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# Men and their experiences of domestic violence

Dr Elizabeth A. Bates

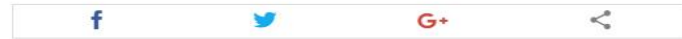
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# Aims

- To discuss my work with men who have experienced domestic violence – touching on four different studies
  - Men's experiences and the impact, including the perceptions of male victims and older men's experiences
  - Post-separation abuse and the experiences of fathers
  - Barriers to help-seeking
  - Men's experiences of "recovery"

## Man bled to death after girlfriend stabbed him in face with broken plate

Tom Herbert Monday 30 Apr 2018 4:40 pm



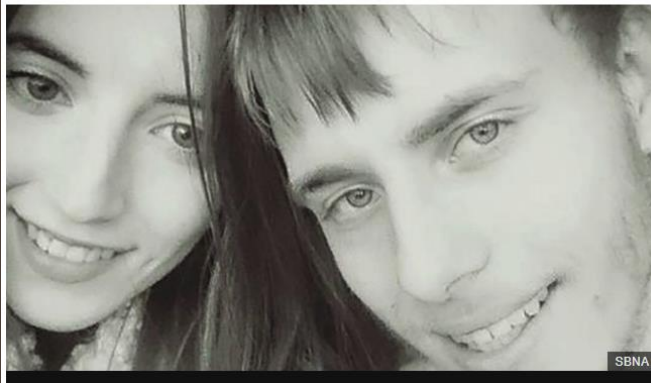
## Sharon Edwards: Violent wife murdered lawyer husband

8 March 2016



## Alex Skeel: Domestic abuse survivor was 'days from death'

17 April 2018



By ALEX SUNDBY | CBS NEWS | May 24, 2018, 2:16 PM

## Woman gets life for acid attack that led to ex-boyfriend's assisted suicide



# Theory and Literature

Cause of IPV is gender; it is a gendered crime - patriarchal values and control

Steinmetz (1978) "The Battered Husband Syndrome"

Charivari and punishment of male victims (George, 1994)

Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) and gender symmetry in perpetration

"When a woman slaps her husband in the heat of an argument, it is unlikely to be interpreted by him as a serious attempt to do him physical harm. In fact, it is likely to be seen as a quaint form of feminine communication"

# Coercive Control

- Women's use of control
- Tilbook et al. (2010) found high rates of legal and administrative aggression by women who control
- This is often a factor preventing men leaving, because of the fear of losing their children (Hines & Douglas, 2010).
- Hines, Brown and Dunning (2007) 50.3% "manipulating the system"
- Chivalry – condemnation of violence against women, but not violence against men

# Men's experiences

(Bates, in press [1])

Verbal and  
Physical  
Aggression

Control

Sexual  
aggression

# Verbal and Physical Aggression

- “In the evening after any argument, always as I was about to fall asleep, she would bring up the whole argument up again. I soon learnt to just apologise for anything and everything because if I didn't I wouldn't be allowed to get any sleep.”
- “There will be slapping, scratching, pushing, pulling, blocking exit from a room, spitting, sometimes kicking or throwing things.”
- “She has woken up in the middle of the night hitting me”



## Lack of retaliation

- “I was raised to never ever ever hit a woman, so I never fought back, I just covered my face and backed away from her the best I could”
- “No I didn’t respond, because I was scared”
- “I have never attacked her or fought back at all. I have tried to restrain her at times to prevent her from attacking me. The problem with that is that she would then show me bruises a couple of days later and tell me that she could report me to the police for assault and that they would believe her story.”

# Sexual Aggression

- “Sex used as a form of abuse and control”
- “...waking up to find myself handcuffed to the metal bedframe. She proceeded to torture me (insertion of vibrators into my anus, lots of small cuts with a craft knife, squeezing and hitting testicles) and then got infuriated because I was not getting an erection (obviously too terrified and in too much pain) and gave me a good punching and left me there.”
- “I opened my diary and she had placed a letter in it stating that she was pregnant and had come off the pill deliberately...I felt totally violated”

## Control - isolated

- “I have no friends now, my wife insisted I stop socialising as I was now with her and if I loved her I would not want to spend time with anyone else.”
- “I was afraid to go spend time with friends because I didn't know what kind of minefield I'd be walking into when I got back home.”
- “what I have come to realise is that she was deleting a lot of messages from friends that I was getting. Because some of them were saying we have been sending you this message and that message and I never got them. So, she had actually got into my phone and deleted messages from friends and deleted a few friends off my Facebook page as well”

## Control - threats and manipulation

- “She kept telling me that she would kill our children and me if I ever left her or if I did not comply with whatever it was that she wanted”
- “I knew in their face that they already knew what I was telling them, and the only way they could have known was through my ex-wife. So, she used my child abuse constantly, as if... it was controlling”
- “I now know you’re going into a relationship you don’t share fuck all like that...she used it against me yeah, because that was my greatest fear was my daughter being taken from me and that’s what happened”

# Gaslighting

- “Yes I was constantly told I had remembered everything wrong and that I was mentally unwell for thinking these bad thoughts and that she only loved me.”
- “This was part of the control. When you only hear one voice it dominates”
- “Yes, I didn't know that was a real thing, and didn't know it was called gas lighting, but it describes exactly what she did - that's the nail on the head there.”

# Experiences of Older Men

(Bates & Carthy, 2019)

- “I have had my shoulder dislocated and pulled out of socket by her. She has also locked me outside in 25 degree below zero weather for hours”
- “force-fed me viagra by shoving her fist into my mouth. She then gagged my by shoving her knickers into my mouth and gaffer taping my mouth shut”
- “She didn't like any of my children calling to check on me, and made excuses why I couldn't talk whenever they'd call..”

# Experiences of Older Men

(Bates & Carthy, 2019)

- “She convinced me I had Alzheimer's and tried to force me to sign a legal paper to declare me incompetent.”
- “Forty (40) years of verbal/mental, physical, and property abuse...It never changed and in fact became worse until she divorced me.”
- “My X finally divorced me when she learned she could have 50% of my military pension which in the USA she will continue to collect until one of us is dead, and she will collect it even if she remarries.”

# Impact of IPV

- Many believe this only affects women
- But there is evidence that it is the same for men
  - E.g. Hines & Douglas (2011) mental health; Hines (2007) PTSD
- Tendency for focusing on internalising symptoms (women do this twice as much). Men tend to externalise (Afifi et al., 2008)



# Impact of their experiences

(Bates, in press [2])

- “I tried to kill myself...I ate all the sleeping pills I could find, drank a bit, and was happy that it was over. I woke up next to her, It was the worst moment in my life, I was still in hell”
- “I am still afraid of her”
- “The relationship is over for two years now and I still don't feel like I could trust another person to form a new relationship. I'm also heartbroken knowing there is nothing I can do to help my son, I'm still in court fighting”

# Post- separation

- Escalation of abuse (e.g., Jaffe et al., 2003)
- Stalking (e.g., Douglas & Dutton, 2001)
- Custody dispute and divorce
- Parental Alienation (syndrome)
- We know little about post-separation abuse for men and fathers
  - Follow up study – N = 13 interviews

# Post- separation: Harassment

Bates (in press [3])

- “Erm, last year we was on holiday and it was Father’s Day. I’d already been told that I wouldn’t see the kids on Father’s day so we decided to go away for the weekend, and that was really as a result of I didn’t really want to be at home when it was Father’s Day knowing I couldn’t see the children, so I thought I’d take myself away from the situation. So my partner and I went away and on Father’s Day itself I got a text message through with a picture: Happy Father’s Day, you f-ing sperm donor!” (P12)
- “I actually ended it, which made her very unhappy. She harassed me for a little over two years, sending me emails. Even once I was in a relationship with somebody else...she took every opportunity to tear me down” (P6)

# False allegations

- “no it was a different one... erm, every sort of two or three weeks with increasing severity. She obviously she starts off saying “oh no he used to beat me up” and then it got onto I had sexually abused my older kids, so they had to go through a child protection investigation. Erm... then she said I was having a relationship with an unspecified child at the school”, I was working at, so I got suspended for three months and a whole big position of trust enquiry” (P3)

## Escalation and Continuation

- "...shortly after that we actually separated then things changed really dramatically and if they had been bad over the last few months then it became horrible really..." (P10)
- "oh yeah, absolutely it continues to this day. There is like a vengeful vendetta of erm...that how dare I have the audacity to leave...basically anything to try and damage" (P8)
- "Obviously since my departure, she has had no control on my day to day existence other than, on access to the children. She would be as difficult as possible and not be there or be somewhere else" (P8)

# Children as a weapon: withholding or manipulating the relationship

- “I haven’t seen her for three years, this long I haven’t seen her...yes she was very much aware of it” (P9)
- “...they have sort of said...she has cut you off from the kids, your ten month old daughter when she was taken doesn’t know who you are anymore and the older child has been turned against you...she is scared of me because she thinks that I have murdered her pet cat, which is not true...that I am going to kill her, her sister and her mother, and bury them in the backyard. That’s what this 6 almost 7 year old has been told, and she believes it” (P7)

## Children as a weapon: using the child

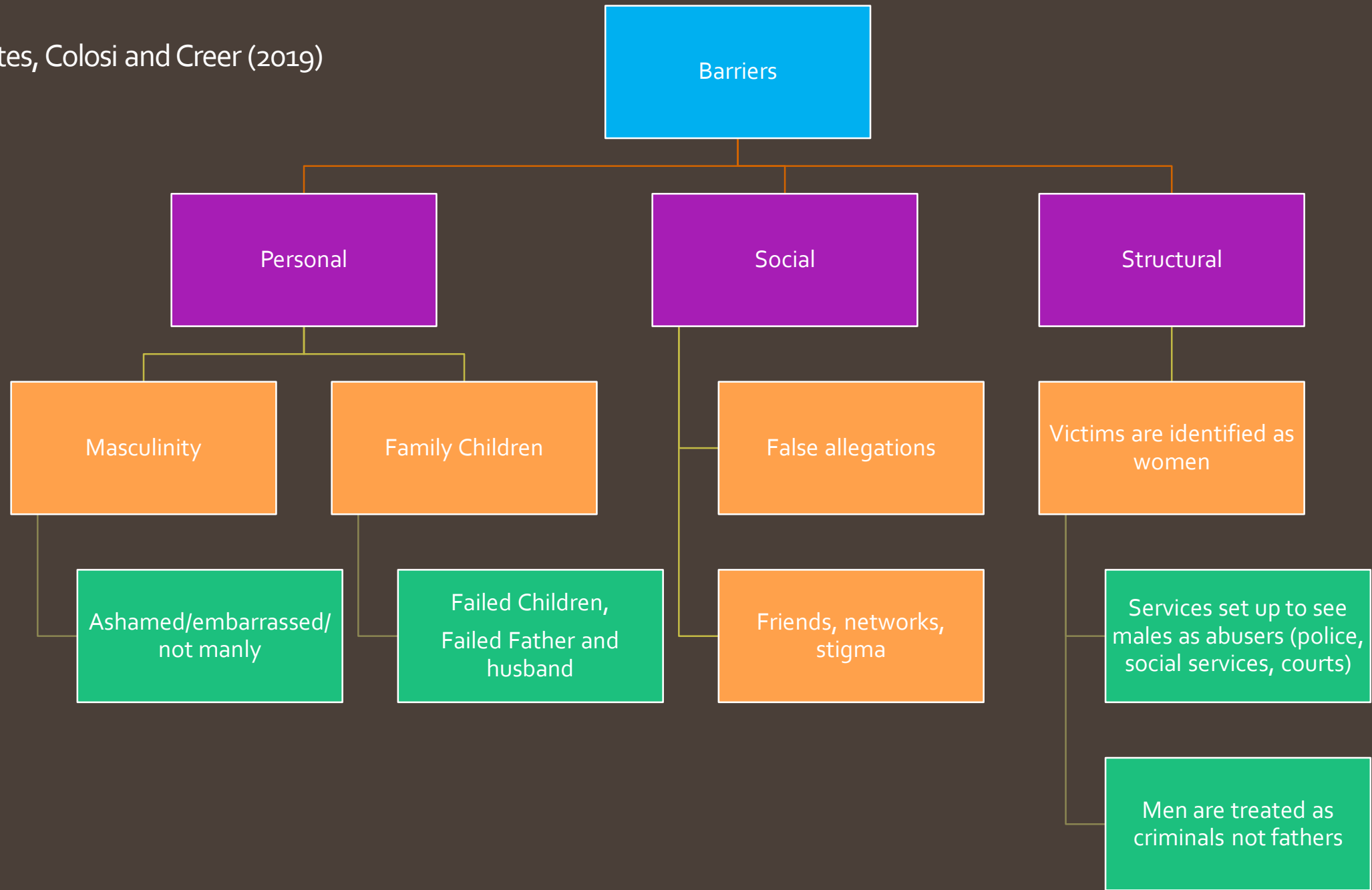
- "... she was basically saying 'oh mummy has been going round...just in tears saying oh I don't know how I am going to cope without you here'" (P6)
- "Quite often my daughters, both of them were telling me that mum tells lies, which is quite hard to explain to children without being abusive yourself but you know, 'well mum sees things slightly different to what we do and you must remember that what you're seeing is your truth...'" (P11)

## Barriers to leaving/help-seeking

- “I was ashamed I thought they would all think that I am a monster. I... she used to tell me that the only reason she used to hit me, was because I was scaring her. Cos I would be big and I would be opposing and I would be standing in her way... and so I thought I was the bad guy. I never once thought that I was the victim,” (P6)
- Significant barriers to help-seeking and reporting – both pre- and post-separation
- Led to the development of another study to explore these barriers in more details, specifically to understand the complexity



Taylor, Bates, Colosi and Creer (2019)



Personal	Social	Structural
Felt like my manlihood would be questioned	I'm a 6 foot 2 ex squaddie with a professional technology job and lots of accomplishments. Moaning about my wife beating me up could turn a friend who admired me into someone who either viewed me as a failure or suspicious that I was really to blame within minutes.	I was hospitalised on two occasions from physical attack and on one occasion I sat in the triage room and their were four posters about DV and all were from the female perspective, not one dealt with the male being the receiver.
a man is looked upon as being the protector not the victim	I was very worried about the sexual allegations and other assault allegations made against as people may believe there is no smoke without fire and for a period of time became withdrawn from family and friends and depressed	I was justifiably worried that if i spoke about it i would lose the kids this is exactly what happened she used the failures of police and social services to her advantage in family court,
Shame was a big factor. I felt unable to discuss my humiliation with friends and family. I felt quite alone.	It was really the threat of reputation destruction that worried me most, that and the ensuring storm that would arise if she accused me of 'beating her' after she harmed herself.	It's is not just men that are reluctant to be seen as 'victims' but this reluctance seems to permeate life, no one wants to hear about male victims as this runs contrary to stereotypes
Feeling shamed and insignificant	I am 6 feet tall with a black belt in karate, my ex wife is 4 feet and 11 inches tall. I was too embarrassed to talk about what I was going through.	The stigma of having so little time with my son and having to see him in contact centre for such a long time is heart breaking. It feels like I am prisoner meeting my child but what crime have a i committed.

# Victims of Control

- Barriers to help-seeking and reporting:
  - Personal
  - Social
  - Structural
- Fear – of reprisal, of being arrested, or being falsely accused
- Being isolated, losing touch with friends and family
- Children
  
- Moving on? Recovery?

Ongoing  
impact

“I had no idea  
how painful it  
would be”

The emptiness  
and the  
struggle

# Respect Model

- Screening/assessment process
- Wrong for several reasons...
  - Assumption men are perpetrators in disguise
  - Adds an additional layer of victimisation to an already vulnerable group
  - Will affect men's decision to come forward, could affect mental health symptoms
  - Same procedure not in place for women – with nature of bidirectional abuse

## Secondary Victimisation

- “ ...in addition, male victims have unique experiences in that their female abusers are able to use a system that is designed to aide female victims of domestic violence. Thus, some female perpetrators of IPV manipulate their husbands because they know that the system is designed without the abused male’s experiences in mind, and that more often than not people will not believe or take seriously these men’s victimisation.” Hines et al., (2007)



# Issues with Current Legislation

- Domestic Abuse Bill and gendered definition – provides a structural barrier for men
  - Gendered crime = “gender-based violence against women shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately
- Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015
  - Current partner
  - Ex-partner but living together
  - Relative
- Stalking and harassment
  - Following, contacting, monitoring, loitering, spying, fear of violence
  - ...that affects victim’ physical and mental health
- “where there is an ongoing relationship then the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour should be considered”.



Thank you for  
listening!

- [Elizabeth.Bates@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.Bates@cumbria.ac.uk)
- Twitter: @DrLizBates
- Bates, E. A. (in press). "Walking on egg shells": A qualitative examination of men's experiences of intimate partner violence. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*
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- Bates, E. A. (2018c) "I am still afraid of her": Men's experiences of post-separation abuse. *Partner Abuse*.
- Bates, E. A. & Carthy, N. (2019) ""She convinced me I had Alzheimer's": Experiences of intimate partner violence in older men" *In preparation*
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- Bates, E. A. & Taylor, J. C. (2019) "I had no idea how painful it would be": A photo elicitation exploration of men's recovery from intimate partner violence. *In preparation*.