice but to defend herself. As was observed in Amy’s FRC, the officers here offer only supportive continuers and do not engage with the question of Julia’s responsibility for her actions. Example (6.1c) therefore amounts to another example of an AV importing accountability assigned by the AP into the present context, displaying her orientation to how the officers are interpreting her version of events.

In the next example, from Neil’s FRC, the AV more explicitly addresses the potential for counter-allegations from the AP, his ex-partner.

*Example 6.1d: Neil*

0110 AV (0.3) she’s grabbed that off (0.2) there ()
0111 On ‘grabbed’ picks it up; sets it beside PO1
0112 thrown that at me that’s hit me ()
0113 On ‘hit’ steps back, gesturing to side of head
0114 PO1 “okay.”
AV (sniffs) she’s gone back that way em (0.7) and
screaming and shouting (. I’m just keeping her at
arm’s length (0.8) and then (. phoning nine nine
nine (. em- so it wasn’t one oh one because
before she even turned up it just kept going
through like- to the operator and nobody answered
my phone message (0.4) she’s come back grabbed
that thrown that (0.5) erm she tried picking my
((other heavy object)) up to hit me with that (.)
em (0.2) she’s gone over there (. I’ve managed-
her’s fallen over I’ve- (.) pinned her (. to the
On ‘pin’ holds out right arm with palm facing
down; puts other hand up to ear, phoning
side so she’s on her side (. (sniffs) then I’m
speaking to (. like the actual operator (PO1:
yeah.) at the time (0.6) em (. she’s got up (.)
gone there I’m tryna hold her back still (.)
(exaggerated whine:) oh he’s punching me he’s
punching me which I wasn’t (0.3) em (0.1) she
managed to get out over there (cont.)

This example differs from those previous, in which the APs positioned the AVs as the cause of
their abusive actions of ransacking Amy’s house and hitting Julia (back). Here, the AP’s act of
blaming is confined to his action of punching her, within the wider context of her assault by
throwing objects. As Neil is the only male AV in the data, it is important to acknowledge the
conventional assumption of men’s physical dominance over women (as reflected in 6.1c) in
relation to the moral responsibility associated with his physical actions against the AP (Connell
& Messerschmidt 2005; Andersson 2008). In this case, Neil employs similar accounting
strategies as those observed in the female AVs’ representations of past blame from APs. He uses
direct reported speech to animate the accusation, and provides an extended justification for the
physical contact which functions to deny the blame. More so than in the previous examples,
here the AV situates his accounting squarely in the present context for the benefit of POI as his
addressee, restricting the AP to a figure in the narrative. He indexes this participation structure
by producing his explanation for his actions before the reported accusation. As a result, the AP’s
accusation is presented for interpretation in comparison to Neil’s version, as opposed to the
blame-account structure employed by Amy and Julia (6.1a-c). The effect is to amplify the
absurdity of the reported accusation by framing it with Neil’s contrastive explanation of his
behaviour.

This passage also includes an echo of the image supplied by Julia in (6.1c), in that Neil
describes himself restraining the AP using the metaphor of pinning her down. This is the action
which he later (lines II6-7) reports as the AP labelling ‘punching’, reflecting the version she
might be likely to relay to the police if questioned in the present context. Reflecting the
seriousness of the ‘punching’ accusation, here Neil frames the accusation by first accounting for
the physical contact, providing a justification for it which entails minimising his agency and the aggressiveness of the action. In the first place, he appeals to institutional procedure, in the description of his efforts to take the correct steps to contact the police in a situation of escalating risk (lines 117-121). The embedded justification, to explain why he was using the emergency number, conveys Neil’s prolonged attempt to get through to the police, strengthening his moral justification for the physical contact with her. His actions of ‘keeping her at arm’s length’, pinning her down and holding her back were motivated not only by the need to protect himself against her attack but also by his ongoing efforts to access police help. Furthermore, Neil’s description of his own behaviour mitigates his agency in various ways, foregrounding the fact that he acted out of necessity to defend himself against an onslaught of attacks (such as in lines 121-3). Lexical choice throughout this passage builds a vision of the AV’s prolonged and desperate effort, with ‘just’ (line 116), ‘managed’ (line 124), ‘tryna’ and ‘still’ (line 131) depicting him as barely able to fend her off. His reported ability to restrain the AP stems from the latter having fallen over, so that she is positioned as the actor and Neil’s agency is backgrounded in this potentially aggressive action. Similarly, his prone gesture in line 126-7 depicts him holding her down with one hand, which is a considerably less aggressive action than is conjured by the ‘pinned’ metaphor. Correspondingly, in line 130-1 he reports that the AP freed herself from this restraint without complication (‘she’s got up’ and ‘gone there’), maintaining her agency and ultimate freedom of movement throughout this passage, despite his efforts to act against her.

Compared with Neil’s foregoing detailed description, he interjects the AP’s ultimate accusation of ‘punching’ (lines 132-3) into his narrative to present a comparably invalid version of what happened. The incongruity of her accusation lies not only in her proposition of violence that contradicts Neil’s version so starkly, but also in its reported delivery. As in Julia’s representation in (6.1c), the ‘oh’-preface imbues the quotation with a note of disparagement in Neil’s evaluation of it. This evaluative marker combines with the repetition of ‘he’s punching me’ to portray the AP’s calculated display of victimhood for the benefit of the call handler (cf. Ingrids 2014). The AP’s note of exaggerated whining echoes the earlier ‘screaming and shouting’ (line 116) in Neil’s portrayal of the AP as immature and unreasonable (see also App.R3 lines 83-4; 135-6). In line with this identity construction, the third-person pronoun ‘he’ conveys an attempt to override the institutionally-defined participation framework established between AV and the call-handler, whom the AP assumes as her addressee. The belligerence with which she disrupts the telephone interaction contrasts with Neil’s prior explanation of his adherence to institutional procedure in trying to contact the police.
He thus reconstructs the AP’s past attempt to incriminate him (which is potentially retrievable from the call recording) in a way that frames her act of blaming as an offensive strategy within the context of her ongoing physical attack on him. The contrast between their competing versions and positionings is crystallised in Neil’s switch back to his own ‘voice’ in line 133 to issue the matter-of-fact denial directly to POI: ‘which I wasn’t’. He does not elaborate on this denial (as did Amy and Julia in the previous extracts), having already provided the elaborative detail in his prior description of what happened. Example (6.1d) can be interpreted in light of Neil’s claim that the AP has made false accusations against him to the police on multiple occasions (see 6.3a), creating a multidirectional accounting that is relevant not only to the present interaction but also to the potential reporting history available for the police to assess Neil’s behaviour. This subsection has thus identified a distinction whereby Amy’s and Julia’s self-positionings echoed past blame from the APs (6.1a – 6.1c), while Neil orients more (6.1d) to the potential for future blame from the police. The nuances of AVs’ variable blame orientations can be unpacked further in relation to past blame from others.

6.1.2 Past blame from other sources
In this subsection, AVs reconstruct past episodes in which they were held accountable by other people for their involvement with the AP. In the following examples, Julia discusses her continued involvement with her ex-partner after he had already been abusive, culminating in the resumption of their relationship.

Example 6.1e: Julia

0167  AV ~*anyway* .hh (.) um a couple of weeks ago- about
0168  two weeks ago (.) he was going {aggressive:} >on and
0169  on and on< he wants to see us and he wants to see
0170  his daughter ((first name)) (0.7) so (.) I was like
0171  (0.3) against everybody else’s (.) input (.) my dad
0172  my mum (0.3) don’t let him see her blah blah blah
0173  (.) me being (.) soft if you like (.) let him see
0174  the baby. >anyway< before I knew it he was back
0175  involved (POI: °mm°) °°he was back in my life°°

Example 6.1f: Julia

0338  AV [but I] work
0339  for the community my last placement was on community
0340  s-.hh my dad (.) my dad doesn’t actually know that
0341  he’s been coming back here because if my dad knew
0342  he’d go >absolutely ballistic< (.) my dad’s like
0343  you’re working with the vulnerable like why aren’t
In both these extracts, the AV represents specific instances in which her parent(s) oriented to her responsibility in relation to being in contact with the AP. In doing so, she contrasts their perspective with her own, from which she accounts for the continued contact. These accountings rely on Julia’s self-positioning as being caught in the middle between the persuasive forces of her parents and the AP (cf. Pence & Paymar 1993), a positioning that she indexes using reported speech and metaphor. In (6.1e), the AP’s coerciveness is initially conveyed through indirect reported speech in lines 168-70, with the repetition of ‘on and on and on’ and ‘he wants’ animating his persistent demands. Julia cites this pressure to account for the fact that she eventually granted him access to their child, as evidenced by the deductive ‘so’ in line 170 that introduces her explanation. So far in this reconstructed scenario, therefore, she cites her behaviour as having been directed by the AP.

However, by introducing her parents’ unsuccessful attempts at persuasion (6.1e lines 171-2), the AV applies a blame-account structure which foregrounds her own responsibility and potential culpability in renewing the relationship. The parents’ reported talk conveys the insistence with which both of them (‘my dad my mum’) applied verbal pressure, with the bald directive (‘don’t let him’) and repetition (‘blah blah blah’) echoing the AP’s demanding voice from earlier in the extract. Julia also conveys this ‘input’ metaphorically, as something she was able to act against, despite her parents’ pressure. She thereby positions herself as having had some agency in the situation, and ‘soft’ acknowledges her potential culpability in having made the wrong decision. At the same time, this characterisation also functions as an accounting that frames her behaviour as an emotional response to a father’s desire to see his daughter (see Enander 2010; Hydén 2005), thereby self-positioning as responsible for the emotional needs of both AP and their child. The two contrastive identities are crystallised in the juxtaposition of the AV’s malleability with the AP’s forceful re-entry into her life without her conscious involvement (lines 174-5). Example (6.1e) thus communicates Julia’s sense of being caught in the middle between two imposing forces, with the AP ultimately dominating. Her struggle back and forth between the two perspectives is reflected in a fluctuation between responsibility positionings during this passage, whereby she validates her parents’ assignment of agency while citing her actual lack of agency in the face of the AP.
In example (6.1f), Julia again accesses her parents’ past blame to reposition herself in the present context of her interaction with the officers. Whereas the previous example centred primarily on her causal responsibility for resuming the relationship, this example brings her moral responsibility to the fore. Her fluctuation between positions hinges on the two occurrences of ‘but’. In the first place, in line 338, the discourse marker points to a contrast between her situation with the AP and the expectations surrounding her work, with intonational stress and the repetition of ‘community’ underscoring her professional responsibilities. She supports this self-assessment by projecting her father’s reaction to her situation (lines 342-4), animating his attempt to reason with her using direct reported speech, as in (6.1e), which vividly conveys both frustration and insistence: ‘why aren’t you realising this’. This beseeching combines with his projected explosive reaction in line 342 to reinforce the pressure Julia experienced from both sides. With the second ‘but’, in line 344, she repositions herself by contrasting the appeal to her professional role (as cited by her and her father in the first half of the extract) with the AP’s dominance, which she emphasises through metaphor. The vivid depiction of the AP manually controlling her mind neutralises the moral responsibility assigned by her father.

In both extracts above, therefore, the AV contrasts her parents’ voice of reason with the AP’s means of manipulation to acknowledge the potential blame levelled at her while demonstrating her lack of agency at the time. She thereby cites the past reactions of others as a means of addressing her responsibility and accounting for her actions in the present context of the FRC. As was observed throughout Section 6.1.1, Julia’s representational choices suggest an orientation to blame anticipation in her interaction with the officers. As with each example so far, the officer here does not contribute to the construction of the AV’s responsibility, beyond the supportive continuers which acknowledge her claims of having had no agency.

In the final example in this section, Neil orients to (perceived) blame from other sources based on his relationship with the AP and, by extension, losing access to his children. In this instance, the source of past blame is social services and, implicitly, his ex-partner.

**Example 6.1g: Neil**

0002 AV  em (.) so she turned up at my flat what- two three
0003   weeks ago (.) just walked straight in knowing my
0004   kids would be there (PO1: "mhm") (.) (4 syllables)
0005   (.) em (.) social services have stopped me seeing
0006   them because they can’t guarantee [my-]
0007   On ‘see’ PO1 starts writing in notebook
0008 PO1 "[*>({acronym}))] yeah<="
Here, the AV reconstructs the sequence of events which led to losing access to the children, a potentially contentious issue with the potential to reflect badly on him (e.g. Jarnkvist 2019; Yatchmenoff 2005). Neil’s recontextualisation entails a multi-layered construction of responsibility which repositions the participants (him, the AP, the ex-partner, social services and the social worker) according to his present goal of describing the AP’s abusive behaviour to POI. The initial image in line 2 of her materialising and walking ‘straight in’ when Neil’s children were there aligns with his wider positioning of her as a belligerent intrusion in his life. By linking from this image to the information about losing access, he assigns her causal responsibility for this development. The strong modality of his explanation that ‘they can’t guarantee...’ (line 7) indicates Neil’s alignment with social services in their concern for the children’s welfare.

Unlike the examples so far in this section, here the officer actively engages with the past situation in which the AV was held accountable. POI’s writing in line 7 conveys the investigative relevance of the social services information, as confirmed with reference to the question about children’s social care in the DASH risk assessment questionnaire (Richards 2009: 6-10). Although obscured by simultaneous talk, the deontic modal can in line 10 indicates POI’s attempt to offer Neil assistance in some aspect and thus aligns with his self-positioning as the wronged party in this scenario. However, whereas POI’s falling tone in line 10 could close the topic, Neil elaborates with a contrastive, ‘but’ which signals a problem with the social services action against him, introducing his explanation as to why he was not to blame. He thus imports the issue of his own accountability into the present interaction to address it.

The reconstruction of the AP’s act of blaming and subsequent behaviour in lines 11-18 echoes those observed in examples 6.1a through to 6.1d, although Neil does not detail here what she accused him of (beyond ruining her life), nor about the contents of the letter. By contrast, he vividly reconstructs her subsequent threat using direct report speech, anchored by the attitudinal marker ‘aw’ (see also 6.1c and 6.1d), which demonstrates her malicious intent in
sending the letter and thereby undercuts her ascription of blame. By acting on the AP’s information, social services could be perceived as aligning with her positioning of Neil. He offsets this inference by accessing the authority of the social worker’s voice to ‘disregard’ the letter as something deemed unworthy of institutional attention. The use of indirect reported speech obscures whether this choice of framing can be attributed to the social worker or to Neil.

In contrast to the AP’s foregrounded position, the AV mitigates his assignment of responsibility to the other people involved. In the first place, he obscures the ex-partner’s agency throughout the chain of events leading to his losing access. It is unclear what happened when the AV ‘called for the girls’ (line 15-6), and the ex-partner’s only included action (giving the letter) is backgrounded through passivisation (line 18-9). The social worker’s role is foregrounded, but Neil tempers the criticism of their actions that is inherent in ‘but’ (line 20) with epistemic modality (‘I don’t think’) and further acknowledges the face-threatening potential of criticising an institutional representative with ‘to be honest’. Through contrastive representations of AP and social worker, therefore, Neil outlines an institutionally-facilitated injustice against him while positioning the AP centrally as the one to blame. Whereas the ex-partner and social worker are represented as being motivated by concern for the children’s welfare, the AP’s reported behaviour contributes to Neil’s narrative of ongoing abuse, as expressed in the metalinguistic framing of ‘it’s just one thing after another’ (line 21-2). He thereby rejects the responsibility that was assigned to him in the past context by explicitly framing this event for POI as further evidence of the negative impact the AP has had on his life. The complexity of this representation, with its layered acts of blaming and accountings, brings to the fore the overarching conflict between APs and AVs that drives all three interactions in the data.

In line with the pattern established so far in this chapter, Neil’s accounting in (6.1g) is bidirectional in function. His reported rejection of blame in the past context, whereby the social worker felt he had grounds to disregard the letter, also demonstrates for POI Neil’s blamelessness in relation to the contentious issue of access to the children. In turn, he attends to the possibility that POI is going to contact social services by providing the necessary information from his own perspective. This extract thus provides further evidence of how the AVs in all three cases orient to potential blame in relation to their children (see also Buchbinder & Eisikovits 2004; Woods 2010). The findings about this contentious topic bear implications for the AVs’ power relative to both the APs and the institutions which govern their care of the children, as will be discussed in Chapter 7.
6.2 Responsibility for ‘what happens next’

This section shifts focus from the AVs’ reflections on the past to the construction of their present and future responsibilities. Corresponding with the fact that they have taken action by contacting the police on this occasion, the AVs position themselves more centrally as accountable for what happens next, but with differing degrees of responsibility. This section is divided into instances in which the AV (Julia) self-positions as responsible for the future and those in which the AV (Neil) is moved towards this positioning by the officer. Analysis will show how these (re)positionings also involve negotiating the officers’ subject positions within the unfolding narrative.

6.2.1 Claiming responsibility for leaving the AP

The following example is taken from an extended narrative turn, during which Julia discusses her decision to call the police.

Example 6.2a: Julia

0217  AV  # {cont.} so - (. ) he
0218  AV  hit me (. ) tried to {puts hand to throat} strangle
0219  AV  me {PO1: "mm"} (. ) and all the rest of it (. ) I was
0220  all >I says< right you’ve gotta go. I says I’m not
0221  fighting with you I’m not arguing (. ) he threw all
0222  that shit in there- (PO1: "hm") in {points to sink}
0223  there# (PO1: "yeah.") ~I said right you’ve gotta go
0224  I said I’m phoning the police I said ((AP’s first
0225  name)) y’know - (. ) and then that was it (. )
0226  (beseeching:) please please >please< I said d’you
0227  know what- .hh #I said I’ve put up with this (PO1:
0228  "mm") .hh >for years-< I said I can’t do it no
0229  On ‘can’t’ holds out hands palms up; face crumples
0230  m(h)ore (PO1: "yeah.") I said I’ve got children
0231  upstairs I’m doing this ((qualification)) like I’m
0232  supposed to be (. ) like y’know (. ) like the police
0233  like the doctors you’re sp- you’re supposed to have
0234  like a decorum about you that you don’t have people
0235  like that around you .hh I said I’ve given you
0236  chance after chan- ch(h)ance (. ) anyway he had me by
0237  my neck then (. ) he snapped my phone so I couldn’t
0238  phone the police (PO1: "mm") so I went to phone them
0239  off my son’s °.hh .hhº ph(h)one (0.2) so that’s all
0240  my photos >I probably can get them back< but that’s
0241  all my photos of the baby and things like that (. )
0242  he’s going you aren’t getting the police >you
0243  aren’t< I said I’m gunna have to (PO1: "mm") (. ) I
0244  said d’you what there’s so many times I could have
0245  phoned them and I jus- (. ) haven’t and- (PO1:
0246  "yep.") but it gets to the point now where (. ) I
0247  personally believe that you- you belong (0.2)
0248  somewhere (. ) where they can (0.4) er- prison
0249  basically because you cannot deal with being in
0250  normal society (. ) (PO1: "yep.") (cont.)#
In this passage, Julia reconstructs her internal debate regarding an emotional dilemma that is frequently faced by DA victims: taking action against the abuser (Towns & Adams 2009; Billig et al. 1988). As was observed earlier in (6.1b), the juxtaposition between the AP’s depicted violence and the AV’s detailed justifications for her actions indicate an orientation to her own accountability, even when her need to defend herself is self-evident from the narrative. However, unlike in the examples discussed so far, (6.2a) entails a shift from a past state of powerlessness to a present state of resolve. This shift is expressed in the modality of ‘I’m phoning the police’ (line 224), ‘you’ve gotta go’ (line 220 & 223) and ‘you cannot deal with being in normal society’ (lines 249-50). These assertions position her centrally as taking action, contrasting with her expressions of former helplessness with ‘I’ve put up with this’ (line 227-8), ‘I’ve given you chance after chance’ (line 235-6) and ‘I just haven’t’ (line 245). The shift is also indexed by the transition marker ‘right’ (lines 220 & 223), which introduces decisive action, and ‘d’you know what’ (line 226-7), which introduces a comparison of past and present that is driven home with ‘but it gets to the point now’ (line 246). The constructed dialogue also conveys Julia’s agentialisation in that she rebuts the AP’s efforts, contrasting with other occasions in her narrative when she demonstrates his ability to apply verbal pressure to overpower her. These other occasions are referenced in line 225: ‘and then that was it’ frames the AP’s upcoming reported speech as conforming to an established pattern, as was exemplified by his repetitive, insistent ‘on and on and on’ pleas in (6.1e).

The contrast between the AV’s past and present position inheres in her cited lack of choice in the matter, as expressed in the modality of the past in which she ‘could’ (line 244-5) have phoned the police and the present in which she ‘can’t do it no more’ (lines 228-30). Julia’s explanation at this stage does not directly address her own safety, but cites external motivations, namely societal expectations related to her professional training, the needs of her children and, ultimately, what is best for the AP; ‘you cannot deal with being in normal society’ (line 249-50). This orientation to obligation is reflected in a series of deontic assertions, ‘I’m/you’re supposed to be/have’ (lines 231-3), ‘you don’t have people like that around you’ (line 234-5), ‘I’m gunna have to’ (line 243), constructing the position she aspires to instead of the one she has inhabited so far (cf. Hydén 2005).

This repositioning includes an implicit appeal to the officers’ expertise, in terms of their shared understanding of the societal and professional expectations by which Julia feels bound. In this way, the representation in (6.2a) not only describes the AV’s shift towards action when she called the police; they express an ongoing process of agentialisation (van Leeuwen 1996) that is being negotiated interactionally in the present context. By shifting between her inability
to act in the past and her present resolve, Julia generates a complex construction of her own moral responsibility which recalls other occasions on which she has oriented to potential blame (e.g. 6.1e and 6.1f). In the above passage, she works through her sense-making process in relation to accepting police help and triggering an investigation. The effect is an internal debate by which Julia is justifying to herself the fact that she had no choice but to act against her partner, but her orientations to police role-expectations and ‘decorum’ (line 234) indicate her sensitivity to the officers’ perspective. Given this centralisation of their position in the narrative, the officers’ responses are instrumental in co-constructing Julia’s responsibility for what has happened and what might happen next. Therefore, although primarily discursive in function, POI’s supportive continuers throughout (6.2a) also indicate her acceptance of Julia’s reasoning, thereby subtly contributing to the AV’s (re-)positioning in relation to the AP.

In the following examples, the officers are more actively involved in supporting Julia’s perspective.

**Example 6.2b: Julia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AV</th>
<th>(cont.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0291</td>
<td>(0.7) I wouldn’t have done this likely because I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0292</td>
<td>know ##this is gunna go to social services and I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0293</td>
<td>know it’s gunna affect my ((training)) thing but I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0294</td>
<td>can’t let this go on (PO1: &quot;course you can’t.&quot;) for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0295</td>
<td>any longer because if I do <em>.huhh</em> I’ll probably end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0296</td>
<td>up dead .hh because I let it go on and let it go on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example 6.2c: Julia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AV</th>
<th>#will this affect my sort of- (.)#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0326</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0327</td>
<td>PO1 n- y- no (. ) not at all (.) you haven’t done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0328</td>
<td>anything wrong have you (.) so [(.) y’know- (.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0329</td>
<td>you’re a victim of something at the e- (.) &gt;well&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0330</td>
<td>he’s- he’s going to well- (.) yeah- well-]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0331</td>
<td>AV #no I haven’t done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0332</td>
<td>On ‘hav’ clutches both hands to chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0333</td>
<td>anything wrong and that’s what he keeps on telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0334</td>
<td>me he’s like if you do this you are gunna lose this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0335</td>
<td>On ‘like’ squares shoulders aggressively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0336</td>
<td>and I] ##just can’t## [.hih.hih]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0337</td>
<td>PO2 =social services will= help you (.) [support you]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example 6.2d: Julia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AV</th>
<th>#{cont.} but tonight when he actually- it reminded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0365</td>
<td>me of (1.3) seven eight years ago (PO1: &quot;mm&quot;) when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0366</td>
<td>he actually went to prison for ((violent assault on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0367</td>
<td>her)) (PO1: &quot;yeah.&quot;) I thought (.) (PO1: &quot;no.&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0368</td>
<td>you’re gunna kill me (.) (PO1: &quot;exactly. enough’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0369</td>
<td>enough&quot;) if this carries on (.) I’m gunna end up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0370</td>
<td>dead (.) (PO1: &quot;mm&quot;) and it cannot go on any longer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These extracts represent the ongoing internal debate that was observed in (6.2a), whereby the AV explicates her process of making sense of her present position, including figuring out the extent to which she is responsible for what the future holds. Here, Julia cites her own safety to account for taking action against the AP, referring to his past violence to support these justifications. Nonetheless, in (6.2b) she orients to her own role in the theoretical future scenario of her death, with the repetition of ‘end up dead’ and the causation of ‘because I let it go on and on’ (lines 295-6). It is notable that Julia assumes her own agency in the hypothetical situation in which she ‘lets’ the relationship continue, when she has already detailed her past powerlessness within the relationship (e.g. 6.1e and 6.1f). In assuming her own agency to take action and leave the relationship, it follows that if she does not leave, then she is somewhat accountable for her eventual death. This tension brings to light the position of moral and causal responsibility assigned to the officers: they are involved in Julia’s immediate sense-making process as her interactants, but they also represent a source of support in enacting the desired disengagement from the AP (see Ch.7.3). Julia underscores the officers’ position by animating the AP in (6.2c line 333-5) threatening her repeatedly about what she is ‘gunna lose’ if she contacts the police. These “discursive silencing devices” (Towns & Adams 2016: 499) indicate that he is the source of Julia’s ongoing concerns about her professional role (e.g. 6.2a; 6.2b), reflecting the connection identified in Section 6.1.1 between AVs’ present self-positionings and how they have been positioned in the past by the APs (Davies & Harré 1990: 44).

Correspondingly, the officers’ discursive choices dictate the extent to which they become involved in co-constructing the AV’s position, and here POI takes a markedly active role by explicitly and emphatically affiliating with Julia’s assessments of the risk to her life and the necessary course of action. Most prominently, while offering reassurance in (6.2c), POI invokes her status as an institutional insider to legitimate her assessment that Julia has done nothing wrong and is ‘a victim of something’ (lines 327-30), with the common sense nature of this evaluation expressed in the ‘have you’ tag in line 328. Julia’s emphatic response to this, by which she takes the floor and reasserts her positioning with ‘haven’t’, picks up on the reassurance offered by the officer. POI thus actively contributes to constructing Julia’s moral position as someone who is justified in her concerns, correct to take action and entitled to institutional support.
Emerging from these examples is the question of police impartiality and the complexities around achieving this when faced with a vulnerable AV (with a proven history of having been assaulted by the AP, per 6.2d) who may nonetheless be predisposed to self-blame. The position of the police is also being co-constructed as the FRC unfolds, so the officers’ explicit affiliation (6.2c and 6.2d) encourages Julia to reach out for police support and counters her doubts about ending the relationship. The collaborative undermining of the AP’s reported anti-police argument in (6.2c) illustrates the officers’ pivotal role in providing a new voice that adds weight to Julia’s perspective: “narratives of self-reliance and equality often offer an opportunity for an individual to construct an alternative position that will facilitate a breakup” (Jarnkvist & Brännström 2019: 4701). The AP’s ability to override others’ input was illustrated in (6.1e) and (6.1f), further emphasising the officers’ power to contribute to positive change in Julia’s life. This opportunity stems from the AV’s decision to call the emergency number and thereby involve the officers in her process of taking responsibility for what happens next. At the same time, however, the officers’ ‘new voice’ could represent both an affordance and a limitation for the AV. Any police opinions captured in the footage could bear implications further along in the legal process if officers are deemed to be leading the witness towards a particular positioning in relation to blame and responsibility (CoP 2014a; see further Ch.7).

6.2.2 Negotiating responsibility to ‘get your life back’

The following two examples, from Neil’s FRC, demonstrate a different scenario in which participants co-construct the AV’s responsibility in relation to his future circumstances.

Example 6.2e: Neil

0297 AV          {cont.} (.) I
don’t- I don’t need this- (.) {laughs} I don’t
0298 need this this cost me s- it’s caused me so much
0299 trouble (.>well< [my girls are my world and this
0300 like-]=)

0301 PO1          (**I-°° (0.2) I can imagine.]
0302 AV          = I’ve not- (.) I’ve not been able to see them for
0303 the last three weeks (.>I don’t blame their mum
0304 either (0.1) you know (.>or social services but
0305 it needs to stop I’ve got a--
0306 PO1          you’ve got to get your life back haven’t you=
0307 AV          = responsibility to them like I’ve only just taken
0308 this over y’know?
0309 PO1          On ‘only’ PO1 starts tapping on phone continuously
0310 AV          ah (.7) >well< that’s the last thing you want is
0311 PO1          that (AV: >yeah<) to be im- impacted isnit (AV:
0312 yeah)
Example 6.2f: Neil

These extracts show AV and officer collaboratively working out Neil's prospects for the future and reasoning out why he needs to be free from the AP. The situation depicted here differs from the previous examples in this section, in that the romantic relationship is already over and Neil has reported the incident as another episode in the AP’s continued harassment. His vision of the future here focuses less on his own accountability for taking action against the AP and more on the circumstances that need to change. These dynamics are reflected in the agentless deontic assertion ‘it needs to stop’, repeated in both examples. Similar to Julia in (6.2a), Neil foregrounds his moral responsibility as a parent and new business-owner in both examples (e.g. 6.2e lines 308-9), but unlike Julia he distances himself from causal responsibility (past, present and future) for resolving the situation that has ‘caused’ (line 299) him problems. The intonational stress on ‘blame’ in line 304 combines with the contrastive ‘but’ to assign agency to social services and his ex-partner in having control over his past and future circumstances. He therefore cites external problem sources more so than his own responsibility, constituting an appeal to PO> that some action be taken for the benefit of his children. Whereas the previous examples in this section saw Julia interactionally working out her plan of action, here Neil implicitly positions the police more centrally than himself in the process of determining what happens next.

In response, PO> displays supportiveness while subtly repositioning the AV more centrally with responsibility for his future. Like the officer in (6.2b) to (6.2d), PO> takes an affiliative stance, particularly with the formulations ‘you’ve got to get your life back’ (line 307) and ‘that’s the last thing you want’ (lines 310-1), which reflect and reinforce Neil’s evaluations of his situation. However, as indexed by his active positioning in you’ve got to get your life back, PO> constructs Neil as the one with the agency to enact change. The officer consolidates this
causal positioning by projecting an image of Neil’s future self in (6.2e) lines 476-8 to presuppose that he has a choice as to what his situation will be: ‘you’ve gotta look, where d’you wanna be’ (cf. Noordegraaf et al. 2008). As with the other AVs, Neil’s narrative has so far emphasised his lack of control over the AP’s actions (e.g. 6.1g), yet POI’s use of spatial metaphor here emphasises that the AV has the means to ‘take’ his life 'back' and get to the ideal future location. The officer thus portrays a process of empowerment as a means of renegotiating Neil’s responsibility for what happens next. This negotiation is audible in the emphatic well-preface in line 476, which signals that POI’s upcoming advice involves the potential dispreference (Heritage 2015) of agentialising Neil’s position from ‘it has to stop’ to ‘you’ve gotta look’.

Nonetheless, the collaborative framing of ‘what happens next’ generates a tone of cooperation and camaraderie in both extracts. The mutual appeal to a shared perspective is expressed in both speakers’ use of the discourse marker ‘you know/y’know’ (lines 309, 477) (Schiffrin 1987) and POI’s first-person expression of empathy in (6.2e) line 302. POI’s interjections create overlapping and latching throughout, creating a flow of talk by which the officer picks up on each of Neil’s points to offer positive feedback. In this context, the officer’s use of the tags ‘haven’t you’ and ‘isnit’ (line 307, 311) soften his assignment of responsibility by building these assertions into the talk as common-sense extensions of Neil’s perspective. POI’s approach here constitutes an expert practice identified by Candlin and Candlin (2002: 126) as layering or staging, by which “the practitioner seeks to move the client gradually toward a point of self-realization ... but does so by a sequence of staged tactical actions, each of which falls short of any overt decision or challenge”. Neil’s enthusiastic responses (e.g. line 312) indicate POI’s success in tuning into his aspirations, as emphasised in his appraisal (line 479-80) of the officer’s representation of his situation. The sense of cooperation is crystallised in lines 476-8 when POI’s formulation is interjected into a brief pause in Neil’s turn, functioning as an emphatically supportive continuer. The officer thereby performs relational work to achieve the co-construction of the AV’s position in relation to what happens next.

Examples (6.2e) and (6.2f) illustrate a balance between rapport-building and objectivity in the officer’s contributions, which subtly foreground particular aspects of Neil’s argument as relevant while backgrounding others. POI does not engage directly with Neil’s positioning of his ex-partner and social services as responsible, or even that he should gain access to his children again. The proposition to ‘get your life back’ (line 307) is less specific in defining the desired outcomes. Similarly, POI picks up on Neil’s appeal to his role as a new business-owner, but orients only to the potential for his business ‘to be impacted’ (line 311) and not to Neil’s primary orientation to his children when introducing this topic. Furthermore, this agentless
passive formulation of Neil’s perspective falls short of assigning blame to the AP for adversely affecting his business. This subtle negotiation of responsibility positionings between these two speakers is crystallised in the following exchange:

Example 6.2g: Neil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>0407</th>
<th>she weren’t like this when I first got here</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0408</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>=yeah.=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0409</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td>=I mean it’s: (.)[like-]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0410</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>[like] a train wreck in front of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0411</td>
<td>PO1</td>
<td>you isn’t it=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0412</td>
<td>AV</td>
<td>=&gt;yeah yeah&lt;=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The AV’s opening assertion mitigates his own moral and causal responsibility for being involved with the AP, explicated by ‘otherwise’, which appeals to his lack of knowledge about her true nature and the deterioration of the situation up until ‘now’. As observed in (6.2e) and (6.2f), POI picks up on the image created by Neil and reformulates his experience metaphorically as a ‘train wreck in front of you’. This evaluation is particularly supportive in its sequential positioning, following Neil’s elongated sound and pause in line 410 suggest his search for the right words. Yet POI’s formulation again subtly repositions the participants vis-à-vis blame. He picks up on the image of a ‘disaster’ with the metaphor of a ‘train wreck’, which connotes the same sense of uncontrollable chaos. He similarly aligns with Neil’s backgrounding of his own agentive role in the relationship but goes a step further in positioning him as a bystander watching the chaos (‘in front of you’), as opposed to being directly damaged by it (see Aldridge & Steel 2022). Furthermore, building on POI’s prior agentialisation of Neil in relation to what happens next, the assigned role of bystander here entails a degree of choice as to whether to look at what is unfolding. Therefore, as with ‘you’ve got to get your life back’ (6.2e), POI again falls short of explicitly positioning Neil as the target of abusive action. The officer thus displays his sensitivity to the AV’s perspective while retaining a degree of neutrality within the account being captured for the record.

In this section, whereas Julia took the lead in self-positioning as responsible for her future situation (6.2.1), Neil was directed in this regard by the officer (6.2.2). So far, therefore, this chapter has demonstrated the fluidity of AVs’ self-positionings and the officers’ influence in shaping them. The distinctions identified align with the differing degrees to which the AVs ‘present’ as vulnerable20, revealing the considerable power held by first response officers to tailor

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20 Research shows that victims’ vulnerability cannot reliably be judged from their demeanour, given the potential for trauma-induced numbing behaviour (see Ch.2; see also the DAS focus group App.R4).
their assignment of responsibility to AVs according to their perceived needs – and perhaps their gender – as will be evaluated in Chapter 7. With this institutional authority in mind, the final analysis section examines a consequential form of responsibility positioning, whereby officers’ questions position AVs as accountable and potentially responsible for aspects of their experience.

6.3 Responsibility-implicative police questioning

Questioning that projects an accounting in response is inherently face-threatening, in that it “directly or indirectly orients the participants to the attribution of responsibility” (Johansen 2011: 2847). The examples in this section vary in the degree of face threat entailed by the officers’ questions, the degree of blame interpretation evidenced by the AV, and the degree of mitigation work done to negotiate the AV’s responsibility in relation to the issue in question. The first subsection illustrates one officer’s contrastive approaches to questioning the AV (Neil) on two topics, and the second subsection demonstrates the disempowering effect of repeatedly foregrounding an AV’s (Amy) accountability.

6.3.1 (De)centralising responsibility for past decisions

This subsection centres on the officer’s questioning of Neil about two past decisions, beginning with the evidentially salient fact that he has not previously reported the AP to the police. Example 6.3a begins with Neil describing the AP’s behaviour on a previous occasion.

**Example 6.3a: Neil**

```
0022 AV {cont.} she turned up
0023 PO1 >when was it< four nights ago two o’clock in the
0024 AV morning and tried to put a ((heavy household
0025 PO1 object)) through my front door (0.2) she broke my
0026 AV front door (.). emm (0.3) it was around Christmas
0027 PO1 day (0.7) emm (.). where it’d smashed em: (.) and
0028 AV then so she turned up here again yesterday=
0029 AV PO1 ="okay." (3.4) is the violence getting worse?=
0030 AV =yeah.=
0031 PO1 ="mkay."=
0032 AV =yeah.
0033 PO1 (3.0) has she ever tried to harm you before?
0034 AV (.). yeah
0035 PO1 "mkay." and when was that
0036 AV em loads of times {laughs quickly}
0037 PO1 "okay." alright then have you reported any of
0038 AV those to the police?
0039 PO1 (.). {sniffs} I’d say so when she’s like- (.)
0040 cause- (.). it used t- I’d never been in a
0041 relationship-
0042
```
(indistinct speech from unseen male calling in the door)

to unseen person: *no it’s okay ((first name))

(. ) >see you in a bit<*

to PO1: (0.5) I’d never been in a relationship like this so I used to get arrested all the time because {aggressive:} oh he’s done this he’s done th- (. ) and I hadn’t (PO1: ° mm°) you know (. ) (cont.)

This exchange is characterised by an underlying tension deriving from the officer’s face-threatening action of probing the issue of the AP’s violence, which in itself positions the AV as accountable for making the claim. POI’s interruptive topic shift in line 30 and subsequent series of closed questions signals his goal of securing evidence of physical violence (with phrasing that echoes the DASH questionnaire; Richards 2009: 6-10), and Neil aligns with affirmative responses in lines 31 and 33. However, the progression from questioning about ‘violence’ to ‘harm’ differentiates the two propositions and presupposes that the violence Neil confirms in line 31 (and reinforces in line 33) does not necessarily entail physical violence, and might instead be confined to the sort of aggressive behaviour described in lines 22-9. The downgrading of the proposed behaviour to attempted harm (’tried to’) subtly calls into question Neil’s immediately prior claim of violence, inviting him to account for the claim by reconfirming it, which he does in line 35. However, the unexpected nature of POI’s question (which is interpretable as tautological) is reflected in Neil’s turn-initial pause, which contrasts with his prior latched responses, conveying hesitation. This is the first indication of the note of justification that emerges in his subsequent response (from line 40) to POI’s continued probing. The typical case formulation ‘loads of times’ (Sarangi 2017; cf. Pomerantz 1986) combines with the burst of laughter to frame the AP’s violence as common-sense knowledge.

So far, therefore, the participants have implicitly negotiated the AV’s accountability for supporting his claim of violence. Within this context, POI’s question in line 38-9 about reporting to the police is interpretable as implying some degree of blame. The question itself assumes Neil’s agency to report the offences, but the inclusion of ‘any’, which “expects a negative response” (Newbury & Johnson 2006: 226; Heritage 2006), refers back to the claim of ‘loads of times’ and projects a potential mismatch between the alleged scale of abuse and Neil’s lack of reporting. Neil orients to POI’s assignment of accountability by framing his response as an explanation (’cause’) in line 41. However, because he neither confirms nor denies POI’s proposition, the accounting is incomplete. The false starts and pausing in lines 40-2 indicate some difficulty in formulating this response, contributing to the overall effect of having been caught off guard by POI’s shift in focus within this passage from the AP’s to the AV’s behaviour.
(As observed in Chapter 4.2, the external interruption generated by the instability of the setting further obscures the coherence of his response.)

Neil manages the shift by picking up on the topic of reporting to the police as a means of refocusing on the AP's behaviour (lines 49-53), thereby resisting POI's centralised positioning and transferring his accountability back to the context of the AP's accusations. Although his explanation in this regard is propositionally vague in that he does not clarify how never having been in a comparable relationship led to getting arrested ‘all the time’, Neil creates a logical connection between these two states of affairs with ‘so’ and the repetition of ‘because (of her)’, reinforcing the AP’s causal responsibility for his arrests. Her recentralisation is underscored with the direct reported speech in lines 51-2 that animates her aggression, while the lack of specificity in the quotation maintains the vagueness around what exactly she accused Neil of doing (as in 6.1g). The use of quotation here reflects Stokoe and Edwards’ (2007: 353) observation that the ‘editing’ of reported speech using pro-terms like *this* and *that* functions “to characterize the abuser as using abusive language as such, rather than saying any words in particular”. Neil’s switch back to directly addressing POI in lines 52-53, combined with the appeal in the tag ‘y’know’, presents his denial as being in earnest, as compared with the AP’s speech. He thereby emphatically repositions himself to deny not the proposition, but the agency presupposed by POI’s question about reporting, indicating his interpretation of the question as blame implicative. The officer accepts Neil’s shift away from the issue of reporting as he continues his description of the AP’s behaviour from line 53 (see App.R3). This example thus demonstrates participants’ interactional negotiation of the AV’s responsibility in a scenario that yields the potential for blame. Example (6.3a) also raises the question of whether the officer would position a female AV in the same way for past non-reporting, given that DA victims are often hesitant to report for fear of repercussions from the AP and other sources (Coulter et al. 1999; Towns & Adams 2009; Woods 2010). This potential for gendered positioning in relation to violence and non-reporting will be interpreted more fully in Chapter 7.3.

The next example shows the same officer again introducing the idea of Neil’s responsibility in relation to a past decision, namely his disclosure of a medical condition to AP.

*Example 6.3b: Neil*

0414 PO1 =°okay. (.) >alright then.°< (.) with regards to
0415 PO1 your medical background (.) (AV: yeah) does
0416 AV anybody else know about it?= 
0417 AV =no.
0418 PO1 so it’s just her is it=
0419 AV =>yeah yeah<=
This discussion of the medical condition pertains to the reported abuse because the AV has previously described the AP using this information against him (see Ch.5.2). The source of Neil’s accountability here, therefore, is the fact that the AP would not know about the medical condition she is using against him had he not told her. This example differs from (6.3a) in that the officer here displays his efforts to avoid positioning Neil as blameworthy in relation to this sensitive topic. However, although POI’s question in line 420 is not inherently blame implicative, it highlights the AV’s causal responsibility, leading both participants to negotiate Neil’s positioning throughout this passage to mitigate the potential for blame. In the first place, POI’s elongated filler in line 420 displays hesitation in formulating the question, as is subsequently reflected in Neil’s turn-initial pause (as with his pausing in 6.3a). However, it is POI who explicates the potential blame source, when he diverges from the closed question-answer sequence to produce an accounting on Neil’s behalf. The repeated ‘okay’ in line 424 functions dually, both as a response marker to display POI’s acceptance of Neil’s action and as a reorientation marker to introduce POI’s subsequent accounting for the action. He then supplies a justification for Neil (lines 424-36) which refocuses the question of his responsibility onto his moral conduct within the relationship, subverting the potential blame source by positing a hypothetical situation in which Neil would be to blame had he not told the AP about his condition. Because the explicit responsibility talk here (‘the onus is on you’) refers to past action, the strong deontic modality reinforces the positive appraisal of Neil’s behaviour within the relationship. The officer thus pre-emptively accounts for Neil’s actions so that he is not required to do so, displaying empathy and acceptance of Neil’s decision with ‘I get that’. However, at the same time, the officer’s act of accounting for Neil places emphasis on the medical condition as an accountable. This framing prompts a justification from Neil (lines 427-
which orients to his management of the condition and is not clearly connected to the original issue of his disclosure to the AP.

The AV’s behaviour flags this a sensitive topic, and POI aligns with further work in lines 430-6 to offset any blame implication in his original question. The interruption (line 430) is supportive in signalling his affiliation while relieving Neil from further elaboration, and the increase in hesitation markers in this turn indicate the delicacy with which POI is treating this issue. He now reinforces the justification proffered in his previous turn, but this time focusing not on Neil’s obligation to the AP (‘onus’), but on his obligation to himself, as indexed by the emphatic ‘for you’ (line 432). The AP’s position is further decentralised in the generalised reference to the ‘people’ who might be affected by Neil’s actions. POI thereby frames Neil’s action of disclosure to the AP as a manifestation of his general inclination to be ‘honest and open’ (line 436), instead of a misguided decision to trust the AP. Neil’s falling-tone response tokens (throughout lines 434-7) signal his agreement with POI's evaluation of his actions, and this time he provides no further justification. This passage illustrates how the officer actively supports the AV to manage his responsibility in relation to a sensitive issue that is largely beyond his control, as compared with other instances (e.g. 6.3a) in which he probes Neil’s responsibility in relation to more ambiguous aspects of his involvement with the AP.

6.3.2 Recentralising accountability for the reported incident

Ambiguity also underpins the remaining examples in this section, from Amy’s FRC, which illustrates the complexities of negotiating the AV’s accountability when there is a tension between the urgent need to make a decision about arrest (see Ch.5.1) and the AV’s pronounced distress. The first three extracts pertain to the fact that Amy let the AP into her house on the evening of the reported incident. This idea is established in the below extract, from near the beginning of the narrative.

Example 6.3c: Amy

0087 AV his dad died today (PO2: oh-) today#=
0088 PO2 =what's his name?
0089 AV {sniffs} #eh {{first name surname}}# {sniffs}
0090 On 'first name' gestures out window to police van
0091 PO2 right okay
0092 (1.8)
0093 AV #so (.) he's come here now saying I've had people
0094 here and stuff- he just came out of nowhere he was
0095 hanging on- but (.) he's off his face [on drugs#]
0096 {sniffs}
0097 PO2 [are you] (.)
0098 together or not=
This passage deals with the AP’s arrival to and entry into the AV’s house, a topic selected by Amy as the starting point for her narrative (for the second time, after the spatial disruptions described in Chapter 4.2). Accordingly, her opening turn focuses solely on her ex-partner’s behaviour, which she characterises as extreme (‘banging on’) on account of his drug use (lines 94-5). Corresponding with this description is her emphasis on the sudden and unexpected nature of his arrival in line 93. So far, therefore, Amy has not displayed any orientation to her own accountability in relation to the AP’s presence at her house. Yet PO2’s interruptive question in line 97-8 shifts the focus from the AP’s behaviour to their mutual involvement, making it relevant to the unfolding story and thereby shifting Amy to a more centralised position within the story. Although the question is propositionally straightforward, PO2 does not clarify her reason for asking it at this point, so its implication remains ambiguous. The officers’ task of mapping the AV’s narrative onto potential offence categories involves determining the relationship status and the AP’s connection with the house (see further App.II). PO2 indicates this motivation by sequentially positioning her question following Amy’s emphasis on the AP arriving ‘out of nowhere’ (line 94). However, for a lay hearer without access to the relevant procedural knowledge, the officer’s interruptive question is interpretable as problematising the immediately prior claim that the AP’s arrival was unexpected.

Corresponding with this interpretation, Amy uses her negative response to the polar interrogative to initiate an accounting for her own role in the AP arriving at her house (lines 99-101), aligning with PO2’s centralisation of her position within the story. The contrastive marker ‘but’ orients to the connection (made relevant by PO2’s question) between their relationship status and the expectability of the AP’s appearance. Amy maintains her orientation to this
connection by accounting for her contact with him prior to the incident. The justification marker ‘y’see’ (line 100) indicates an “attempt to negotiate common ground” (Aijmer 2002: 228) with PO2 by linking the facts of AP’s arrival (line 94) and her contact (line 100-1) to justify her action. The AV does so by directly reporting her own text message, which demonstrates her motivation for contacting him – for a welfare check – and thus functions to justify the contact. In the same vein, the repetition of the categorical marker ‘just’ (Aijmer 2002; cf. Aarts 1996) in this turn (lines 99, 103, 107) reiterates the unanticipated nature of his arrival. Amy’s justifications here demonstrate that regardless of investigative salience, positioning AVs as accountable for their involvement with the AP poses implications for their evolving understanding of what has happened to them.

Whereas PO2’s first question in this extract sought to establish a key fact, her formulation in line 110 functions to move the narrative along. More explicitly than before, this turn shifts the focus from the AP’s behaviour to Amy’s role. The fact that information is lost due to PO2’s chronological step forward in the narrative, from the AP jumping over the fence to being in the kitchen with knives, signals to Amy the overriding importance of her action of letting him in. The declarative presupposes her agency in giving him access through the door he was banging, with the reorienting ‘right so’ summariser assuming a logical connection between his banging and her action. However, despite the precision imposed by the formulation (cf. Johnson 2008: 344), it does not (as it might appear) reiterate the AV’s version, which has not yet mentioned how the AP gained entry to the house. Furthermore, PO2’s declarative is ambiguous in function, which is interpretable as either seeking confirmation or offering a point of departure to progress the narrative. Despite the well-preface in line III which cues a ‘my-side response’ (Heritage 2015), Amy orients to the latter interpretation by continuing her narrative without engaging with the proposition that she let him in. However, her claim that the AP already had the knives when she came downstairs (line III) suggests that he entered the house while she was still upstairs, so his means of entry remains ambiguous. Nonetheless, the officer’s ‘right so’ formulation inserts into the narrative a scenario which foregrounds Amy’s causal responsibility for the AP’s presence in her house.

The centralisation of Amy’s position is compounded by the fact that PO2’s contributions here do not engage with the narrative prominence of the AP’s aggressive behaviour. In particular, the emphasis on ‘knives’ and his drug-fuelled state (lines III-4) amount to a justification for not standing up to him based on the danger21 she perceived. The AV employs

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21 The specific act of threatening with a knife in private has since been criminalised under the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 s.52
an iconic gesture to convey his wild demeanour (line 113), punctuated by an explicit appeal ('see') for the officers' understanding of her perspective, but PO1's affiliative response in line 115 uses her appeal as an opportunity to shift topic (see further Ex.4.2b). Interestingly, PO2's later formulation that 'you say he's kicking off' (App.RI line 162-3) demonstrates her attention to Amy's representation of the AP in this extract (6.3c), even though her lack of immediate engagement backgrounds its salience for the time being. As was emphasised in relation to Chapter 5.1's evidential 'sticking point', it is important to contextualise the officers' behaviour here in light of their pressing need to make a decision about arresting the AP, who is being held in the police van outside the house. Nonetheless, the narrative elements they select for focus are consequential in light of the AV's orientation to account for her own behaviour (6.1a & 6.1b), resulting in a tension that becomes more evident towards the end of this FRC. In the following two excerpts, the officers' focus on the AP's point of entry indicates (without explicating) the evidential salience of this detail.

**Example 6.3d: Amy**

| 0384 | PO1       | (cont.) we need to identify what the correct (AV:
| 0385 |          | "yeah") thing to arrest him for is or if- (AV:
| 0386 |          | "right") if he even needs to arrest (ted but-
| 0387 |          | (0.3)
| 0388 |          | so-
| 0389 |          | PO3 and PO4 enter house during PO1’s turn and stand
| 0390 | AV       | beside the other POs, audience formation [well (.)
| 0391 |          | he just- he] come through my back (.) door and
| 0392 |          | obviously he's kicking screaming and shouting
| 0393 |          | obviously the situation (.). if it was any other
| 0394 |          | normal day I wouldn't [let him in--]
| 0395 | PO1      | [so-] he- he's kicked the back
gate o[pen (.)] wh- where have you been
| 0396 | AV       | [-*yeah* he's come the {points} back way] (.)
| 0397 |          | I dunno--=

**Example 6.3e: Amy**

| 0352 | AV       | (cont.) and we're just in the room up there I said
| 0353 |          | On 'yeah' PO1 reaches out arm and rests it on the
| 0354 |          | bottom stair rail, blocking AV’s path
| 0355 |          | what's the matter and then he goes (.). then well- he
| 0356 |          | just like took over then~ (starts crying) .hih hhh
| 0357 |          | #and he was up [and down-#]
| 0358 | PO1      | [so (.). he's in the back] garden he's been banging on the- on the door [and you've come
down and (.). let him in is it?]
| 0359 |          | [#yeah but it- (.)
| 0360 | AV       | yeah I've come down] and said '((first name)) love
| 0361 |          | why are you doing that what are you doing and he's
| 0362 |          | On 'first name' holds out both hands, palms up
| 0363 |          |
Both exchanges occur within an extended stretch of questioning to ascertain what specific offence has been committed, so the AV is already in a position of overarching accountability for supporting her claim of assault (see further Ch.5.1). The above examples demonstrate a complex layering of accountability whereby Amy accounts for her own actions even in response to questions that focus on the AP, as in (6.3d). In lines 393-4 she revisits the issue of having 'let him in' that was established earlier by PO2 and accounts for it on the basis of the bereavement. This justification echoes Amy’s earlier accountings for this issue (6.3c), with ‘obviously’ framing it accordingly as known information. Her unprompted accounting here presents the officers with an opportunity to acknowledge her reasoning for letting the AP into her house, a supportive move which might help the AV make sense of her own accountability. Conversely, POI’s interruptive so-summariser (line 395) enacts a backwards chronological shift which not only disregards the explanation but also obscures the key claim that she ‘let him in’, leading to POI’s later clarificatory question in (6.3e, lines 358-60). The interruption in this instance could be interpreted as supportive, insofar as it intervenes to shift focus when Amy is becoming progressively more upset. However, the shift is marked because it (again) does not follow chronologically from her description, instead returning to the issue of how the AP approached the house. Because this information was established in (6.3c) and revisited by Amy in (6.3d), the interruptive question reinforces the evidential salience of this narrative element.

Given the officer’s expressed focus on the criminality of the AP’s behaviour, it is notable that their questions in both above extracts shift the focus back to the AV, inviting the inference that the actions of both parties are being interrogated. This effect is enhanced by the use of so-summarisers which recalls their coercive function in suspect interviews to redirect the interviewee’s account on evidential bases (e.g. Heydon 2005; Johnson 2008; cf. Ainsworth 2021). Correspondingly, Amy’s response in (6.3e) from line 361 indicates that she has interpreted the question as requiring her to account again for the focal action of letting the AP into the house. In the overlapping talk in lines 361-2, the AV begins to respond to the first part of POI’s turn, indicating her readiness to continue describing the AP’s behaviour as per POI’s summary. However, POI’s continued speech prompts Amy to pause in line 361 and then adjust to his shift in focus to her behaviour in the second part of his turn. Therefore, as in (6.3c), the officer
interactionally draws Amy into alignment with his centralisation of her position within the narrative.

The vividness of Amy’s subsequent explanation (lines 362-9) reflects the officers’ foregrounding of her action as pivotal to the reported incident. The constructed dialogue demonstrates her efforts to reason with the AP and the verbal pressure she experienced in response. She emphasises her past bewilderment and desperation with the parallel construction, ‘why are you doing that’/what are you doing’ (line 363), and the embodied re-enactment of beseeching in line 364. Having already indicated her concern about the bereavement (6.3d line 393-4), Amy now provides further justification, indexed by ‘so’, with reported thought in lines 395-6: ‘cause he’s acted quite calm’ (see Haakana 2007). This assessment sets up a juxtaposition between what she expected (‘quite calm’) and the ‘bull in a china shop’ that ensued, underscoring his coerciveness in gaining access to the house and thus neutralising her own responsibility. The repetition of ‘just’ throughout this turn (as in 6.3c) emphasises that his behaviour was unanticipated. Notably, Amy’s representation here mirrors FRC guidelines which stipulate against positioning victims with causal responsibility for letting perpetrators into their homes. These guidelines contrast the officers’ perspective that “the victim lets the perpetrator into their home” with the victim’s perspective: “He will break in and assault me if I do not let him in” (Build Rapport, CoP 2022). Given Amy’s consistent depiction of the AP’s aggressive behaviour, the officers’ focus on her action of letting him in is at odds with both the guidelines and the version of events she is providing, maximising the potential for her to feel disoriented and disbelieved. The officers provide no signposting as to the motivation behind this line of questioning to help the AV situate her own behaviour relative to the AP and the investigation.

The topic of how the AP gained access to the house illustrates how the officers’ positioning of the AV as accountable gains traction in the form of her progressively more detailed justifications throughout examples (6.3c) to (6.3e). This co-construction of responsibility recalls the findings from Section 6.1 about the potential for AVs to import past blame into the present interaction with the police. With these dynamics in mind, the final examples for analysis demonstrate some further complexities around negotiating accountability when gathering evidence. In the following two extracts, the officers question Amy about her wider relationship with the AP.
These exchanges involve a complex interplay of responsibility-implicative talk which negotiates the AV’s position in relation to her involvement with the AP. In each instance, the officer’s first question probes the AP’s behaviour and Amy’s response cites their separated status to emphasise his transgression of continuing to mistreat her, mitigating her own responsibility in the process. The contrast between her past and present positions relative to the AP (cf. Hydén 2005) inheres in the repeated ‘but’ in (6.3f) and the emphatic first-person possessive pronoun ‘my’ in (6.3g). Yet in the first example, Amy’s reference to their separation also yields a justification as to why she was in contact with him on the day of the incident (lines 200-3). The first ‘but’ (line 200) frames this explanation as addressing a potential perceived inconsistency
in her story, reflecting the earlier question from PO2 (6.3c) that made their relationship status relevant to the evening’s incident. Amy’s orientation to blame is evident in the emphasis on ‘did’ (line 201) by which she acknowledges the source of potential inconsistency to be resolved with the explanation marked by ‘because’. Another ‘but’ (line 201) conveys a sense of justification by pointing to the contrast between the embedded fact that she contacted the AP and the original issue of her involvement with him, rejecting causal responsibility for his behaviour. However, the fact that the AV has arrived at this accounting unprompted by POI’s initial question displays her orientation to her own role in what happened that evening, reflecting the officers’ earlier focus on her letting the AP into the house.

It has been proposed throughout this chapter that officers have missed opportunities to acknowledge AVs’ justifications (cf. MacLeod 2016), although in (6.3f) POI goes some way towards doing this with ‘yeah’ in line 202. Although minimal, such response tokens are supportive in signalling acceptance of the AV’s self-positioning and have the potential to close off specific points of accountability (cf. 6.2a). However, POI proceeds to sustain the thread of Amy’s accountability with his subsequent question about the length of their separation (line 204). The question functions as a facilitator in response to her apparent trailing off in line 203, but the closed wh-form constrains Amy to the topic of her continued involvement with the AP. POI thus aligns with Amy’s stepwise topic shift towards their relationship status, but in doing so marks it as more immediately salient than his prior interest in the threatening. This officer was not present (see further Ch.7.1) when Amy was previously asked about their relationship status by PO2 (6.3c), so this is a novel line of questioning for him that reflects its investigative relevance. The evidential import of this detail lies in the fact that the crime of coercive control only applies if the victim and perpetrator are currently in an intimate relationship and/or living together (Serious Crime Act 2015 s.76). From the AV’s perspective, however, the question reinforces the ongoing focus on the nature of her involvement with the AP as integral to the reported assault. POI’s prioritisation of this topic over threatening is also marked because despite Amy’s emphatic confirmation and extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986) in line 200, emphasising a pattern of behaviour (‘the whole time’), her response about the threatening is propositionally unclear. Yet POI does not probe further to clarify either the AP’s past threatening or the original question about threatening during the incident, even though the latter issue ultimately emerges as a basis for arrest (App.RI lines 554-9).

22 This requirement is due to change, as per s.68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, but the change is not yet in force at the time of writing (July 2022).
Aligning with the connection made by POI’s question between Amy’s contact with the AP that evening and their relationship status, her response in lines 206-7 elaborates on their ‘month and a half’ separation with another justification for the continued contact. As in her previous turn, the AV fluctuates here between orienting to her own and the AP’s accountability, conveying the fluidity of their positions within her evolving understanding of her experience. This time, her evaluation of the AP’s behaviour as ‘bang out of order’ (line 212) elicits an overtly affiliative response from POI. The strong deontic modality of his tagged declarative (line 213) frames as common-sense his agreement that the AP had no right to ‘behave like that’, backgrounding (although still not negating) Amy’s causal responsibility for having ‘been in contact with him’. The officer’s expression of solidarity here aligns with the increased intensity of the AV’s sobbing in line 212, but his displayed break in attentiveness in lines 208-9 somewhat undercuts the subsequent response because he is only partially engaged in the interaction with Amy. This moment further illustrates the disempowering potential of disrupting the interactional space at delicate junctures in the AV’s narrative (see Ch.4.2; Ch.7.1).

The disempowering effect is reinforced in example (6.3g), which follows a similar structure to (6.3f) in that a police question about the AP’s behaviour initiates a sequence in which the focus shifts progressively to the issue of the AV’s accountability. Initially, Amy’s response in lines 463-7 emphatically foregrounds her ex-partner’s blameworthiness, with the interruptive and thrice-repeated ‘yeah’ and ‘because of him’ underscoring the causality between his behaviour and her suffering. As before, she shifts focus to their current relationship status to (now more explicitly) highlight the AP’s transgression of invading her new space. The assertion about her ‘new house’ in line 466-7 is punctuated by the affective display of increased sobbing and the frustration marker ‘ohh’, inviting emotive involvement in her experience of being overpowered (Selting 2010). Nonetheless, POI’s minimal acknowledgement token ‘yeah’ in line 471 creates an instance of incongruity between an emotional appeal and a reductively casual response.

Furthermore, the overlapping ‘yeah’ combines with the prior simultaneous speech (line 470) to convey the overriding importance of POI’s upcoming question, which shifts the focus onto the AP’s access to their daughter. He thereby disregards the first part of Amy’s response, in which the new information about the shelter (line 464-5) reconfirms the pattern of abusive behaviour queried by PO4’s original question (as did ‘the whole time’ in 6.3f). Instead, POI’s question about parental access shifts focus to an aspect of the story in which the AV is actively involved. Propositionally, this question is not inherently blame implicative, but its position directly after Amy’s assertion that her house was ‘nothing to do with him’ invites the
interpretation of questioning this assertion on the basis that access to their child entails a connection to her house. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Amy has already provided POI with the requested information (in 6.3f): ‘I’ve still been in contact with him cause of the baby’. Amy’s latched ‘well’ followed by a pause in line 473 indicates a trouble source in the question, initiating the co-constructed qualification of ‘access’ in lines 473-9 which delineates the AP’s rights in relation to her house.

The officer displays some awareness of the sensitivities around assigning the AV accountability in relation to her child. The deletion of Amy’s agency from the construction ‘he’s got access’ (line 471) backgrounds her role, and the hedging in the subsequent turn (lines 474-6) indicates POI’s effort to treat the topic with delicacy. The hesitatio markers reflect the face-threatening potential of a formulation which establishes that, contrary to Amy’s claim that the house had ‘nothing to do with him’, the AP ‘knows’ where she lives. Furthermore, the elaborative formulation positions Amy centrally with causal responsibility for his knowledge (‘because’) through her action of speaking to him. POI’s request for specificity as to the AP’s involvement with the household prompts Amy to reformulate more explicitly that ‘he has time to see the baby’ (line 477). As compared with her cooperation in repeatedly addressing the issue of letting him into the house, Amy now displays some resistance to accepting responsibility in relation to his access to the child. By interrupting to reformulate POI’s ‘he knows you’re living here because you’ve spoke-’ as ‘he has time to see the baby’, she reframes the situation as an arrangement (potentially institutionally-defined) which dictates her present involvement with the AP. Amy’s deletion of her own agency from this construction reinforces the fact of their separated status. This note of resistance reflects the fact that the questioning in lines 471-6 effectively requires Amy to contradict her prior emotive assertion that the house was ‘nothing to do with him’. Her crying becomes more pronounced at this stage (line 478), as reflected in POI’s display of backing off in the next line. However, the ‘no problem’ acceptance marker also reinforces her accountability: by appraising her production of an explanation, he confirms that one was required or at least expectable in the first place. The overall effect is to position Amy as partly responsible for the AP’s connection to her house, but (as with letting him in) it is not clear to a lay listener why this detail warrants the probing questions. The evidential relevance of the parties’ relationship status, including length of separation, is reflected in questions on the FRC risk assessment questionnaire (see Richards 2009: 6-10). Furthermore, POI’s focus on how the AP knows where Amy lives relates to the potential offence of stalking (Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s.2; see App.II). In the understanding that some investigative opacity is to
be expected, however, the officers could frame potentially blame-implicative questions more clearly to guide the AV in interpreting their focus on her behaviour.

This final section has demonstrated various officer approaches to positioning the AV as responsible with their questions, with variation according to the evidential salience of the topic and the time pressure on the police to get this information. The officers’ power to shape the evidence being entextualised will be evaluated throughout Chapter 7 and will feed into recommendations for practice in Chapter 8.

6.4 Synthesis: Positioning and victim responsibility

This third and final analysis chapter has explored the co-construction of AV responsibility as it is entextualised as evidence, and how participants are positioned by this process. Analysis centred on various aspects in which AVs’ accountability was made relevant, demonstrating how participants (re)positioned AVs in various ways in relation to both the moral and causal dimensions of responsibility. These findings are drawn together in this section to form the basis for the next chapter’s interpretation of the nexus between AVs’ responsibility and power relations during FRCs (Ch.7.3).

In the first section of this chapter, AVs accessed the perspectives of others who had positioned them as blameworthy in the past, reconstructing these episodes to demonstrate their lack of agency and neutralise their responsibility for the reported events. Analysis first centred on representations of APs’ counter-accusations during the reported incident, then shifted focus to perceived blame from other parties in the past, illustrating the thread of accountability running through AVs’ dealings with the APs. All three AVs produced accountings in response to past accusations that oriented to the present interaction, mitigating potential blame from the officers and, by extension, any future audiences. This deictic (re)positioning thereby situated the AVs “relative to past, present, and imagined others” (Anderson 2009: 293). The result was a complex self-positioning whereby AVs simultaneously rejected blame while importing their accountability into the FRC context and thus sustaining its relevance. These multidirectional self-positionings encapsulate the function of accounting “to interactionally construct preferred meanings for problematic events” (Buttny 1993: 21). Throughout this section, Amy and Julia oriented to their own blameworthiness in ways that echoed their past positionings by the AP, whereas Neil oriented more to the potential for the AP's accusations to engender future blame from the police. These different positionings bear implications for the AVs’ power relative to both the AP and the justice system, as will be discussed in the next chapter.
Analysis in the second section centred on the co-construction of AVs’ responsibility when assessing their prospects relative to ending their involvement with the AP. Whereas in the previous section AVs cited their past lack of agency within the relationship, in the second section AVs assumed more agency in terms of ‘what happens next’, with a focus on the key concerns of their children and/or their professional roles. However, analysis in this section revealed the malleability of responsibility positionings. Julia’s examples depicted the emotional dilemma complicating her shift towards taking action against the AP, drawing from the officers’ input to work out her self-positioning in real time. On the other side of the coin, the officer in Neil’s call-out subtly manoeuvred him from relative passivity towards a more agentive position, decentralising others in the process. These orientations to ‘what happens next’ therefore also involved negotiating the position of the police within the unfolding narrative, according to officers’ engagement with the AV’s perspective. Officers’ discursive choices in this regard are crucial in shaping AVs’ understanding of their ongoing situation but might therefore have the dual consequence of inviting future questions about police impartiality (see Ch.7.2).

The implications of these conflicting considerations came to the fore in the third section. Analysis uncovered the complexities generated when officers’ questions implicitly positioned AVs with causal responsibility for aspects of their reported experience. These positionings were underpinned by an archetypal clash between institutional and lay goal-orientations and expectations (Tracy 1997): while officers sought to construct evidence by clarifying key details (cf. Chapter 5.1), the AVs sought to make their version of events understood and believed. Within this interactional context, questions that require AVs to account for their own behaviour are interpretable as blame implicative, especially when their evidential salience remains opaque. The extent to which officers mitigated their focus on AVs’ actions correlated with their relevance to the reported incident, with the background issue of Neil’s medical condition generating the most mitigating work. At the same time, in Amy’s FRC, the implication of blame in relation to her involvement in the incident emerged partly from the officers’ lack of mitigation when questioning. Building on previous sections, which demonstrated AVs’ orientations to self-blame and the malleability of their responsibility positionings, the final section highlighted the potential for officers to position AVs more centrally in relation to the incident than the position they might claim for themselves. This repositioning informs the content of the account being constructed (and captured for the record) and bears implications for the AV’s assessment of what happened to them and their entitlement to police support in future.
Davies and Harré posit that “who one is is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices” (1990: 46). The final analysis chapter has explored the complexity and fluidity of AVs’ responsibility positionings, considering both the evidential and sense-making functions of the first account. Therefore, the culmination of the three analysis chapters has produced key insights to inform the next thesis chapter, which brings together these three strands to critically interpret the relationship between positioning and power during FRCs.
Chapter 7: Discussion

With unique access to real police first response call-out (FRC) interactions at the scene of reported domestic abuse (DA) incidents, this research was conceived in response to the lack of existing knowledge about the nature of communication between officers and alleged victims (AV) in an unstudied yet pivotal speech context. The ultimate aim is to empower AVs by informing police practice and build towards a body of empirical FRC research. Analysis has been guided by the concept of positioning, by which speakers are dynamically “constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate” (Davies & Harré 1990: 46). The bottom-up approach has revealed key themes and allowed for an exploration of micro-level interactional choices in the local context of talk. We now step back to critically interpret FRC interaction as social practice. To this end, this chapter evaluates the findings from the previous three analysis chapters to address the main research question: **In what ways are social power relations constituted through interactional positioning during the FRCs?** The three analytic strands are addressed in turn in the first three sections of this chapter and drawn together in the final section to evaluate the findings as a whole. From time to time, discussion integrates insights from the DAS focus group (App.R4; see Ch.3) for illustrative purposes.

7.1 Revisiting the research question: Positioning and power in FRC settings and their interactional spaces

Van Leeuwen (2008: 90) points to the “fundamental role of space in enacting social practices”. When FRCs take place in AVs’ territory, AVs are prepositioned with more authority than they can assume in other aspects of the FRC context. For instance, whereas their K+ epistemic advantage is balanced by officers’ procedural and evidential knowledge, participants’ insider/outsider status is more clearly delineated in relation to the physical environment. At the same time, officers are endowed with the institutional power to enter and move around the premises as necessary (Powers of Entry, CoP 2022; PACE 1984; s.17). FRC guidelines offer no further advice as to managing the diversity of FRC settings, leaving spatial aspects to be negotiated discursively at the scene. This study has shown how the adaptation of private realms for institutional purposes entails (re)distributing authority over the setting. These (re)positionings were found to constitute power relations according to the following loci of control:
1. Relative control of the setting is established at the point of entry and in turn establishes control over the narrative.
2. Officers’ disruptions of the narrative space reinforce their authority over the narrator, but ultimately reduce all participants’ control over the evidence produced.
3. Officers and AVs have unequal agency to demarcate spaces and adjust their environment for particular functions, reinforcing the officers’ overriding authority.
4. Officers retain control of AVs’ freedom of movement, with implications for AVs’ vulnerability and ongoing positioning vis-à-vis institutional power.
5. Officers display their ability to minimise the power distance between speakers when mitigating the invasiveness of entering AVs’ personal body space.
6. The exposure of the setting via BWV contextualises AVs’ initial accounts according to the ideological assumptions of future audiences.

Discussion in this section is based primarily on the analysis presented in Chapter 4, but will draw in findings from the other analysis chapters as required.

**7.1.1 Controlling entry**

The process of entering the AV’s realm presents officers with the choice of either self-positioning as dominant by taking control of the space at the outset (as has been licensed by the AV’s emergency call), or as outsiders negotiating their presence in collaboration with the AV. These findings demonstrate that AVs are not automatically afforded the same territorial authority as institutional actors through their ‘fixity’ in institutional settings (Giddens 1984; Ainsworth et al. 2009). This dynamic illuminates another issue which has resonated throughout this study: the importance of differentiating ideology (the assumption that police can do what they want) from necessity (police are doing what they need to do) during FRCs. It must be reiterated that the scenario in which the officers took immediate control of Amy’s space upon entry (4.1a) involved a high level of risk and the urgent need to remove the volatile AP from the house. Nonetheless, comparative analysis revealed that coercive entry into the setting establishes a power dynamic that compounds the vulnerability of a distressed AV and is less conducive to gathering (verbal) evidence, as was emphasised during the DAS focus group:

M2 it’s like where are you when the incident happens if they’re outside the door still looking at you [others agree loudly] I think their initial communication with you dictates the whole interaction (.) their initial approach to you will then just dictate the whole thing if they come at you um aggressively or dismissive then I think you just shut down and
that will just dictate it then there's no coming back after that {others agree} you've lost your trust in them you're not going to open up about what's happened

*DAS focus group, App.R4: 16*

This connection between the officers’ treatment of space and the quality of the verbal evidence will be elaborated throughout the remainder of this section.

### 7.1.2 Controlling the stability of the narrative space

The power imbalance between participants was also manifest in officers’ movements in and out of the physical and cognitive space established for the AVs’ initial account. Disruptive treatment of this narrative space presupposes that the officers’ authority to move freely overrides the AV’s authority as inhabitant and narrator. The AV’s authority is further downgraded if officers provide little or no mitigating explanation as to the priority policework occurring elsewhere. On the other side of the coin, AVs were empowered when officers displayed efforts to preserve the narrative space and thus position the AVs’ lived experience centre-stage. Nonetheless, in all FRCs analysed, disruptions impacted the coherence of the AV’s narrative to a certain extent, even when mitigating strategies were used. Lack of consistency in the AV’s audience displays the officers’ inattentiveness, marks certain information as less evidentially salient and prevents the AV from telling their story in their own way. The study thus demonstrates how the analytic concepts of participation frameworks and audience design can be usefully applied to train first response officers how to manage unpredictability while facilitating quality evidence and supportiveness (see Ch.8).

Previous research has illustrated the correlation between institutional dominance and verbal interruption (e.g. Hak 1994), and there is a corresponding emphasis on allowing vulnerable witnesses to speak in investigative interviewing guidelines (see e.g. Aldridge 2021). This study has demonstrated spatial interruptions working in tandem with their verbal counterparts to maximise the disempowering effect of silencing the AV (cf. Jack 1991; Towns *et al.* 2003; Towns & Adams 2009; see 7.3). The dual effect is to disrupt the verbal evidence being produced, both in the moment (as preserved for future audiences by the BWV) and in potential future contributions from the AV. Therefore, despite the fact that disruptions reinforce officers’ position of authority, they ultimately reduce police control over the evidence and threaten their productive powers of cooperation and protection (Tew 2006). This point is supported with reference to the enhanced instability of the semi-public setting of Neil’s barbershop, which differs from the buffer of privacy surrounding domestic settings. The officer’s efforts to
minimise external disruptions of the setting raises the question of officers’ differential treatment of spatial instability when it is the police agenda at risk of being derailed. This officer’s subsequent move to the station for statement-taking (Ch.5.3) signaled his need for a more controlled setting and thus the evidential primacy of the formal written statement. Yet the potential for BWV footage to be used in court (CoP 2014a) bears out the consequentiality of disrupting the narrative space during FRCs.

7.1.3 Controlling the function and environment of spaces
Because the settings lack predetermined institutional functions, participants must assign temporary functions to spaces. This research has found that the multifunctional potential of FRC settings is another aspect in which the officers can either reinforce their dominance or assign the AV some agency. Two spatial dichotomies arose in the data which are typical of FRC settings: inside/outside and downstairs/uptstairs.

The inside/outside divide established in Amy’s FRC (Ch.4.3; Ch.5.1) demonstrated that from the police perspective, the compartmentalised structure of FRC settings can be a spatial affordance (Jucker et al. 2018) which officers can use to facilitate ‘offline’ talk. This dimension of FRCs recalls research on the communicative functions of liminal spaces such as corridors (Iedema et al. 2006) and kitchens (Hazel & Mortensen 2013) in institutional settings. Yet this thesis has uncovered an inversion of the power balance associated with liminal spaces. They are typically associated with resistance to power, in that they facilitate communication set apart from the institutional business for which the setting is designed (e.g. Waring & Bishop 2010; Vesala & Tuomivaara 2019). In FRCs, however, the officers can both divorce spaces from their normal function within the AV’s realm and block AVs’ access to these spaces, with varying degrees of necessity (see e.g. Ch.4.3). Demarcation of spaces during FRCs can therefore maximise the power imbalance by increasing police control and reducing the AV’s freedom of movement and knowledge of what is happening. Chapter 5 illustrated how the inside-outside division enabled the officers to channel their collusive power (Tew 2006) to strategise and gain control over Amy’s account, while her physical exclusion amplified her vulnerability. At the other end of the relational spectrum from Amy’s FRC, the officer’s staged departure from Julia’s kitchen to ‘nip’ outside for paperwork (Ex.4.2c) nonetheless reiterated that AVs must adhere to the institutional function assigned to the space (the narrative), whereas the officer dictates the process of remoulding the space for its next function (statement-taking). Also emerging from

Furthermore, the effect on the narrative may not be detectable for audiences if the disruptive movements are not visible in the footage used. This point is supported by the four different viewpoints provided by different officers’ cameras in Amy’s call-out.
the comparison with liminal spaces in more structured settings is the fact that the BWV restricts officers from finding any space that is backstage (Goffman 1990) from the institution’s perspective, as evidenced by the outside discussion that has been preserved in the present data (see further 7.2).

In two FRCs, the downstairs/upstairs divide reflected a division between the main policework and the AVs’ children. Analysis observed two diametrically opposed approaches by officers in their treatment of this division. When the officer restricted Amy from checking on her child on the basis that the officer had already checked, this extension of control into the maternal space underscored the officer’s absolute authority over every aspect of the AV’s realm. While Julia was licensed to create a barrier between the narrative space and her children upstairs, this symbolic division was breached verbally when the officer directed a question upstairs to her child. Despite the private setting of most FRCs, there is no official guidance as to managing spaces which the AV may prefer to keep out of bounds, if circumstances allow it. This issue arose in the DAS focus group, in terms of the intimidating potential of uniformed police in children’s homes:

M2  it’s like when they come in and they say y’know ‘you have children here’ ‘yeah they’re upstairs’ ‘we’ll just go and check on them’ (.) don’t go and check on them [others agree loudly] [M5: no don’t] they do not want to see

M5  they’re fast asleep in their safe place in their bed and the door opens and it’s not mummy it’s some great big stranger in a uniform with radios and handcuffs (.) and they’re not going to be completely freaked out [others agree loudly]

M2  don’t go and check on them I will go and bring them down or you’ll come up with me but don’t- but they’ll say that as they’re off up the stairs and you think ‘don’t go and open their door you’ll frighten the life out of them’ [others agree loudly]

M5  I think that kind of that approach of just going through their- y’know into a child’s bedroom or into a school or anything it kind of exemplifies also the manner of the speech and attitude and language and stuff if they’re prepared to just go in there without checking then quite often the sorts of attitude stuff matches against that

DAS focus group, App.R4: 14

In the final turn, M5 draws a correlation between officers’ privileged prepositioning and their power to move freely within her house. Arising from this exchange is the fact that victims’ perceptions of police legitimacy can be influenced by how officers treat FRC settings. Spaces associated with AVs’ children warrant particular delicacy, given DA victims’ sensitivity to blame
and institutional sanctions involving their children (see 7.2). This dynamic will be considered in Chapter 8 in relation to recommendations for FRC practice.

Related to their control over the functions of spaces, officers assumed varying degrees of agency to adjust the material structure of the narrative environment according to these functions. Participants’ relative prepositioning of authority within the setting comes to the fore in this aspect, with officers’ lack of familiarity hindering their efforts. The contrastive approaches aligned with officers’ coerciveness in other aspects of control over the setting. The officers who overrode the AV’s desire to check on her child also adjusted the lighting in her house counter to her preference (Ex.4.4d), whereas the officers who allowed the AV to establish the narrative space also gave her control of adjusting her seating. Although brief, these instances contribute to the cumulative construction of who holds authority within the setting. The diverse material structure may represent obstacles for officers but they can afford AVs more control over the way they tell their story, such as when Neil used a prop to demonstrate the assault. Managing the narrative environment is another aspect of FRCs in which officers lack guidance, despite the impact on verbal evidence and attendant emphasis in vulnerable witness interviewing guidelines (MoJ 2022: 67). This gap will be addressed in Chapter 8’s recommendations for FRC procedure.

7.1.4 Controlling victims’ movements

A fundamental distinction between an FRC setting and a formal interview room is the degree of control over witnesses’ movements dictated by the context. This study has highlighted officers’ management of AVs’ movement as a key means of establishing AVs’ positions relative to the police at the beginning of the investigative process. All three AVs in the data oriented to the officers’ authority in this regard, and the FRCs entailed varying degrees of restriction of AVs’ movements. Most stark was the AV (Amy) who twice asked permission to check on her child, before being confined to the staircase when questioned (Ch.4.3). However, even when the other two AVs exerted some control over officers’ movements, such as keeping them waiting in the doorway upon arrival and delaying their departure, this agency was licensed in the first place by the officers. The crucial contrast in the officers’ approaches was the degree to which control of AVs’ movements was evidently warranted by the circumstances and mitigated discursively. Where restriction of the AV’s movements does not have a clear motivation (from the AV’s perspective) the dual effect is to compound their vulnerability and perpetuate the ideological assumption of police omnipotence, which in turn brings police legitimacy into question. These
effects were demonstrated in Amy’s case, in which the officers offered the distressed AV no explanation for their strict control of her movements. This finding reveals a key aspect in which FRCs differ from emergency calls, in which the caller’s position is much less likely to dissolve, as Amy’s did, because their K+ information defines the call. Whereas Kidwell (2006) identified affordances in the face-to-face modality of FRCs which enabled officers to calm citizens with eye gaze, the constraint imposed on Amy demonstrates a limitation of this physical engagement in terms of the AV’s vulnerability. By contrast, Julia’s FRC showed that allowing more freedom of movement supported the AV by facilitating their story and alleviating their distress, through reassigning them some power in a space associated with recent abuse. The study thus contributes to our understanding of the “action-shaping and action-shaped” nature of interactional space (Mondada 2013: 250; Goffman 1971; Kendon 1990), by demonstrating how this concept intersects with power in a consequential context and how it might therefore be applied to inform police practice (see Ch.8).

The implications of unnecessary and unmitigated control of AVs’ movements can be illuminated with reference to a key similarity in three narratives, which all draw a connection between the reported abuse and spatial control. Each describes the episode in terms of the AP’s aggressive domination of their space: forcing entry (Amy and Julia), rampaging around (Amy and Neil), controlling the AV’s movements (Amy and Julia), throwing items (Julia and Neil) and invading the AV’s personal space with violence (Amy and Julia). In the below excerpt, which captures many of these elements, the AV describes being immobilised by the AP through fear, then through confinement by him in a cramped space.

**FRCI: Amy**

0497 AV and then- (. ) he says stand in the corner you stand  
0498 On ‘stand’ she points aggressively  
0499 there (. ) and I’m gonna- (. ) look round the house  
0500 and I was like *what are you doing* >honestly< I’m-  
0501 (. ) just like shaking and I was just stood there  
0502 ’cause >I was like< if I go- if I go anywhere near  
0503 him he’s gunna b-. hihihhhh like bomb into the  
0504 baby’s room and I- you know- I can’t have that  
0505 because my little girl’s asleep >like< (PO1: "yeah")  
0506 I didn’t wanna get to that >.hihihh< so I just  
0507 stood there and then he was like- (. ) then he’s:  
0508 On ‘stood’ she stands stiffly with hands to side  
0509 checking then he’s going {angry:} *my house* are  
0510 you- so wha- you you’ve been with people here (. )  
0511 (PO1: "yeah") and then he’s come down here (. ) and  
0512 he’s told me to go into the bathroom (. ) so I’ve  
0513 gone into the bathroom he’s come in and like- (. )
This description brings to light the fear and helplessness experienced when subjected to abuse in one’s own home, and the power of first response officers as the first authority figures victims encounter after an abusive episode. Coercive and disruptive police behaviour within a space that carries physical and mental associations with trauma could intensify victims’ vulnerability (e.g. Krause et al. 2006, Richards et al. 2008). The correlation between DA perpetrators’ control of victims and of their space is conjured by one AV when she underscores the importance of having a space that is hers: “ohh this is my new- this is my house. This is nothing to do with him” (Ch.6.3.2). The other two AVs similarly express distress at the APs’ physical and psychological encroachment into the domestic life they have sought to protect. In the understanding that officers must work with the diverse and unpredictable characteristics of FRC settings, this research has illustrated how coercive and disruptive treatment of the setting compounds victims’ vulnerability and reinforces the ideological assumption of police omnipotence across contexts (see further 7.4). The parallel between perpetrators’ abusive invasion of space and first response officers’ legitimised invasion of space underscores the need for officers to restore a degree of agency to AVs.

The study therefore contributes to the literature by presenting FRC settings as complex ‘architectures for interaction’ which are associated with particular types of talk (Jucker et al. 2018; Hausendorf 2022). It was established in Chapter 2 that FRC settings are moderately structured spaces which are associated with day-to-day family or work talk (Jucker et al. 2018). It was demonstrated in Section 7.1 that for DA victims, the day-to-day talk associated with their space may include abusive interactions. Adding another layer of complexity, the supplanting of this ‘normal’ talk with institutional business during FRCs creates an incongruity by which the interactional hallmarks of heavily structured, formal police settings are present, without the spatial affordances which “enable and facilitate the communicative activities for which they were designed” (Jucker et al. 2018: 87; cf. Yoong 2010). However, unlike vulnerable witness interviews, whose settings can be arranged in advance, this study has illustrated how FRC interactions function not only to produce evidence but to inform the officers’ immediate next steps. The AV’s initial account is thus bound to its sequential position within the investigative process, underscoring the need for officers to develop a more supportive approach to managing the settings in which they find themselves (see further Ch.8). A more strategic approach would also maximise the officers’ productive power by giving them tighter control over the unfolding situation, which in turn would invite AVs’ confidence in police support.
7.1.5 Controlling physical proximity and touch

Officers demonstrated their capacity for reducing the police-victim power distance using discursive strategies when entering the AV’s personal ‘bubble’ of space (MoJ 2022: 205) to inspect and photograph injuries. In one scenario, the officers’ delicate approach to physical proximity and touch contrasted with their coercive treatment of the AV’s wider domain. In both instances, the officers involved the AVs in a collaborative, staged process which brought to light the ad hoc management of other spatial aspects of the FRCs. This contrast displayed officers’ prioritisation of physical over verbal evidence, reflecting the greater evidential value of physical manifestations of abuse (see Ch.1). The primacy of tangible forms of abuse was evident throughout each strand of analysis, revealing the dialectic between the text (police-victim interaction) and the overarching social practices (criminal justice system) which determine officers’ priorities during FRC interactions, which in turn reinforce these social practices. Yet the differential approach to the physical inspections also represents an opportunity, in showcasing officers’ ability to discursively manage the relational dimension of power vis-à-vis their own privileged prepositioning. If officers were trained to conceptualise FRC settings similarly in terms of invading the AV’s personal space (see Ch.8), this could inform a more victim-centred approach from the point of entry.

7.1.6 Controlling visibility of the setting

The primacy of visual evidence also brings to light the exposure of AV’s private realms via body-worn video, which the participating force (and most others) mandate officers to turn on for domestic abuse incidents. The BWV footage preserves for the official record not only evidence, but many other aspects of the AVs’ lifeworlds. The wealth of additional information transmitted via FRC settings contrasts with the depersonalising environment of formal police interview rooms (see Ch.4.4). It was established in the research background that police stations are far from neutral, with the setting structured to reinforce communicative norms, but FRC settings are equally loaded with evocative potential. Given the diversity of settings visible in the footage provided for this and future research\(^{24}\), it is worth questioning the influence of the setting on future viewers’ evaluations of the AV and their story. While viewing the AV in their ‘natural habitat’ invites empathy through personalisation, the meanings transmitted by visible sociodemographic and lifestyle markers will position certain AVs more favourably than others (cf. Aldridge & Luchjenbroers 2008). The role of the BWV therefore contributes to the

\(^{24}\) The full set of fourteen recordings comprises markedly different (mostly domestic) settings and contains much variety in visible sociodemographic and lifestyle markers.
sociodemographic positioning of AVs relative to the evidence being produced during FRCs, inviting the ideological assumptions of future audiences into the AV’s territory. This sense of exposure was discussed during the DAS focus group meeting:

M2 and it’s embarrassing as well [others agree loudly] because you think ‘this is my home and they’re coming into my home’ and it’s embarrassing

M4 it’s your dirty laundry out here [others agree loudly]

[...]

M4 ... one time they did that you know the kids had just come home from school and you know had thrown all their school stuff in the hall and it was quite an ample hall they walked in and they’d actually written in their logs ‘house is untidy’ [others agree; shocked sounds]

M7 yeah ‘stain on carpet’ flipping heck the stain on the carpet why does that matter [others agree loudly]

M6 he’s just come in from school () and then you get paranoid because then you become aware that they’re actually looking at everything [others agree loudly] for signs that you’re not coping

M7 damp porch

M6 and why aren’t you- you know if you aren’t coping why aren’t you coping and that really- and let’s face it there’s no reason to thump somebody y’know it doesn’t matter how untidy their house is [others agree]

DAS focus group, App.R4: 7-8

These personal experiences align with FRC guidelines which instruct officers to remain vigilant for “signs of disturbance” and evidence of coercive control in the AV’s environs (First Responder as a Witness, CoP 2022). Although such guidance is motivated by the need for supporting evidence, it nonetheless highlights the fact that the BWV footage gives the institution indefinite access\textsuperscript{25} to the AV’s territory. The officers’ freedom to move around the AV’s space highlights the power embedded in their role as the BWV producers. The footage may be recontextualised further along in the legal process, but the officers retain moment-by-moment control over what is captured for the record, typifying the processes of production, distribution and consumption that drive the reproduction of institutional power (Fairclough 1995).

\textsuperscript{25} At the beginning of this research, the participating force had an eight-week retention limit for non-evidential footage (which further restricted data access), but this policy is no longer in place at the time of writing.
7.2 Revisiting the research question: Positioning, power and police expertise-in-interaction

The AVs’ emergency call summons first response officers’ expertise, on the basis of their institutionally-ascribed protective power (Tew 2006) and the associated assumption of their expert vision: their “ability to take into account implications of the facts and infer what to do” (Arminen & Simonen 2021: 584). To realise their protective power during FRCs, therefore, officers must not only act on their expert know-how, but also exhibit this know-how in interaction to encourage AVs’ confidence and cooperation. Embedded in first response officers’ dominant prepositioning is the ability to shift between different available positions during FRCs according to different goals, while AVs are confined to their highly personalised positioning of help-seeker. This study has found that expertise-in-interaction hinges on officers’ ability to harness the multiplicity of positionings available to them to progress their objectives without amplifying the police-victim power imbalance. These (re)positionings were found to constitute power relations in the following interconnected ways:

1. Time pressure may lead officers to prioritise offence categorisation over AVs’ experiential knowledge, but this has spill-over effects which amplify AVs’ disempowerment.
2. Officers’ prioritisation of physical violence perpetuates ideological assumptions about domestic abuse and the silencing of AVs whose experiences do not conform.
3. Sharing procedural knowledge with AVs reduces the relational distance and thus bolsters the officers’ cooperative power to achieve institutional aims (including those which counter the AV’s aims).
4. Foregrounding procedure as a barrier to protection displays officers’ lack of professional autonomy and compromises perceived police legitimacy.
5. Positioning ‘with’ the AV against the AP can disempower AVs later in the legal process if police impartiality is called into question.

The following discussion of these findings is based primarily on the Chapter 5 analysis, but incorporates relevant observations from Chapters 4 and 6 along the way.

7.2.1 (De)centralising the victim’s lived experience

Reflecting the mutually determining relationship between knowledge and power (Foucault 1977), analysis found that expertise-in-interaction inheres in officers’ ability to manage
experiential and procedural knowledge gradients. It was established in Chapter 2 that AVs are prepositioned with the K+ know-that advantage in relation to the reported events and, much like their treatment of the AV’s space, officers assigned AVs with differing degrees of authority based on this knowledge (Heritage 2013). In Amy’s FRC, the officers’ strikingly disempowering approach to diagnosing the situation (Chapter 5.1) stemmed from their denial of the AV’s experiential epistemic authority, ostensibly due to the time pressure. Through their insistent questioning, selective attention to detail and insensitive response to her distress, the officers objectified Amy’s experience as something she must hand over, instead of developing it in her own way (e.g. Ex.5.1a). This FRC was therefore characterised by an incongruity whereby the AV was positioned centrally as the source of information, but her lived experience was side-lined. The result was a struggle back and forth wherein Amy attempted to transmit her experience and the officers marked it as the wrong type of information. The decentralisation of Amy’s perspective was crystallised when the officers displayed their collusive power to exclude Amy by self-positioning both ‘as’ the institution and as a police team to apply pressure.

Clearly, no generalisations can be drawn from just one FRC, and it is vital to reiterate the challenges of conducting ad hoc questioning in high-pressure situations. Yet victims face a corresponding degree of trauma and disorientation in these environments, in which officers are expected to “put victims at ease” (Build Rapport, CoP 2022). The coercive questioning observed in Chapter 5.1 recalls the point made in Section 7.1, that restricting victims’ movements echoes the dynamics of abuse (cf. Ainsworth 2021). In this vein, the study reveals first response officers’ leeway to use discursive strategies that are incommensurate with established practice for questioning vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in formal contexts (Ministry of Justice 2022). Further leeway is afforded by the potential for multiparty interactions to involve the ‘team questioning’ effect observed in (Ex.5.1a). If such strategies derive from time pressure, then there is a clear need to equip officers with readily available strategies to ask the necessary questions while validating the AV’s experience (see Ch.8).

The effects of an alternative approach were observed in Neil’s and Julia’s FRCs, in which the officers foregrounded AVs’ epistemic authority by allowing them speaking space and displaying understanding and empathy (although see 7.2 on impartiality). Julia’s long narrative turns (see App.R2) illustrated that assigning AVs ownership of their lived experience requires officers to relinquish a degree of interactional control to allow for evidence that reflects this experience, despite the time constraints26. When this tension was topicalised by Julia, the

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26 Both Amy’s and Julia’s FRCs were informed by the next police action of arresting the AP. In Amy’s case, the AP was being held in the police van outside the house and in Julia’s case, the officers were yet to apprehend the AP.
officers recentralised her lived experience by offering what Hepburn & Potter (2007) term take-your-time crying receipts (Ex.4.4a). Space to speak equals space to express emotion that “may be epistemically relevant in conveying the seriousness of the […] story” (Hepburn and Potter 2007: 114), which has evidential advantages in that AVs’ demeanour (captured on BWV) can contribute to evidence of the AP’s behaviour (CoP 2014a). Given the established correlation between interactional freedom and quality evidence (see e.g. Risan et al. 2020; Griffiths and Milne 2006; Dando et al. 2016), this study demonstrates the power of first response officers to either downgrade or preserve an AV’s lived experience, with implications for their vulnerability and future audiences’ evaluations of their story.

7.2.2 Positioning domestic abuse as evidence

With this last point in mind, there are also ideological implications associated with an approach that prioritises the AV’s knowledge, which may produce complex representations of DA that do not align with investigative and legal frameworks. Despite the increasing legislative prominence of non-physical forms of abuse, such cases remain beset with evidential difficulties (Barlow et al. 2019; Brennan & Myhill 2022; see Ch.1). In Amy’s FRC, this legal context was implied throughout the officers’ questioning about the grabbing and made explicit in their discussion outside between themselves (5.lb), illustrating the need to take the wider power structures into account when analysing micro-interactional choices (Fairclough 1993). As the outside talk demonstrated, this wider context is oriented to primarily (or solely) by the officers, while AVs like Amy may perceive only that their representations are deficient. By extracting a more explicit description of assault, the officers succeeded in securing grounds for arrest, but in doing so reinforced this requirement. Even as the officers announce their decision, Amy indicates some uncertainty about her description of being grabbed:

\textit{FRCI: Amy}

\begin{verbatim}
0535 AV and then that’s b-- (.). #like where he’s {points to arm} grabbing me and that# (sniffs) >.hih.hih< hhh
0536 {sniffs}
0537 PO1 >"okay"< (.)
0538 AV ~"oh I dunno"~
0540 AV Inspecting her arms
\end{verbatim}

Victims know that aggressive verbal and physical behaviour leads to physical violence (e.g. Dobash 2003; Dutton 1994; Ganley 1995; Stark 2009), but if they call the police as a pre-emptive measure, they risk making their situation worse by angering the perpetrator. The balance may be tipped if victims feel they will not be able to produce sufficient evidence for police action.
Amy’s FRC thus exemplifies the sociocultural assumption of ‘real’ DA that still resonates throughout the justice system (Strobl 2004; Meyer 2015). Given that coercive control is a precursor to domestic homicide (WHO 2017; Sabina & Tinsdale 2008), Amy’s claim to be “scared for her life” was bolstered by references to the relationship history throughout her account, but the “absence” of violence led the officers’ backstage evaluation of her story as “wishy-washy” (Ex.5.1b). The evidential consequences of such a reductive focus were demonstrated when the officers blocked Amy’s repeated attempts to describe threatening behaviour (Ex.5.1a), which they nonetheless later cited as evidence of harassment (Ex.5.1e). One officer’s comment that this evidence was made “even better” with the additional detail about grabbing may express investigative reality, but it also shows how this reality is reproduced when officers silence victims’ own expertise as to what constitutes dangerous behaviour (cf. Ashcraft 2000). While no generalisations can be drawn from one FRC, the study provides unique insight into the cycle of (mis)representation by which first response officers preposition AVs for future audiences according to legal discourses around DA, in turn reinforcing the very discourses that constrain them (and see 7.2.4).

7.2.3 Expert knowledge and cooperative power

So far, this section has focused on officers prioritising procedure at the expense of AVs’ experiential knowledge, recalling Dall and Sarangi’s observation that professionals’ “invoking of institutional categories is often linked to selected aspects of the client’s case vis-a-vis institutional affordances” (2018: 117). However, analysis of Neil’s and Julia’s FRCs demonstrated how officers can also invoke their expert knowledge for productive purposes, by explaining procedure to progress the goal of statement-taking (Ch.5.3) and delineate the scope of police support (Ch.5.2.1). When officers invite AVs into their professional sphere, they reduce the relational distance and bolster their cooperative power to work alongside AVs within institutional frameworks, recalling the participation model in healthcare communication (e.g. Rowland & Politi 2016). Previous studies have cited first response officers’ belief that DA AVs lack understanding of institutional constraints (Lagdon et al. 2015; Horwitz et al. 2011), and this procedural knowledge gap was topicalised by the officers who appealed to Neil and Amy to consider the police perspective (Ex.5.1a). However, the contrast between these two scenarios reveals the functional distinction between explicating procedure to manage AVs’ expectations and relying on procedure to responsibilise AVs (cf. Hadjimatheou 2022; Duggan & Grace 2018; Coy & Kelly 2019).
Officers’ displays of procedural knowledge therefore proved supportive when they stemmed from AVs’ own appeals to this ascribed expertise. Both Neil and Julia sought the officers’ expert input on various topics (e.g. Ch.5.2), whereas Amy appealed only to their institutionally-endowed power to protect her. Instead of reinforcing this positioning by displaying their shared extralinguistic goal of helping Amy, the officers conveyed that their hands were tied by procedure (Ex.5.1a). By setting protection and procedure against each other in this way, officers may compromise the perceived legitimacy of policing frameworks.

7.2.4 Professional autonomy and protective power

In Amy’s FRC, therefore, the officers seemed to lack the autonomy to judge the situation themselves, despite the AV’s escalating distress. If expert vision is the “ability to take into account implications of the facts and infer what to do” (Arminen & Simonen 2021: 584; Goodwin 1994), officers who do not display this ability compromise their expert positioning. The DAS focus group foregrounded the fact that there are instances in which victims need officers to take control:

M5 and I wish that they would do that more rather than keep putting it back [others agree loudly] on- on the individual (.) [M2: because again that’s not consistent] it’d be a bit like you go to a doctor and he’s gone ‘yeah that’s a rash what shall I prescribe you for it’ [others agree; laugh] and you go ‘well I don’t know’ and he goes ‘well it’s your- your choice [others laugh] [M2: yeah ‘I just want it to go away’] (.) do you want the cream or’ [laughs]

M4 yeah but d’you know what it is do you know what it is it’s because the CPS turn down so many cases [others agree] whereas with me it was absolutely cut and dried (.) the man’s done wrong you know [others agree] and what he did to me and the physical evidence that was there

DAS focus group, App.R4: 19

M5’s analogy of a doctor treating a rash highlights the implications for perceived competence when officers centralise AVs in the decision-making process and background their own ‘epistemics of expertise’ (Heritage 2013). The connection drawn by M4 between police autonomy and cases that are “cut and dried” encapsulates the difference between Amy’s FRC (see Ch.5.1) and those of Julia and Neil. The latter two produced explicit descriptions of violence early in their narratives (e.g. Ex.6.1c, Ex.6.1d), and in those cases the officers displayed personalised expert judgement (e.g. Ex.6.2d). M2’s reaction that “I just want it to go away” echoes Amy’s plea that the AP “can’t come back here”, illustrating that the barriers to protection
are confined to the officers’ perspective. Victims who call the emergency number solely for protection may resist (or not even perceive) being positioned as responsible for fulfilling officers’ evidential obligations. The study thus builds on previous research which has identified autonomy as a precursor to achieving expertise-in-interaction (e.g. Sarangi & Clarke 2002; Iedema 2005; Flynn 1999), a dynamic that is understudied in policing contexts and especially in FRCs, where the autonomy-expertise nexus generates ongoing consequences.

7.2.5 Victim-perpetrator positioning and police impartiality

So far, this section has evaluated officers’ positioning between AV and institution, but analysis also identified a complexity in their positioning between the AV and AP. It has been established that officers can empower AVs by validating their lived experiences and exhibiting professional judgement, but when positioning ‘with’ the AV involves evaluating the AP’s behaviour, questions are raised about officers’ neutrality. Overt affiliation was a feature which recurred primarily during Julia’s FRC (e.g. Ex.6.2c) and was marked compared to what would be expected in a formal police interview. The study has therefore uncovered a tension inherent in the officers’ pivotal position of influence: verbal agreement is central to building solidarity (Heritage & Raymond 2005) but risks neutralising the future validity of AVs’ evidence. Furthermore, first response officers must also manage their own subject positions within the ongoing story in relation to the AV, the AP and the investigation. These police self-positionings are captured in the BWV footage for future audiences who are evaluating not just the AVs’ story but the officers’ individual expertise.

Previous research has illustrated first response officers’ limited capacity to assume a therapeutic role (Horwitz et al. 2011; Lagdon et al. 2015; Lane 2019), and a key task is to refer AVs for specialist support (see Ch.1). Yet unlike an investigative interview later in the process, first response interactions are characterised by a primacy that positions first response officers with a unique opportunity, as illustrated by the below excerpts from the DAS focus group:

M2  ... you already suspect that they don’t believe you and you don’t now want to make matters worse {others agree} so you’re not going to say what’s happened you’re not going to open up because in a minute they’re going to leave and you’re going to be left with the repercussions basically {others agree loudly} of the police having been called [...]

M3  I think being believed was huge actually {others agree loudly} I think you just- when you- one of the things that perpetrators do is to make you feel that no one will believe you {others agree loudly} (?) and you believe them that there's nothing- you've got- it’s
like you've got no firm ground underneath you {others agree} (.) and I think that was huge- just I'd say what's been happening and for somebody to believe me and being believed is just [such a huge thing]

DAS focus group, App.R4: 14; 38

These insights illustrate the connection between victims’ vulnerability and officers’ initial reactions to their stories. Accordingly, DA research (e.g. Wolf et al. 2003; Birdsey & Snowball 2013; Meyer 2015) and first response guidelines underscore the role of belief during FRCs: “Where an AV feels unsupported or disbelieved themselves, they are less likely to support police action” (Build Rapport, CoP 2022). Yet there is no guidance as to how officers should counter disbelief while remaining impartial, as will be addressed in Chapter 8’s recommendations for practice. This complexity is encapsulated by Julia’s description of the AP’s strategic positioning of the police as her oppressors:

FRC2: Julia

0358 AV that’s- that was another mental sort of- (0.3)
0359 thing (PO1: "mm") (.) and like- (.) I’ve been so
0360 scared cause he’s been going {quietly nasty;} oh
0361 well if you phone the police on me (.) then you’re
0362 gunna have this you’re gunna have that you’re
0363 gunna have this you’re not gunna be able to do
0364 this and that (.) and I’ve been so scared because
0365 he’s been saying that to me

This dynamic foregrounds the interpersonal complexities first response officers face to achieve a neutral positioning when responding to accounts, like Julia’s, of being trapped in a cycle of abuse and oriented to self-blame (see 7.3.1). By contrast, Neil expressed confidence in his interpretation of events and entitlement to police assistance. In this context, the officer was able to focus his personalised support in positioning ‘with’ Neil relative to the institution, while maintaining a more neutral position between AV and AP (Ch.6.2.2). The contrast between Julia’s and Neil’s circumstances raised questions about the influence of gender on the officer’s positionings (see 7.3.4), but it nonetheless reinforces that expertise-in-interaction during FRCs involves tailoring an approach that meets individual AVs’ needs (see Ch.8).

An AV’s appeal to first response officers’ protective power via the emergency call therefore activates various dimensions of responsibility. According to van Langenhove (2017), social actors are positioned according to various moral orders, including legal, institutional, cultural, and intrapersonal. These categorisations reveal the clash at the heart of first response officers’ professional positioning. On the one hand, impartiality attends to both the legal-institutional and intrapersonal moral orders by facilitating a fair investigation (for the AP) and
valid evidence (for the AV). On the other hand, affiliation may also serve both legal-institutional and intrapersonal moral orders by encouraging AVs to pursue prosecution and helping them escape abuse. FRCs differ from police interviews because they are a juncture at which AVs decide whether and how to proceed into the legal process. Therefore, while impartiality has the potential to disadvantage AVs in court, lack of support at this initial juncture might prevent the case from progressing further (see 7.3).

Nonetheless, first response officers’ expert positioning is bound up with their overarching moral responsibility to remain neutral during interactions that are being recorded for the record (CoP 2019). From an interactional study perspective, however, this research has indicated impartiality as an area of interactional complexity (further complicated by BWV) which requires greater prominence in FRC guidelines to reflect the implications for victims’ trust and officers' legitimacy. The police inspectorate’s 2014 report recommended that frontline officers address “poor attitudes” and poor evidence collection practices (HMIC 2014: II-13; Lagdon et al. 2015). The study has shone a light on some problems that arise when officers do not balance their competing interpersonal and evidential obligations discursively. As such, analysis has supplied key points of departure for future research to explore a wider range of contextual factors (see Ch.8).

7.3 Revisiting the research question: Positioning, power and AV responsibility

FRC guidelines stipulate that officers should “avoid jumping to conclusions about which of the parties in the relationship is the victim and which the perpetrator” and “conduct immediate investigation at the scene” to determine each party’s responsibility (Initial Investigation, CoP 2022). First response officers are thereby imbued with the power to apportion blame on a case-by-case basis, according to the assumption of their expert vision (see 7.2.4). This adjudication is an inherently subjective activity which, if not expressed discursively, may remain hidden from the BWV and instead be entextualised according to the officer’s representational choices in writing their report (The First Responder as Witness, CoP 2022). First response officers are therefore bound by the same expectation as police interviewers, to conceal their continuous process of evaluation while interacting with witnesses (see CoP 2019). Yet as discussed in the previous section, from an interactional perspective, the (semi-)private setting and ad hoc nature of FRCs creates an incongruity in the format of talk: AVs must make a disclosure within an emotionally charged context, but (as per 7.2.5) the officers are not licensed to offer an equivalent, emotionally-oriented response. The implications of this juxtaposition came to the fore in Chapter 6’s analysis of AVs’ responsibility (re)positionings, which were topicalised by
both AVs and officers during the FRCs. These positionings constituted power relations in the following interconnected ways:

1. The AP-AV control mechanisms of blame and silencing are imported into the police-victim interactions to (explicitly and implicitly) shape AVs’ talk.
2. The extent to which AVs foreground their own responsibility and blame informs the police-victim power gradient during FRCs.
3. AVs’ self-blame correlates with their perceptions of entitlement to police support.
4. Male AVs’ (re)positioning relative to blame can be complicated by sociocultural assumptions about gendered abuse dynamics.
5. As institutional members, officers are positioned with the influence to mediate between AVs and other key power structures which govern their lifeworld responsibilities.
6. First response officers hold the power of the questioner to topicalise AVs’ responsibility and imply blame, with evidential and sense-making implications.
7. First response officers are drawn into AVs’ process of reconciling their past, present and future positions at a crucial juncture, revealing the potential impact of the BWV on officers’ protective power.

7.3.1 Representing the domestic abuse control mechanisms of blame and silencing

The control mechanisms of blame and silencing are imported into FRC interaction in ways that shape AVs’ discursive choices, both implicitly and explicitly. The study thus builds on previous work (see Ch.2.3) with unique insight into AVs’ interpretations and representations of the power dynamics of DA during a speech event which potentially marks the AV’s transition away from the AP. A common theme of abuse across the three FRCs was that of silencing (Jack 1991; Jack & Ali 2010): how domestic abusers strategically prevent victims from speaking out (e.g. Theismeyer 2003; Towns & Adams 2009). Amy and Neil depicted the APs physically hindering their emergency calls, and Julia and Neil described silencing tactics within their wider relationships. The latter representations highlighted the function of blame as a tool of control to silence victims, such as when Julia cited her partner’s threats that she would get into trouble with social services and the police if she took action against him (Ex.6.2a-b). Neil’s representations pointed to a gendered mechanism of control by which the AP accused him of violence to interfere with his attempts to call the emergency number (Ex.6.1d) (see 7.3.4).
Beyond their explicit references to being prevented from involving the police, the influence of the AP’s voice also infused the AVs’ explanations and justifications for their own behaviour and, in Amy’s case, backgrounding of the AP’s agency (e.g. App.RI lines 502-4; see Aldridge & Steel 2022). These nuances of control are salient from a policing perspective in that they illustrate the range of APs’ oppressive tactics to inform officers’ ongoing understanding of abuse dynamics. Jealousy and accusations of promiscuity of the sort described by both Amy and Julia are associated with escalating violence and murder (e.g. Towns & Adams 2016; Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005; Martin & Pritchard 2010), further supporting the argument (see 7.2.1) that giving AVs speaking space increases the protective scope of the police by uncovering more of the warning signs that officers must be able to ‘recognise’ during FRCs (CoP 2022).

The study expands on previous work on blame displacement in DA and other contexts (Town & Adams 2016; Lempert 1996a; Thapar-Björkert & Morgan 2010; Pallatino et al. 2019; Ingrids 2014; Franzén & Aronsson 2018) by revealing how it seeps into AVs’ interactions with officers in the most consequential of contexts. The fact that AVs make their own blameworthiness relevant during encounters in which they seek to convey the APs’ culpability epitomises the pernicious psychological effects of abuse. Previous research has linked abusers’ silencing strategies with the privacy of domestic settings (e.g. Towns et al. 2003) which abusers exploit to muffle victims’ voices, so the findings about AVs’ self-blame reveal another layer of complexity to interacting in a locale associated with abuse. Perpetrators’ use of blame to stop victims from contacting the police positions first response officers with a responsibility to avoid reproducing this blame discursively, as will be elaborated in 7.3.5.

### 7.3.2 Responsibility, blame and the police-victim power gradient

The degree to which AVs orient to their own responsibility and blame informs the police-victim power gradient during FRCs. Hydén (2015: 183) notes that blame displacement isolates victims from support because it obscures their perception of perpetrators’ culpability. During FRCs, therefore, victims’ importing of past blame into the present context sets the perpetrator’s voice against those of the officers. If accountings reflect “the nature of the normal” (Potter & Wetherell 1987:75), the combination of the officers’ expert authority and the primacy effect can reset victims’ idea of ‘normal’. While all three AVs peppered their narratives with explanations and justifications, analysis revealed differing degrees to which AVs self-positioned as blameworthy, and the corresponding influence on the power distance between speakers. Julia topicalised the officers’ power to evaluate her behaviour in her reported internal debate about involving the police, and accordingly she reached out for the officers’ input as to her
responsibility (Ch.6.2). Amy’s frequent justifications were less explicit (e.g. Ch.6.3.2) and thus remained unaddressed by the officers, incrementally increasing the relevance of her accountability (cf. MacLeod 2016) during an interaction already characterised by oppositional tension. Much like the difference between cases that are ‘cut and dried’ from an evidential perspective, the study has thus illuminated the varying degrees of explicitness with which AVs can infuse their initial accounts with justifications which might stem from abuse but might nonetheless be used against them in later recontextualisations of the evidence. The associated need for first response officers to perceive implicit constructions of self-blame again highlights the interactional complexities around the notion of officer impartiality when DA so often involves blame displacement.

**7.3.3 Victim (self-)blame, entitlement to support and (dis)empowerment**

AVs’ self-blame was found to correlate with their perceptions of entitlement to police support. Neil displayed the most awareness of the evidential function of his account by self-positioning relative to potential points of evidence against him, such as the AP accusing him of punching her during his emergency call. By self-positioning relative to both the local interactional context and the wider power structures, Neil aligned with the duality inherent in the officers’ professional positioning. Correspondingly, he deflected blame and foregrounded his entitlement to police support, activating what Tracy (1997) terms the *customer service* frame. As a result, the officers’ blame-implicative questioning about Neil’s past non-reporting of violence (Ex.6.3a) did not have the same disempowering effect as the blame-implicative questioning in Amy’s case, because the two AVs displayed contrastive perspectives on their own responsibility. At the other end of the spectrum, Julia expressed uncertainty about her right to support from the police and social services, stemming from her orientations to self-blame (Ch.6.1). The study has thus identified that an area for ongoing research, with a larger dataset, would be to explore in more depth the linkages between blame attribution and self-positioning relative to present and ongoing police support. This dynamic has clear implications in relation to both the low reporting numbers and victims withdrawing support for prosecution in DA cases, which might be addressed with messaging that identifies specific sources of self-blame and doubt.

**7.3.4 Gendered abuse dynamics and male victims’ responsibility positionings**

Analysis demonstrated how male AVs’ (re)positioning relative to blame, and the associated police-victim power relations, may be complicated by sociocultural assumptions about
gendered abuse dynamics. Neil’s descriptions of the AP making accusations against him also topicals the fact that male AVs’ reporting entails a reversal of the typical gendered power dynamics associated with DA. Although Neil cites the AP as exploiting these gendered associations to silence him, the officer nonetheless implicitly orients to the same assumption of male agency. Whereas Julia received reassurances in response to her accountings for submitting to the AP’s silencing strategy: “and I’ve been so scared because he’s been saying that to me” (Ex.6.2a), Neil’s past non-reporting is topicalised by the officer as an accountable: “have you reported any of those to the police?” (Ex.6.3a). Hesitance to report has been identified in the DA literature as affecting both female and male victims, where the latter can be silenced by cultural ideologies around masculinity and victimhood (Migliaccio 2001; Durfee 2009; Burcar & Åkerström 2009; Tsui et al. 2010; Enander 2011; Corbally 2015; Morgan & Wells 2016, Hine et al. 2020; Allen-Collinson 2009). Although Neil provides no reason for not reporting, the officer’s blame-implicative indication that it is incommensurate with the violence Neil describes indicates that the silencing of male victims involves dynamics that may be less recognisable to officers. This potential is alluded to in FRC guidelines which warn officers against apportioning blame according to the “type of relationship”, including participants’ gender (CoP 2022).

There is further evidence in Neil’s FRC of the officer problematising Neil’s claims of violence, such as when he assessed the facial injury reductively as “only a tiny scratch”. It was noted that this downgrading of violence also fitted with the collegial atmosphere of this encounter, which raised questions about the positioning of male AVs and officers relative to victimhood and masculinity during FRCs. Further research into FRC interactions with male AVs is needed to explore these linkages, but the gendered dynamics of manipulation described by Neil highlight the potential for officers’ discursive choices to perpetuate the ideologies that prevent male AVs from reporting in the first place. At the same time, first response officers’ task of gauging blame is complicated by the increasing phenomenon of male APs who exploit the legal system’s adoption of a gender symmetry model of DA to make accusations against female victims (Aldridge 2020; Kelly & Westmarland 2016; Hester et al. 2017). The study provides a point of departure for exploring how first response officers manage the unique complexities when interviewing male AVs, especially when their story creates ambiguity as to the criminality of their own actions against the AP.

27 The large cut on Neil’s cheek is clearly visible throughout the footage, including in detail in the officer’s smartphone camera frame. It spans the vertical length of his cheek and could not reasonably be described as a ‘tiny scratch’.
7.3.5 Lifeworld responsibilities and mediating across power structures

Analysis found that the AVs derived a sense of responsibility for ‘what happens next’ from their children, primarily, and financial circumstances (see Ch.6.1.2), supporting previous work that has identified these as barriers to reporting and pursuing prosecution (e.g. Buchbinder & Eisikovits 2004; Douglas & Walsh 2010; Jarnkvist 2019; Nikupeteri 2017). The study builds on previous work by demonstrating the interconnectedness of FRC discourse with other macro-level structures, such as the social care system, which govern key aspects of victims’ lives. Amy’s reference to the AP having “time to see the baby” and Julia’s query about the case impacting her benefit entitlements illustrate the cascading effects of DA and the power of first response officers to inform other institutional processes stemming from the FRC, as exemplified by the officer who sought to contact social services about Neil’s loss of parental access. There was an interesting parallel between officers’ delicacy when discussing AVs’ children and when entering AVs’ physical bubble of space. The metaphorical correlation between these two pursuits reflects FRC guidelines, which stipulate extra care when questioning about children (CoP 2022), indicating the practical benefits of ensuring that potential sources of disempowerment are made visible in authorised procedure.

7.3.6 Responsibility-implicative questioning and the power of entextualisation

As with the selective focus on information (such as that regarding violence), the officers’ power of entextualisation came to the fore in the potential to embed AVs’ responsibility and even blame into the initial account. The blame-implicative questioning of Neil and especially Amy (Ch.6.3) demonstrated the power wielded by first response officers to move AVs to a more central position within their own narratives. Clearly, officers must probe AVs’ actions to gain a comprehensive picture of what happened, but in Amy’s case this involved shifting focus from the AP’s actions to her agentive involvement in his entering the house. This focus foregrounds Amy’s responsibility (Ch.6.3.2) not only in her mind (as evidenced by her responding justifications) but in the evidence being produced, reflecting the “intimate relation between perception of the positions in which the various characters find themselves and perception of story lines” (Davies & Harré 1990: 61). Recalling the conclusion in 7.2.2 about officers’ focus on physical abuse perpetuating ideological assumptions about real abuse, their focus on Amy letting the AP into the house perpetuates the notion of an ‘ideal victim’ as someone who “acts rationally to escape the abuse” (Jarnkvist & Brännström 2019: 4690). The combination of Amy’s self-blame, the officers’ blame-implicative questioning and their consistent non-engagement with her justifications (see Ch.6.3) assigns her a degree of agency at odds with her account of
the abuse and, indeed, her evident helplessness against the AP in the opening few minutes of the footage (see Ch.4.1). Moreover, the officers’ questioning bore troubling similarities to the AP’s own positioning of her as responsible, on the basis of the perceived promiscuity that drew him to her house (Ex.6.1a).

7.3.7 Crystallising positions in victims’ lived storylines

The study has demonstrated that the pivotal nature of FRC interaction involves AVs’ reconciling their responsibility positionings between past, present and future scenarios (e.g. Ch.6.2). These findings support previous work (e.g. Towns & Adams 2016; Jarnkvist & Brännström 2019) which has shown that DA victims’ responsibility positionings shift throughout the relationship, according to shifting contexts. The observed deictic repositionings have revealed the fluidity of FRC sense-making processes, whereby AVs “shift from one to another way of thinking about themselves as the discourse shifts and as their positions within varying story lines are taken up” (Davies and Harré 1990: 58). The thesis contributes further new insight by pinpointing specific moments in which victims are repositioned vis-à-vis their future with the AP, and demonstrating how officers are instrumental in co-constructing these positions at a crucial investigative juncture. In both Julia’s and Neil’s FRCs, the AVs move from a more passive to a more active position, with the key difference being that Julia drives this repositioning with the officers’ encouragement (Ch.6.2.1), whereas Neil is manoeuvred by the officer towards taking responsibility (Ch.6.2.2).

This process epitomises Henriksen’s (2007: 54) concept of crystallisation, by which “the negotiation of perspectives ceases” to create a crystallised position with a “defined, protected character”. From this position, speakers possess new power to achieve a desired action. The problem of low conviction rates in DA cases is partly attributed to the number of victims who decline or withdraw their support for prosecution (ONS 2021). This thesis has shown that victims’ positions can be crystallised during FRCs towards resolve to take action, with the implication that the opposite process of liquidation (Henriksen 2007) is possible, whereby an AV’s position of resolve shifts according to their FRC experience and is re-opened for negotiation. The juncture at which this might go either way is demonstrated by Julia’s real-time process of working out her responsibility:

**FRC2: Julia**

0289 AV “yeah”) (.) it’s always something and he’s like
0290 (0.5) mentally abusive (PO1: "hm") and like I ca-
0291 (0.7) I wouldn’t have done this likely because I
0292 know ##this is gunna go to social services and I
By declaring a new beginning, Julia positions the officers in attendance as representing a new voice to counter the old narratives of blame. Her oscillations between worry and resolve in the above excerpt illustrate that victims who take the step of leaving their abusers have limited or no control over what happens next (Hydén 2005: 173). In this way, the new beginnings that FRCs may offer victims also represent new territory for them, which falls instead within the police sphere of expertise.

Previous studies have cited officers’ frustrations with the expectation that they attend to AVs’ emotional needs during FRCs to an extent that is beyond their capabilities and professional scope (e.g. Horwitz et al. 2011; Lagdon et al. 2015). By unpacking the interplay of accountability, responsibility and blame that AVs work out in real time during FRCs, and the attendant questions about police objectivity, this study has uncovered an overarching area of interpersonal complexity which could underly the interactional tensions cited in both AVs’ and officers’ self-reported experiences of FRC interaction (see Ch.2). Neil’s and Julia’s enthusiastic responses to the officers’ respective input showed that while some AVs may be empowered through accepting more responsibility, others are vulnerable to the “silencing impact of ambiguity” (Towns & Adams 2016: 512) and therefore need reassurance from those to whom they have reached out for help. Yet the BWV’s surveillance delineates the scope of officers’ expert judgement and, by extension, their protective power, revealing a key aspect in which FRC procedure supports dominant voices and suppresses the powerless. A solution for practice is indicated by the officer in Neil’s FRC who, reflecting his generally neutral positioning (7.2.5), engaged with the issue of AV responsibility by focusing his input on causal responsibility (Fletcher 1967; Baier 1991) for Neil’s future situation: ‘you’ve got to think, where do you wanna be in six months two years’ time’” (Ex.6.2f). The partiality noted in Julia’s FRC centred on the officer’s orientations to moral responsibility, including in talk about Julia’s future: “enough’s enough” (Ex.6.2d). This contrast provides one means by which officers might empower victims to break free by scaffolding their responsibility positioning without leading them (see Ch.8).
7.4 Synthesis: Power positionings in domestic abuse FRCs

The review of the research background in Chapter 2 established that the police-victim power imbalance is built into the FRC context. In this study, all three AVs summoned the police to take control of their situation, appealing to the only established power structure available to DA victims for emergency protection. First response officers are thus endowed with power on the macro-level of their institutional membership and meso-level of their professional positioning as first to deal with the AV’s problem. By contrast, DA victims are prepositioned as powerless, relative not only to the police but also the AP. What this thesis has proven to be open for negotiation at the micro-level of FRC interaction is the degree to which embedded power asymmetries are realised, reinforced or reduced, through speakers’ dynamic (re)positionings relative to lifeworld and institutional social practices. This chapter’s critical interpretation has identified six primary modes of power relations realised by the various actors and entities which participate in and govern FRCs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modes of FRC power relations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Productive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agentialisation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dual potential</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entextualisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restrictive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domination <em>through local discourse practices; surveillance</em></td>
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*Table 4: Modes of power relations in FRCs*

This model adapts Tew’s (2006) binary distinction between modes of productive and limiting power, providing a valuable basis for ongoing FRC research to develop with new insights.

Each strand of analysis has underlined that power relations during FRCs are determined by how speakers discursively manage their limited control over how these encounters unfold. Given the unpredictable logistics around safeguarding and other practical tasks, FRC guidelines recognise that officers have limited control over certain aspects, such as structuring their decision-making formally (CoP 2014b). In the same way, research into FRC discourse cannot assume officers’ ability to control their interactional behaviour to the same extent as in a pre-arranged formal interview environment. Yet allowances for first response officers must be balanced with the recognition that fear dominates the lives of DA victims (see Hydén 1999). As brought to light by this study, unpredictability can give rise to an ad hoc approach that licenses
first response officers with a considerable amount of discursive freedom which, if mismanaged, can disempower all participants – except perhaps the perpetrator. While the inductive approach strove to avoid assessments of good and bad practice, analysis uncovered a series of contrasts between different officers’ discursive behaviour and the attendant (dis)empowerment of the speakers. The officers who adopted a flexible approach, (re)positioning themselves and others according to developments in the unfolding talk, minimised the power distance and gained more detailed accounts and interpersonal affinity with the AVs. The officers who sought to repeatedly impose control instead realised an empty form of domination which, at its worst, mirrored the DA control mechanisms of spatial and verbal restriction, silencing and blame.

The study has equally emphasised AVs’ lack of control during FRCs, as compared with formal environments in which they would have legal representation during questioning and, if eligible, special measures to soften the potentially traumatic experience of recounting abuse. Reflecting the dominant prepositioning of the police, all three AVs took the officers’ lead in co-constructing their own positions relative to the governing power structures, the AP and their potential future selves. Julia’s and Neil’s FRCs demonstrated how the unstructured format allows for speakers to find common ground to forge more meaningful interpersonal engagement. However, as revisited throughout this chapter, this pursuit is complicated by the institutionally-defined communicative restrictions reinforced by the BWV camera’s surveillance.

This research has thus made visible the power dynamics of discursive practices previously hidden from analysts’ view. The study provides unique insights from authentic data to build on a body of work which has singled out DA FRCs as a primary site of police-victim tension but which relies on self-report data (see Ch.2.3.1). In particular, the analysis builds on a wealth of important research on the pronounced power imbalance between vulnerable witnesses and institutional actors in other contexts (e.g. Trinch 2001; Aldridge & Luchjenbroers 2007; Ehrlich 2013). The clash of goal-orientations that is well-documented in gatekeeping encounters (e.g. Tracy 1997; Imbens-Bailey & McCabe 2000; Tennent & Weatherall 2019) has proven to be exacerbated in the FRC context by the juxtaposition of authority within the setting, the potential for urgency, the complexities around police impartiality and the omnipresent BWV cameras.

Whereas guidelines for vulnerable and intimidated witness interviews advise against using the same location as the traumatic event (MoJ 2022: 67), the diagnostic function of FRC interaction centres on the officers’ immediate need to find out what has just happened to determine their next move. This study has demonstrated that it is the longer-term evidential
function of FRC interaction which conflicts with victims’ relational and emotional needs. The vivid descriptions provided by all three AVs in the data reflect the persuasive power of video-recorded initial accounts, yet analysis demonstrated that officers’ methods for eliciting these accounts during FRCs do not reflect their increasing prominence in the criminal justice process. This chapter has detailed some of the ways in which this mismatch can undercut the evidential value of the footage and perpetuate victims’ powerlessness in its various manifestations. The findings thus reinforce previous work which proposes that the BWV system requires first response officers to obtain evidence that will stand up in court using interview skills that are beyond their capabilities (e.g. White 2014), and that BWV is therefore a “double-edged sword” (Pfitzner et al. 2022: 13; Harris 2020) which creates compelling evidence but may also misrepresent and invite bias against the AV. This previous research has been conducted from the criminal justice perspective, so the thesis contributes unique insight into the discursive means by which these problems are realised, leading to the relevant recommendations for practice in Chapter 8.

The metaphor of a double-edged sword applies equally to the dual potential of power relations (as per Table 4) demonstrated by the analysis of three FRCs which yielded key differences as well as similarities. The merits of the data will be discussed in Chapter 8, but the richness of available positionings they have revealed recalls the focus group’s assessment of police first response: “we’ll remember it for the rest of our lives what happened, whether it was good or bad” (App.R4: 10). The findings thus supply insight as to why DA victims describe “very mixed” experiences of FRCs (HMIC 2014: 14; HMICFRS 2019). The practical implications of the analytic findings will be addressed in the next chapter, which evaluates and concludes the thesis with a focus on looking ahead to the prospects it has uncovered for practice and research.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Culminating in the critical interpretation presented in the previous chapter, this study has achieved its primary objective of shedding light on what happens during police first response call-outs (FRC) to reported domestic abuse (DA) incidents, and has evaluated the implications of these discourse practices. This concluding chapter will consider the practical policing applications of the findings, evaluate the strengths and limitations of the study and, finally, look ahead to the research opportunities it has opened up.

8.1 Implications and recommendations for FRC practice

The research findings are based on close analysis of a small number of recordings from one force area, so it is not possible to make generalised recommendations for first response practice. Although the dataset shared key themes, it was also characterised by a series of contrasts, underscoring the need for further research using a wider range of scenarios to explore the implications for practice which are indicated by the present analysis. Nonetheless, the findings identify several areas of import in relation to current FRC procedure. As established in Chapter 3, recommendations will be shared with the participating force to help improve their in-house procedures. Continued communication with this force will aim to inform the development of more far-reaching recommendations for policy improvements, bolstered by findings from ongoing research.

8.1.1 Specialist domestic abuse training

In their research in a hospital emergency department, Slade and colleagues (2018: 273-4) argue that “the outcomes of such specialized practices will only be as good as the organizational and communicative processes that support and facilitate them”, a reality that is recognised by the development of statutory special measures for interactions with vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in formal contexts (Ministry of Justice 2022). In the FRC context, the interactional complexities and opportunities uncovered in the present study underscore the value of specialist DA training for first response officers, especially given the potential evidential function of AVs’ initial accounts (see further Pfitzner et al. 2022). Full details of the participating force’s DA training activities were not provided for this research, beyond the fact that they adhere to the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (last updated in 2022) that has been referred to throughout this thesis. The force has, however, expressed frustration with their limited resources to conduct sufficient DA training for first response officers. This study
adds to the many voices highlighting the detrimental effect of government cuts to police funding across the jurisdiction, with the greatest impact on those who are already powerless (e.g. Ali et al. 2021; Sharma & Borah 2020; Aldridge 2020). In view of this training gap, and bearing in mind the potential for disparities between existing policy and what happens in reality, the remainder of this section will summarise the main considerations for practice presented by this research.

8.1.2 Positioning, permeable boundaries and rapport

FRC guidance for rapport-building emphasises that AVs must feel listened to, believed, taken seriously and not judged (Build Rapport, CoP 2022). Positioning, defined as the “discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (Davies and Harré 1990: 48), has proven a valuable conceptual tool for analysis, and similarly it might be applied in training to help officers visualise the effects of their interactional behaviour. For instance, a victim-centred approach to tackling evidential ambiguities in AVs’ accounts recognises the speakers’ contrastive positions relative to the AV’s lived experience and the governing legislation. One of the most complex interactional issues identified in this study was the contradiction between relational-emotional work and police objectivity. It was argued that this tension reflects macro-level problems with the evidential function of initial accounts, but at ground level some (context-dependent) discursive solutions were identified. Officers can focus their supportiveness in positioning ‘with’ the AV when mediating between them and the legal/policing institutions, using personalisation devices and epistemic markers which encourage both rapport and AVs’ confidence in professional intuition. From this supportive positioning, officers may have the relational leeway to position more neutrally between AV and AP, using distancing devices such as passivisation to avoid subjective evaluation if AVs appeal for an expert opinion on their situation. As was emphasised throughout Chapter 7, however, avoiding evaluation may generate interpersonal tensions when AVs appeal for empathy. A key recommendation in this regard is to avoid overt affiliation of the type observed in Julia’s FRC (e.g. Ex.4.2c), while focusing on strategies for maximising AVs’ speaking space and scaffolding their narrative with active listening cues to facilitate their version of events.

The findings also demonstrated the unpredictable, ad hoc character of FRC interaction, reflecting Drew and Heritage’s (1992: 28) note that in non-institutional settings, “the boundaries between these forms of institutional talk and ordinary conversation can appear permeable and uncertain”. This permeability represents not only unpredictability, but also an
opportunity for officers to maintain a less formal, rapport-oriented positioning than would be licensed in a formal interview context. The need for rapport-building is emphasised in FRC guidelines (Build Rapport, CoP 2022), but analysis nonetheless identified some reliance on institutional lexis at odds with the domestic setting and the AV’s displayed distress (e.g. Ch.5.1). The recommendation that officers minimise jargon and other institutional markers of formality may seem intuitive, but analysis demonstrated how these interpersonal considerations may be eschewed in high-pressure FRCs, when victims’ emotional needs are most acute.

8.1.3 Managing officer and victim accountability

Analysis found that officers can use explanations and signposting not only to mitigate against AVs’ disorientation but also to convey their own professional judgement, which in turn invites AVs’ confidence. Current guidelines advise using explanations when questioning AVs about their children and medical information (CoP 2022), but the study has identified additional aspects in which signposting is particularly valuable: when moving around the setting, shifting activities, and asking responsibility-implicative questions. It was noted that some responsibility-implicative questioning in the data appeared to derive from the DASH risk assessment questions, for example “Have you separated from/ tried to separate from this person within the last year?” (Richards 2009: 6-10). The length of the relationship separation is relevant to the offence of coercive control (see App.II), but without appropriate contextualisation the risk assessment questions that are designed to protect victims can be delivered in a way that positions them as responsible. Identifying risk factors necessarily involves engaging with the AV’s behaviour, so a practicable recommendation would be to prepare formulations of the risk assessment questions28 that avoid foregrounding the AV’s agency or responsibility relative to the AP (cf. “are you together or not”, Ex.6.3c). Since these data were collected, the participating force has replaced the paper risk assessment questionnaire with a smartphone-based form, which has the potential to reduce AVs’ awareness of the motivations behind certain questions. This problem recalls emergency call research that has observed computer systems “widening the interactional gap” when “call takers become increasingly focused on question prompts from their computer where callers are concentrating on their local unfolding circumstances” (Kevoe-Feldman 2019: 238; Whalen 1995; Heritage & Clayman 2010).

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28 An output of this research is to collaborate with the risk assessment specialist at the participating force to amend their existing list of questions. This project is in the planning stage as the thesis is completed.
8.1.4 Reconceptualising the setting
The study has identified officers’ management of the setting as an area of opportunity to improve victims’ experiences that is not currently being harnessed in FRC procedure. The ABE special measures for police investigative interviews recognise the need for a carefully designed setting to elicit the best evidence (MoJ 2022), but while FRC guidelines have been developed substantially in recent years (see Ch.1), there remains no recognition of the potential impact of spatial dynamics on victims’ vulnerability and the quality of their evidence. This study has shown how the instability of FRC settings needs to be managed carefully to minimise disruptive or restrictive control of space. Supportive strategies include acknowledging the AV’s ownership by using negative politeness and signposting when moving around and adjusting the material environment. Depending on the circumstances, aspects such as lighting, seating and water might be arranged in advance of the account, if appropriate, to ensure the AV is comfortable and to minimise disorienting spatial interruptions, with the added benefit of displaying officers’ victim-centred approach. It was found that officers exhibited greater sensitivity when managing physical proximity and touch than with spatial aspects. This contrast suggests that a less disruptive approach to moving around and managing the setting might be facilitated by conceptualising the AV’s home in terms of their body, which might involve delineating delicate spaces such as children’s bedrooms. A related implication for procedure is the need for consistency in the AV’s audience. Again, this might be more difficult to achieve in high-pressure situations, but a consistent listener may reduce the impact of a chaotic situation on the AV’s narrative delivery and mental state. A key starting point would be to designate one officer to remain in the narrative space to not only attend to the AV but also enhance police understanding (and BWV capture) of what has happened.

8.1.5 Updating authorised procedure
Since the timeframe of the focal interactions, detailed guidelines (CoP 2019) have been developed for obtaining initial accounts from victims and witnesses which address several sources of interactional tension identified in this analysis. Most encouraging, in light of the present research focus, are the orientations to the intimidating potential of first response officers, who are advised to “avoid overdressing” and to be “human not robotic” (2019: 7). However, because this document is not specific to DA incidents, it is not incorporated into the DA-specific first response procedure (CoP 2022) that forms the basis of force policies across the jurisdiction. Therefore, the findings from ongoing research stemming from this study might be applied to adapt the initial account guidelines to suit the needs of DA victims during FRCs. Of
primary interest is the fact that the guidelines place equal emphases on rapport-building (CoP 2019: 6-8), avoiding leading the witness with questioning and verbal response cues (14-5) and being sensitive to vulnerability (19-21). Yet this research has demonstrated that in practice, objectivity and relational work can conflict when DA AVs’ expressed emotional needs involve self-blame and doubt about their entitlement to support, and that withholding positive feedback can compound vulnerability. The discrete categories of advice presented in the guidelines are in fact interconnected, synchronous discursive phenomena which first response officers are expected to navigate at the scene. The study thus supports criminological studies which warn that the advent of BWV evidence in court has shifted the onus onto first response officers to elicit quality evidence from DA victims, without equipping officers with the requisite interviewing skills (see further Pfitzner et al. 2022).

8.1.6 Repositioning FRC interaction

Given the difficulty of adhering to legally-defined discursive restrictions in an ad hoc, emotionally-charged speech context, this thesis raises the question of how appropriate and productive it is to elicit victims’ narratives during FRCs. The focus group members’ consensus was that a follow-up police visit was more conducive to disclosure than immediately after a traumatic episode:

M2 because they’ll say to you a lot of the time ‘well what do you want to happen what do you want to happen now’ and you think ‘I don’t know’ [others agree loudly] like and you’re trying to think ‘how do I feel I don’t know what do I want to happen I don’t know what’s just happened I don’t know’ I think it’s just a mechanism isn’t it in your head [others agree] where after the event you just can’t recall the event [others agree loudly] and you don’t feel anything you don’t and you’re just like ‘I don’t know I don’t know how I feel I don’t know- I don’t know what my options are I don’t know what I want you to do I don’t know what’s going to make it better’ -

DAS focus group, App.R4:17

If forces cannot invest in education and training, it may be more appropriate to streamline the initial account process to focus on safeguarding and immediate next steps. It is beyond the scope of this study to consider the practical and legal feasibility of such an approach, and further research will continue to work towards linguistically informed improvements to current FRC procedure. Nonetheless, the findings from this initial exploration indicate that policymakers face a choice between prioritising victims’ emotional needs or the evidential function of their story.
8.2 Evaluation of the study

The weight of the practical implications addressed so far in this chapter underscores the need to evaluate the study itself, by addressing its main strengths and limitations, with the aim of positioning the findings relative to future research opportunities.

8.2.1 Key strengths

The study’s primary strength is that it has succeeded in contributing new knowledge by analysing for the first time (to the extent of the author’s knowledge) authentic spoken data from this speech context. The considerable ethical challenges described in the Methodology chapter resulted in a small amount of data (see 8.2.2) which has nonetheless proven to be rich with interactional features of interest. As such, the present data provide ample opportunities for ongoing research, which can also integrate the eleven additional BWV recordings provided towards the end of this project period. The three recordings varied in many aspects, revealing insights into discursive behaviour according to different circumstances. Despite the differences, a key similarity was that each AV had contacted the police themselves and, correspondingly, none displayed hesitation in telling their story. Because each FRC was driven by the same overarching extralinguistic goals, analysis revealed a series of comparisons and contrasts in participants’ discursive means of pursuing these goals.

A related strength of the study is that the knowledge contributed confirms that DA FRCs are a unique, diverse and complex speech context, revealing the pressing need for continued research to expand on the present findings and explore the many identified and unknown features which shape these interactions. Although the findings have demonstrated key similarities with other police-witness encounters, more striking have been the unique aspects, many of which engender interactional complexities which go some way towards explaining the interpersonal and practical difficulties cited by both victims and officers (e.g. Horwitz et al. 2011; Lagdon et al. 2015; Maple & Kebbell 2020). Amongst these is the fact that the lack of structure proposed in Chapter 2 (2.2.3) affords AVs more space to seek officers’ expert opinion, and that this dynamic must be accommodated in FRC procedure. This study of a previously hidden investigative stage therefore supplies the ‘missing link’ between research on emergency calls and investigative interviews (e.g. Tennent & Weatherall 2019; Trinch 2003; Canning 2021) to deepen our understanding of victims’ interactions with institutional actors throughout the legal process. The findings on the discursive manifestations and management of aspects such as urgency, emotion and multiactivity can also inform analysis of other first response interactions beyond DA policing.
The use of BWV as a data source is another strength of the study. Policing research has cited BWV as influencing FRC discourse, and the present findings provide unique linguistic insight into some tensions which have prompted other researchers (e.g. White 2014; Pfitzner et al. 2022) to propose that officer training is out of step with technological developments. Given the implications for policy and practice, the position of the BWV in FRC interactions will be of primary interest in ongoing research using a wider set of data. Another methodological strength has been the combination of CA and CDA. Given the diversity in the circumstances and interactional structure of the three FRCs, CA provided a valuable means of tracing participants’ actions and interpretations and identifying commonalities and contrasts. The bottom-up approach proved ideally suited to analysing varied data from a speech context with no previous knowledge attached. This inductive method allowed analysis to build towards a nuanced critical evaluation, in the Discussion chapter, of both the restrictive and productive potential of power relations during FRCs. This balanced application of CDA has opened up opportunities for ongoing practice-focused research, whereas a wholly critical approach would limit opportunities to collaborate with partners with the positive aim of improving policy. A ‘pure’ CA approach would be equally limiting by disregarding macro-sociocultural and legal structures, such as ongoing legislative developments (e.g. Domestic Abuse Act 2021), which will continue to shape officers’ discursive choices.

A final main strength to note here is that the research has developed the use of positioning as a conceptual tool. Although most frequently associated with narrative analysis, the broad application of positioning in this study builds on work in conflict resolution (e.g. Harré 2007) to demonstrate its value for exploring multiparty power relations during dynamic and unpredictable social episodes. Analysis also introduced the concept of spatial positioning, which is done relative to the setting and interactional space, revealing the reflexive relationship between participants’ positionings relative to the space, to each other and to overarching power structures. Furthermore, the use of spatial positioning as a conceptual analytic tool revealed the discursive dynamics involved in interviewing potentially vulnerable victims at the scene of the reported crime, an unescapable feature of FRCs (in contrast to formal interviews) which has not previously been investigated from a linguistic perspective. As such, the study has opened up new lines of enquiry for future work on conducting sensitive interactional work in non-institutional settings.
8.2.2 Limitations

While the richness of the data is the study’s primary strength, the dataset also represents the study’s main limitation, namely the limited number of recordings that were made available within the research timeframe. As explicated in the Methodology chapter (Ch.3), a combination of ethical obligations and Covid-related delays complicated data access, and with no guarantee of obtaining further recordings during the lockdown period, the decision was taken to proceed with the three recordings to complete this initial exploration of FRC interaction. Furthermore, it would have been counter-productive to impose controls on the selection of recordings provided by the police force, given the time pressure and logistical challenges they encountered during the consent request process (see Ch.3). The uncertainty created by Covid meant that the second batch of recordings, provided towards the end of the study period, could not be projected and integrated into the research plan in advance. The resultant lack of representativeness in the data has necessitated caution in discussing interactional patterns and thus also restricted the scope of the recommendations for practice. A key aim for ongoing research is to define the structural characteristics of FRC interaction as a genre (see e.g. Zimmerman 1992), which would both inform academic research and facilitate the implementation of procedural improvements. As noted earlier, however, the small number of recordings allowed for a much more detailed analysis than would be possible with a larger dataset, in turn allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of different facets of discursive behaviour, in line with the inductive ethos and unmined research site.

However, the inclusion of one male AV necessitated caution in making certain claims, due to the unknown influence of gender on speakers’ positionings and power relations. Although there were many other points of variation, including officer gender, victim gender is of particular relevance given that DA is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women (e.g. ONS 2021; WHO 2017; FRA 2015). At the same time, as was proposed in the previous chapter (7.3), this exploratory study also benefitted from the unusual opportunity to analyse an interaction with a male AV, in that it has opened up potential avenues for future work by indicating some aspects in which interactions might diverge according to the gender distribution.

Another limitation arising from Covid restrictions was that the plan to conduct more focus group discussions with both DA victim-survivors and first response officers could not be fulfilled. The focus group meeting that was conducted occurred at an early stage, precluding the possibility of exploring the specific topics which arose from analysis. However, as demonstrated throughout the Discussion chapter, the group’s unstructured discussion generated varied
insights which proved pertinent to key aspects of the findings. This limited ethnographic exploration has thus provided a point of departure for integrating emic perspectives from both victims and officers more systemically into future work.

Finally, the inductive approach meant that the relevance of embodied and spatial dynamics in shaping the unfolding talk became evident at the stage of transcription, by which time the twenty-four hour window for viewing the video footage had expired. As described in Chapter 3, detailed visual information was captured in written notes and screenshots were not permitted. It would have been impossible to create sketches without pre-selecting portions of potential interest and thus prioritising the visual analysis at the expense of moment-to-moment verbal dynamics. As a result, however, the transcribed data present non-verbal information in an interlinear format that is limited in its ability to capture the vivid multimodal dynamics of the FRCs. The future developments of this research will benefit from this early limitation, in that there was more time to create sketches from the second batch of recordings, to allow for a more comprehensive integration of visual information in the next analysis.

8.3 Future directions for FRC research

Specific foci for further research have been proposed alongside the relevant findings throughout this and the previous chapter. This section will briefly synthesise the ongoing research plan and future opportunities made possible by the study. As established in the previous section, the richness of the present data yields many avenues of enquiry which are too numerous to address in detail here. These include prominent micro-level interactional features such as narrative structure, reported speech, pronominal reference, modality, naming strategies and turn-taking. Analysis has also identified meso-level focal themes, including the pragmatic concerns of rapport-building, politeness, agreement and (dis)belief. In particular, the small but varied dataset precluded a comparative analysis of narrative structure and questioning strategies, both of which are of primary interest with the wider dataset. Future research will examine in more depth how both phenomena construct the AVs’ initial account and compare with other settings to enrich our understanding of police-victim discourse more generally. Future work will also explore the macro-level themes which underpin DA FRC discourse, such as the gender of both AVs and officers, the potential offence characteristics, including (non-)violence, and the role of different types of settings. Although the newer data are representative of the majority of FRCs in that most occur in the AVs’ homes, the dataset also includes two public street encounters, adding a new dimension to the present findings on setting and interactional space. Given the uniqueness of the speech context, ongoing analysis of the fourteen recordings will reveal
additional themes of interest which are not yet known. In the longer term, research into police-suspect interactions during FRCs would be enlightening, working towards a comprehensive understanding of the subject positions, social relations and evidence constructed.

**8.4 Conclusion**

This study has fulfilled the fundamental aim set out in the introductory chapter: it has contributed new knowledge about discursive practices in the previously unexplored and maximally consequential FRC context. Analysis has revealed the potential for FRC interaction to reposition victims of domestic abuse at this pivotal juncture according to the discursive processes of protection, agentialisation, mediation, entextualisation and domination. The observed tensions between these dis/empowering processes arise from the dual evidential and sense-making functions of FRCs. Even the most supportive moments in the data uncovered conflicting legal and lifeworld realities which limit first response officers’ power to prevent ongoing abuse, recalling the police inspectorate’s comparison of victims’ experiences to “a lottery” (HMIC 2014: II). As was epitomised by Julia’s experience (Ex.6.2a), domestic abuse perpetrators rely on a ‘behind closed doors’ buffer of privacy to silence victims. This thesis opens a door for an interdisciplinary community of FRC researchers to empower the voices of vulnerable people who call for police protection, and those who are yet to reach out.


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Serious Crime Act 2015, c.9. Available at:
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Appendices

These Appendices are included with the publicly available version of this thesis. Enclosed are:

- **Appendix I**: The participating force’s domestic abuse first response policy (2019)
- **Appendix II**: Details of the domestic abuse offence groups applicable in the study
- **Appendix III**: Ethics paperwork
Title: Domestic Abuse
Practice / Business Area: 
Department Responsible: 
First Published: 01/04/04
Last Reviewed: 27/11/17
Version Number: 17

MISSION & VISION:
KEEP SAFE
TO BE THE BEST AT UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO OUR COMMUNITIES’ NEEDS

PROCEDURE OBJECTIVE:
- To protect the lives of both adults and children who are at risk as a result of domestic abuse.
- To investigate all reports of domestic abuse.
- To take effective action against offenders and they be held accountable through the criminal justice system.
- To prevent and reduce incidents of domestic abuse.

GUIDANCE:
All aspects of this Procedure are mandatory. And must be read in conjunction with
- Authorised Professional Practice on Domestic Abuse
- APP Quick access checklists
- College of Policing – Domestic Abuse Initial Response Guide

GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT:
None

PROCEDURE:
Initial Report
The first point of contact determines the classification of incident and the appropriate level of response. The staff will utilise the ‘THRIVE’ approach as a risk assessment tool to all calls to risk assess each situation.
Where the task an officer to attend a domestic abuse related incident, it is their responsibility to ensure all relevant intelligence checks are conducted, recorded as appropriate and disseminated to the attending officer in a timely manner.

On arrival at scene, officer is to establish the wellbeing of any victim by having face to face contact with them. If this is not conducted for any reason, the incident is to be referred to a supervisory officer immediately for lines of enquiry to be established. In addition the attending officer must ensure all related crimes are identified and are investigated. Officers should utilise the National Decision Model (NDM) as the basis for determining the most appropriate action to be taken.

**Positive Action**

- Every Domestic Abuse occurrence must be treated on a case by case basis and a clear rationale on actions taken must be documented within the and/or .

- Each occurrence MUST include reference to any history of threatening, abusive, controlling or coercive behaviour.

- The first priority of the attending officer is to ensure the safety of the victim and take Positive Action to assess the risks, reduce or remove the threat and prevent any harm.

- Where a criminal offence has been reported, the arrest of the suspect must always be considered. This will include incidents where the victim does not support a prosecution.

- In certain circumstances where an arrest is not considered the most appropriate course of action, Officers are to utilise other forms of intervention or safeguarding such as , removal/separation of parties, placing of children elsewhere, provide support ‘referral’ information/contacts and follow up advice.

**First Responding Officer**

The minimum investigative actions to be taken at all Domestic Abuse (DA) incidents are identified in the below ten point plan. These actions MUST be adhered to and attending officers will assess and gather all investigative evidence and fully consider any immediate safeguarding issues.
1. **ATTEND** - Officers attending cases of DA must consider whether coercive and controlling behaviour is a factor. They should record photographically any evidence using their Samsung devices in the first instance. These images must capture the victim’s injuries, clothing and general appearance and also any signs of disturbance at the scene. Suspects must also be photographed where there is an indication of having been involved in a disturbance. Officers must acknowledge and respond to children and young people’s immediate needs. Welfare checks on children and young people present at the location MUST be made and recorded appropriately. Details MUST also be obtained and recorded of all children and young people who are related to the victim or offender whether resident at the address or not at the time of the incident. A safe time and safe contact telephone number MUST be obtained from the victim. This must be recorded within the remarks section.

2. **ARREST** - Where a suspect is arrested at the scene, the officer must contact their supervisory officer to arrange for a further unit to convey the prisoner to custody. The initial attending officer will remain to provide victim care and complete evidence collation. This will include the obtaining of a victim statement.

   Where further staff are not available and there is a need to remove a prisoner immediately, the officer is to obtain a brief account - signed by the victim. The officer will return to take a fuller statement as soon as possible.

3. **FORENSIC OPPORTUNITIES** - Officers must consider any forensic opportunities such as torn clothing, injuries and weapons. Where available a CSI must be tasked to attend the scene.

4. **HOUSE TO HOUSE** - As a minimum three houses either side and/or three houses opposite must be visited. Officers must seek historical information as well as that specific to the incident for which they are in attendance.

5. **C.C.T.V.** - Parameters must be identified and a trawl carried out for evidential opportunities bearing in mind timescales of CCTV retention before overwrite or deletion.

6. **INTELLIGENCE** - Officers must conduct intelligence checks on all parties and any relevant previous occasions of DA must be referred to within statements taken. Any
offender Person Dossier to be included on the MG 3 and submitted as bad character. The MG 3 must also include where a restraining order is being sought. When a remand application is being made robust bail conditions must be clearly requested in case the application is unsuccessful e.g. the offender is not to have contact with the victim via any means.

7. 999 CALL - Officers must obtain a copy of the 999 voice recording at the earliest opportunity. This must be retained for interview and be transcribed or summarised for CPS advice.

8. MOBILE PHONES - Attending officers must consider the evidential opportunities available from mobile phones and social medium data detention devices. The victims and suspects mobile phones must always be considered as containing evidential opportunities. Sometimes it is unavoidable and essential for officers to seize mobile phones as evidence. Officers are reminded that arrangements must be put in place so that the individual who may be at risk of harm have a means of making emergency communications and that this should be an integral consideration in safeguarding plans.

9. STATEMENTS - Attending officers must complete their own statements as soon as possible after the incident. These must contain detail of what they saw on arrival at the scene, have a detailed explanation covering signs of a disturbance and any comments made by victims or suspects. Any recording of significant comments made by suspects must be in line with PACE codes of practice.

If the suspect is to be charged they MUST be directed to the Court with restrictive bail conditions in place to safeguard the victim and children, whilst they await the court date.

Coercive Control

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence,
resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour

Checklist spotlight on controlling or coercive behaviour
CPS Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship

Where coercive control features this must be brought to the CPS lawyers attention during any case discussion.

Statements from Intoxicated Victims
Officers will need to make a professional judgement about whether or not a victim or witness is able to make a statement despite a level of intoxication. Guidance can be found in Statements from Intoxicated Victims. This is a guide for police officers & investigators.

Withdrawal
When a victim indicates that they wish to withdraw their support for the prosecution process, a statement should be taken stating and describing any reasons for the withdrawal. This should be done by a domestic abuse specialist where possible. Withdrawal statements taken with care may still be used as evidence in current or future criminal proceedings or as evidence within the family court system. Any withdrawal of support for a prosecution should prompt a revised risk assessment process and safety planning. The officer in the case should notify the CPS without delay if the victim indicates a wish to withdraw support for the prosecution. Checklist: Taking comprehensive withdrawal statements

Victim Personal Statement
The victim personal statement is written in the victim’s own words and must describe how the behaviour has impacted upon their lives. This will help the court to make any decisions on Restraining Orders. Guidance can be found in the Victim Personal Statement. A guide for police officers, investigators and criminal justice practitioners. Officers must offer special measures and this must be recorded within the statement.

10. VICTIM CONTACT - Inform the victim when it is anticipated they will next be contacted and by who. Risk assess and manage any immediate victim care and submit a . Consider safeguarding at all times and if need be make contact the
to obtain specialist advice.

Officers MUST prior to the end of their tour of duty task the task to the appropriate inbox. The task MUST be graded Low, Medium or High according to the risk on the risk.

All investigative actions and updates must be recorded on the . The following check list can be used to assist in proof of life enquiries.

11. **BODY WORN VIDEO** – is an essential overt recording device. It significantly enhances evidence gathering opportunities and officers MUST record all Domestic Abuse related incidents they attend this includes the approach and arrival at scene. To enable this all users must be aware of their responsibilities in relation to its deployment and retention, to safeguard themselves and the integrity of the digital product.

12. **FOOTAGE UPLOADED TO** – all footage recorded to the Body Worn Video device will be stored on the database.

**Management**

DA victims and perpetrators may have flags and markers linked to their nominal record on . The below guidance will assist staff to recognise how and when they must be added.

**Repeat Victim** - Is a person who is identified as a victim in two or more domestic abuse occurrences within a twelve month period.

**Repeat Perpetrator** - Is a person who is identified as an offender in two or more domestic abuse occurrences within a twelve month period with the same victim.

**Serial Perpetrator** – Is a person who is identified as been reported to the police as having committed or threatened domestic abuse against two or more victims. This includes current or former intimate partners and family members (no specified time frame).

- **Flags and Markers Guidance**
Role of the Risk Assessor (RA)

Risk assessors review all incidents received in the database. They risk assess and interrogate all available systems in order to obtain a holistic view of the relationship before instigating necessary safeguarding and protective measures, further sharing information with appropriate partner agencies and services. There are Minimum standards expected to be undertaken by the person completing the risk assessment process, depending on the level of risk identified for the victim. MARAC Process

If any new offences are highlighted within the minutes an occurrence must be created and opened as a crime related incident, and crimed. If no investigation takes place the rational must be fully recorded on the case. There is no requirement to inform the victim or alleged perpetrator that the matter has been recorded.

Role of the [Blank]

[Blank] do not generally respond to initial reports of domestic abuse. Safeguarding is the primary role of the [Blank] ensuring an appropriate safety management plan is in place, along with effective engagement with partner agencies to ensure a complete wrap around service is provided to all victims.

Domestic Abuse Alarms

Personal alarms are available to high risk domestic abuse victims, which can be used in or away from the home. [Blank] officers can provide further advice and guidance for utilising this service.

Further Safeguarding Measures

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) also referred to as Clare’s Law

The principle aim of the DVDS is to introduce recognised and consistent procedures for disclosing information which will enable a partner of a previously violent individual to make informed choices about whether and how to take forward that relationship.

DAU officers can provide officers with further information

- **Clare’s Law - Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)**
- **Flow Chart**
Domestic Violence Protection Notices/Orders (DVPN/O)

DVPN/Os are new powers introduced through the Crime and Security Act 2010. A DVPN is issued by the police to prohibit a perpetrator of domestic abuse from molesting a victim by placing strict prohibitions/conditions on them. This process builds on existing procedures and bridges the current protective gap by providing immediate emergency protection to victims. They allow victims protected space to explore all options available in order for them to make informed decisions regarding their safety. This process requires Superintendent authority.

- Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN)

Witnesses and Vulnerable Victims

- Links to 'Victims and Witness' related reference material
- Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime has been updated; please follow the hyperlink to view the changes that impact on ....

FORMS:

- is available on via the person report.
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) forms are available on via reports tab.
- Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) forms are available on
- Person Dossier available on via the person report.

LEGISLATION & REGULATION:

- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Protection of Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2010 (Part 10 Forced Marriage)
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

REFERENCE MATERIAL:
• DASH Risk Assessment Model
• Joint NPCC and CPS Joint Evidence Gathering Checklist
• CPS Violence Against Women and Girls
• CPS Domestic Abuse Charging Advice Sheet (2015)
• CPS Domestic Abuse Guidelines - Self Defence and Counter Allegations
• CPS Guidance Stalking and Harassment
• Domestic Violence and Abuse - Home Office Guidance
• Restraining Orders
• Domestic Abuse Workplace Procedure
• Civil Remedies Guidance
• Domestic Violence and Abuse – Introduction National Guidance Police Visual handbook
• Stalking and Harassment Policy ¹
• Protecting Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People - A practical Guide for Police Forces
• Action on Elder Abuse
• Forçed Marriage
• Forced marriage and honour based abuse - College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice
• Gov.UK Guidance on forced marriage
• Multi Agency Practice Guidelines - Handling Cases of Forced Marriage 2014

¹ Requires review pending publication of Authorised Professional Practice
# Appendix II: Applicable criminal offences

The tables below provide details of the three offence groups which are relevant in the present dataset (with varying degrees of explicitness) and are referred to throughout the study. The information in this appendix is current at the time of completing this thesis (July 2022).

| Offence group | OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON  
(Descriptions adapted from Crown Prosecution Service 2022b) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offence</td>
<td>Common Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Criminal Justice Act 1988 s.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A person intentionally or recklessly causes another to suffer or apprehend immediate unlawful violence. Included is any act that indicates an intention to use unlawful violence, even if physical contact is not made. ‘Assault by beating’ entails a battery, which is the intentional or reckless application of unlawful force, even if the force is slight. Assault does not include any use of reasonable force for the reasons of self-defence, defence of another, defence of property or the prevention of crime.</td>
</tr>
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| Offence       | Assault occasioning Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) |
| Act           | Offences against the Person Act 1861 s.47 |
| Description   | A person intentionally or recklessly assaults another, causing bodily harm, which must be proven to have been caused by the assault. Bodily harm includes any hurt calculated to interfere with the health or comfort of the victim and must be more than transient and trifling (i.e. ‘Actual’). Evidence of external bodily injury is not necessary, nor is physical pain consequent upon the assault. |

| Offence       | Unlawful wounding/inflicting GBH; Wounding/causing GBH with intent |
| Act           | Offences against the Person Act 1861 s.20; s.18 |
| Description   | GBH means ‘really serious’ harm, but this does not have to be dangerous or permanent. A ‘wound’ means a break in the continuity of the whole skin. Unlawful wounding normally applies only to serious wounds, but may be applied when a knife or other weapon is used, to reflect the seriousness. |

| Offence (no group) | Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship  
(Description adapted from Crown Prosecution Service 2017; 2022) |
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<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Serious Crime Act 2015 s.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A person engages in repeated or continuous behaviour that they know will have a ‘serious effect’ (i.e. fear of violence or debilitating distress) on another. The victim and perpetrator must be in an intimate relationship</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
and/or living together'. The numerous potential behaviours include: control of everyday activities, social and familial isolation, financial control, enforced rules to humiliate and dehumanise, verbal denigration, threats to harm or kill, and reputational damage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence group</th>
<th>STALKING AND HARASSMENT</th>
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<td></td>
<td>(Descriptions adapted from Crown Prosecution Service 2018a)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Harassment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s.2, s.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Behaviour which knowingly amounts to harassment of another, defined as causing alarm or distress (s.2) or 'putting people in fear of violence' (s.4). Can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a victim in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person. Harassment can include 'stalking by proxy', which is harassing others (e.g. family members and friends) who are connected with an individual, knowing that this behaviour will affect the victim as well as the other people.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Stalking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Stalking is not legally defined but denotes behaviour which curtails a person’s freedom, leaving them feeling that they constantly have to be careful. Behaviours associated with stalking include: following a person; contacting, or attempting to contact, a person by any means; publishing any statement or other material relating or purporting to relate to a person, or purporting to originate from a person; monitoring the use by a person of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication; interfering with any property in the possession of a person; watching or spying on a person.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Stalking involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress</th>
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<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s.4A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Stalking that (i) causes another person to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them, or (ii) causes another person serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on their usual day-to-day activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 This requirement is now due to be eliminated, as per s.68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, although it remains in force at the time of completing this research in July 2022. With the elimination of this requirement, coercive control would potentially apply in all three FRCs listed here.
Appendix III: Ethics paperwork

This Appendix contains the ENCAP ethics approval paperwork, participant debriefing and consent paperwork (see Chapter 3 for details).
**Proposal Form B: Full approval**

*Use this form if your research involves vulnerable participants or requires deception, or where there is some other reason for ensuring full approval is gained (e.g. as part of a funded project).*

Submitted by: **PhD (Select/circle as appropriate)**

Date: 02/11/2017

Researcher’s Name: Catherine Steel

Principal Investigator/Supervisor if different: Dr Michelle Aldridge-Waddon and Dr Frances Rock

Project Title: ‘Spoken interactions between responding police officers and suspected victims at the scene of domestic abuse incidents.’

Proposed dates of research: January 2018 – September 2020

Reasons for choosing Full approval route (please tick):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Tick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will be gathering personal data about individuals (e.g. names, contact details, biographical or educational information, or other personal information) that needs to be held securely.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be gathering opinions, or making observations or measurements of individuals’ behaviour.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My participants are under 18 years of age.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My participants are members of a vulnerable group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My participants are in a temporarily in a vulnerable situation.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My procedures entail deception.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My research involves the collection of human tissue.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Indicate whether the following basic procedures have been/will be adhered to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Tick</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of the checklist, with no issues arising other than those identified on this form</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the participants or their representatives will sign a consent form</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the participants or their representatives will receive a debriefing document</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The procedures will fully comply with the information given in the consent and debriefing documents</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students and research assistants: I have fully discussed this project and this application with my supervisor/the Principal Investigator</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
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You will be required to discuss your plans with a member of the Ethics Committee. Please indicated below any specific issues you would like to include in that discussion.

Seeking participants’ consent, anonymisation of the data and storage of the data.

Brief description of the research:

1. Aim, hypothesis:

The research will investigate spoken interactions between responding officers and suspected victims at the scene of domestic abuse incidents. The data will be redacted audio recordings of video footage from police body worn cameras (BWCs), which are a relatively new policing technology. Close linguistic analysis of BWC footage will be informed by ethnographic research involving victims, police and other practitioners. The aim is to reach a better understanding of the

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1 This form is available electronically via the Research folder on the ENCAP Shared drive.
linguistic characteristics of these interactions, drawing in contextual knowledge about 
interlocutors’ individual and institutional interactional goals, as well as their personal experiences 
of the encounters.

2. Description of participants, how they will be recruited. Indicate if any screening is required (e.g. 
hearing, handedness, cognitive abilities) in order to determine eligibility to participate.

The police force(s) will grant me access to view BWC recordings according to agreed selection 
criteria:

- I can only view recordings (and sections of recordings) which show police officers (POs) 
and suspected victims (SVs). No suspected perpetrators, children, witnesses or other 
participants will be shown. This means that SVs selected for participation are those who 
have interacted with a PO at some point during the call-out, of which there is usable 
footage (in terms of audio quality).

- The SVs will be over eighteen and will be deemed capable of consenting, i.e. they will not 
have been recorded by responding officers (or elsewhere in police records) as having a 
mental health issue or as similarly impaired.

- The sample will be limited to English-language encounters, although participants will not 
have to be native speakers.

Beyond these criteria, any police officer and suspected victim are deemed eligible to participate, 
subject to their consent.

3. Explain why it is necessary to use this group rather than a non-vulnerable group.

The research focuses specifically on interactions during domestic abuse call-outs, so the suspected 
victim will be (suspected to be) in a vulnerable situation at the time of each interaction.

4. (If applicable) Measures being taken in relation to protection of participants and gaining informed 
consent (e.g. presence or advocacy of a responsible adult; consent from head teacher, care home 
manager, local authority or health service, etc.)

The police force(s) will require me and my two Supervisors to clear their security vetting and sign 
a Data Processing Agreement (DPA) before granting me access to any data.

Before viewing any footage, I shall seek the consent of each participant. The proposed process for 
seeking suspected victims’ consent is as follows:

During the call-out, POs must complete the DASH checklist, which is a formal risk assessment 
procedure for DA, with results recorded electronically at the scene. During this process, they ask 
the SV for a ‘safe phone number, safe time’. At this stage, they ask the SV’s consent to be 
contacted at a later date by a police research team, who will ask them some questions to get their 
feedback on their experience of the incident. If the SV consents, they are logged as ‘safe to call’ 
for the purposes of police research.

Six to nine weeks after the call-out, a trained team of police researchers make these follow-up 
calls to the selected SVs, to get their feedback on the police response. These calls typically last 
one hour, with SVs’ responses logged in a database. The calls are not currently recorded, but the 
police force is willing to record those associated with DA incidents, for the purposes of this study. 
The police force has also given me permission to add information to the callers’ scripts, so I 
intend to integrate a request for the SV’s consent for me to view their footage. To do this, I shall 
speak to the callers beforehand and ensure they understand the requirements of informed 
consent. If there is a question during the call about police use of language, then I shall include the 
consent request at this stage, to enable better contextualisation of my study. Currently, the callers 
close the call by asking for SVs’ consent to be contacted for further research purposes, and I plan 
to expand this request to include the possibility of me contacting them.
If they consent to my contacting them, I shall use the ‘safe time, safe number’ to call and seek confirmation of their informed consent to allow me to view the footage. I shall either:

i) arrange to meet each potential participant in order to explain my research and go over the debriefing document and consent form, and ask them a few questions about their experience of the interaction with the PO(s). These questions will be carefully designed to be simple and to avoid revisiting details of the alleged crime(s) or any other sensitive material. The aim will be to allow the SV to talk about the interaction from their perspective. I shall also provide some academic journal articles to demonstrate how anonymised ‘snippets’ of talk are presented.

ii) If SVs are only willing to talk to me over the phone, then I shall explain the research and ask the questions as above, but then post the consent and debriefing forms to them in a self-addressed envelope, along with my contact details.

If they do not consent to my viewing their footage, then the police will not give me access to it. If they do consent, the police will send me a login to view the individual video, which I shall do on police premises only. The login is time-sensitive and expires after three days.

The consent of individual officers who are represented in the footage will be sought in one-to-one meetings, in which I shall explain the research and provide them with sample journal articles, before requesting their consent. I shall make every effort to ensure that they feel no professional obligation to participate. Consent will be requested on a to view any recordings in which they are shown/heard, and if they consent, they will be given the option of contacting me to exclude specific individual recordings, if they wish. Consent will also be requested to ask them some questions for the ethnographic study, and if they agree, I shall arrange an informal interview at a later date, after viewing the footage. They will be given the opportunity to change their minds about participation in the ethnographic study at any stage.

5. Summary of method. Explain any risks to the participants or researcher associated with this method and how they will be minimised.

Responding officers record all call-outs using BWCs worn on the upper chest area of their vest. They turn on the BWC at least sixty seconds before entering the scene of an incident. The BWC captures both audio and video. My proposed data collection method is as follows:

The original BWC recordings are held electronically on a system administered from police headquarters.

I shall view the footage in a private room at police headquarters. I shall create redacted audio recordings using Audacity (or similar) software, which will enable me to replace personal identifiers with white noise. During this process, I shall create a record of visual information that will be lost in the recording. This will include facial expressions, gestures and other movements. These recordings will be stored in an encrypted folder on the University server, with access restricted to the persons designated by the Data Processing Agreement: me, my Supervisors, and IT personnel.

I shall thereafter access the redacted recordings in a private room at the University in order to prepare a narrow linguistic transcript of each. The transcripts will replace the redacted information with pseudonyms and other aliases.

I shall then conduct a close linguistic analysis of the data, which will focus on specific linguistic features. This analysis will be supported by an analysis of field interviews with participants, as well as other ethnographic work, such as analysis of police training materials. In the thesis and related papers and presentations, both forms of data (BWC footage and interviews) will be presented in short illustrative excerpts, and long stretches of talk will be avoided. These excerpts will be carefully selected to ensure that no one participant is overrepresented.

The redacted recordings will be destroyed, according to University guidelines, upon completion of the PhD project.
6. If deception is involved, explain what and why, and how you will debrief participants afterwards

N/A

7. Type(s) of information that will be obtained and in what format. Will it be anonymised or only held confidentially?

The information that will be obtained will be redacted audio recordings and fully anonymised transcripts of the BWC footage. The data will be stored electronically in an encrypted folder on the University’s server.

8. If you are using an existing dataset, indicate why the data require consideration from the point of view of ethics, and how you have obtained them.

N/A

9. If you are applying/have applied for ethics clearance from another organisation (e.g. a Health Authority, Local Education Authority, or Ethics Committee in another School or institution), give details below, including (anticipated) date of outcome. If you have prepared documents for that purpose and can append them here, please do. Similarly, if you have prepared an ethics statement for a funder in relation to this project please append it.

The police force and I are working on a Data Processing Agreement, but this is not yet finalised.

If your research involves the collection of human tissue, please arrange a meeting with the School Ethics officer to discuss compliance with the Human Tissues Act.

Remember to append the following documents as applicable:
- A copy of any application made for ethics clearance to another body
- A copy of the ethics statement made to the funder in relation to this project

Be prepared to supply, if requested, a copy of:
- the checklist
- the consent form
- the debriefing document
- examples of the materials being used (e.g. questionnaire, stimuli)
Victim consent request *(inserted into police telephone survey script; see next page)*

is working with a Cardiff University researcher to conduct research into the communication between police officers and people who have experienced domestic abuse.

To do this, the researcher would need to view the footage recorded by police body-worn cameras from domestic abuse incidents.

- The footage will be made into an audio recording and a written transcript of what has been said. Personal information such as names, addresses and other details will all be removed, so no person or place can be identified.

- These sound recordings and transcripts will be stored securely at Cardiff University for three years. An analysis of the language used during the incident will be conducted and when complete the audio recordings will be destroyed.

- The publication of the findings might include isolated extracts of the written transcript, but these would not identify you or your particular circumstances in any way.

- All data will be handled under the Data Protection Act

It is important you know that you do not have to give permission for your footage to be used for this research.

I will shortly ask you to state if you: ‘agree or disagree for your footage to be used’. Or, if you would like more information about the research before deciding, you can contact the researcher, whose name is Kate, directly by phone: [redacted] or email: steelcm@cardiff.ac.uk
38. Are you satisfied, dissatisfied or neither with - THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVED FROM THE FIRST OFFICERS YOU HAD CONTACT WITH?

...........and is that completely, very or fairly

If no response then class as 'Don't know'
θ  Completely satisfied
θ  Very satisfied
θ  Fairly satisfied
θ  Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
θ  Fairly dissatisfied
θ  Very dissatisfied
θ  Completely dissatisfied
θ  Don't know

39. Was there anything that stood out regarding the first officers who came to see you?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

[Consent request inserted here]
Police officer consent and debriefing form

**Project**: Police-victim interaction during domestic abuse call-outs

This research aims to reach a better understanding of police-victim communication by analysing body-worn video footage recorded during domestic abuse call-outs.

**Consent Form – Attending Officers**

- I understand that I may currently hold body-worn video footage that has been recorded by me and/or in which I am shown.
- I understand that my participation in this project will involve giving my consent to Kate Steel (the researcher) to view any of these recordings in a secure setting. The researcher does not have permission to save video footage, but will make an anonymised audio recording of the video.
- I understand that the researcher will fully anonymise this audio recording by removing all identifying information, including names.
- I understand that the redacted audio recordings will be stored securely by Cardiff University for up to three years, after which they will be deleted.
- I understand that anonymised information from the recordings might be used in the research report and in related academic work.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I am free to ask any questions or discuss any concerns with the researcher at any time.

I, ___________________________ consent to participate in the study conducted by Kate Steel, School of English, Communication & Philosophy, Cardiff University.

Signed:

Date:

If you have any questions about this study, please don’t hesitate to contact the researcher directly on steelcm@cardiff.ac.uk or steclcm@cardiff.ac.uk.
Participant Consent Form (Domestic Abuse Victim-Survivor focus group)

- I agree to participate in an audio-recorded meeting with the researcher, Kate Steel, held on 26th July 2018.
- I have been briefed about this study, understand what it will involve and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time.
- I understand that the audio-recording will be held confidentially and securely.
- I understand that the information collected will remain anonymous in research outputs unless I request otherwise.

I, ___________________________________ agree to take part in this research on the terms set out above.

Signed: ____________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________

Your phone number (optional): ________________________________

Your email (optional): ____________________________________________
Information for Participants (Domestic Abuse Victim-Survivor focus group)

I am a researcher at Cardiff University carrying out a research project focusing on communication between attending police officers and domestic abuse victims during call-outs. I am specifically focusing on first-response call-outs, whereby officers have been dispatched to the scene of a reported domestic incident. I believe that a better understanding of police-victim interactions could inform the improvement of services provided by the police and other agencies to those affected by domestic abuse.

Part of my approach is to meet with both domestic abuse survivors and police officers to learn about their personal experiences of communicating with each other during call-outs. Your participation in these discussions is entirely voluntary.

If you would like to add anything following our discussion today, or if you would like to discuss the project further, then please contact me using the following details:

Kate Steel SteelCM@cardiff.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest in this study.